

Catholicism, History and Culture: A Dawsonian Synthesis

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Declaration

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Michael Richard Lynch

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my parents

Margaret Mary Lynch

and

Bernard Drayton Lynch

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I am particularly indebted to my Co-supervisor, Dr. Tracey Rowland, for inspiring and encouraging me in this work and for deepening my understanding of the relationship between theology, culture and history. I am also grateful to my Principal Supervisor, Dr. Greg Munro, for agreeing to this proposal and for his enthusiastic approach to the topic. Dr. Rowland and Dr. Munro have both provided invaluable assistance and advice to me during the period of this candidature and I am deeply appreciative of their time and effort.

ABSTRACT

Catholicism, History and Culture: A Dawsonian Synthesis

At present the Church is confronted by two major problems, specifically, its marginalization within Western society, and the difficulty of transmitting the faith to the young. This confusion has had a particularly severe impact on Catholics within English-speaking countries such as Australia, where a dominant secularized Protestant culture has repudiated its Catholic roots. Catholics have had limited opportunities to appreciate the depth and richness of their heritage or to understand the forms and substance of a flourishing Catholic culture.

There have been two major responses to the dilemma of the Church's interaction with modern culture. The first, which predominated before 1960, drew largely upon neo-scholastic philosophy, a major proponent of which was the prominent French Catholic intellectual, Jacques Maritain (1882-1973). However, a sole reliance on this approach has proved unsatisfactory in countries such as Australia, where the Catholic cultural and historical understandings remained underdeveloped. The second major response, which has dominated the period since the Second Vatican Council (1962-65), has interpreted the term *aggiornamento* to mean accommodation by the Church to the modern world. This response has been particularly problematic for Catholics in Australia, which has experienced substantial social and cultural changes in the last forty years.

Consequently, major declines in religious practice and the marginalization of Christian understandings and beliefs within the broader society are indicative of a need for new ways to respond to modern culture and the challenge of secularization. Since the early 1970s, *Communio* scholars have explored the relationship between theology and culture. Their perspectives have

also led to a renewed awareness of the importance of tradition, memory and history in understanding culture. This thesis will build on this renewed awareness, to argue that the confusion about the rôle of culture has resulted from a failure to recognize the challenge posed by modernity's breach with the Christian past, and the accompanying distortion of the historical narrative.

A solution to these difficulties draws upon the historical and cultural understandings of the English Catholic historian, Christopher Dawson (1889-1970). He sought to emphasize the essential quality of the spiritual dimension in culture and history. In particular, Dawson's understanding that religion forms culture gave him a unique insight into the importance of memory and tradition in the survival of a culture. Thus, his work addressed such themes as the rôle of Christianity in forming the West, and the need to analyse the forms and substance of a Christian culture.

During the 1950s, Dawson became increasingly convinced of the importance of education in transmitting the spiritual and cultural heritage of society. He advocated the idea of a Christian culture course that would teach students about their Christian past and help them to understand that religion provides the most vital aspect of society. In particular, this thesis will propose that Dawson's historical and educational framework is an important way to respond to the amnesia of modern culture and to transmit the faith to the next generation.

Specifically, this thesis will use the Dawsonian perspective as well as the cultural analysis of the *Communio* school, as a means to focus on the importance of culture, history, the European heritage and education, in order to argue for new catechetical and educational directions. A focus on Europe would benefit Australia not only because it has a European heritage, but because it

would allow a greater knowledge of a culture that was formed by Christianity, and of the challenge that arises from a secularization of the Christian ethos.

The Dawsonian proposal for a Christian culture course provides an alternative to historical and cultural perspectives that are based on secular and Whig versions of history. Instead of focusing on the three-fold division of history into Ancient, Medieval and Modern eras, Dawson's course developed an understanding of the impact of Christianity by developing a knowledge of six stages of Christian culture: The Apostolic Age; the Patristic Age; the Formation of Western Christendom; the High Middle Ages; Divided Christendom, after the Reformation; and finally, Secularized Christendom. Thus, the Dawsonian course with its emphasis on the formative rôle of Christian culture within Western society is an important means to address the problems of the marginalization of the Church, and the urgent need to find more effective ways to transmit the faith to the next generation.

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INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of the third millennium the Church is confronted by what Pope Benedict calls a ‘clash of cultures’.¹ This clash is particularly evident in the West, where the continuing impact of secularization has brought to prominence the need for the Church to have a developed understanding of the relationship between theological principles and cultural analysis. This is a comparatively recent intellectual need in the life of the contemporary Church. Indeed, prior to the 1960s, very few Catholic scholars with the notable exceptions of the English historian, Christopher Dawson (1889-1970), and the Polish-German Jesuit theologian, Erich Przywara (1889-1972), had investigated the importance of culture. However, the theme was to be addressed in Part II of the Second Vatican Council's document, *Gaudium et Spes*.² As this particular section of the document has subsequently been the subject of scholarly criticism for its terminological looseness and variety of interpretations, there exists a continuing need within the Church for a clearer understanding of what has come to be known as the ‘theology of culture’.³

The present crisis for the Church is evident in two areas. The first concerns the marginalization of the Church within the modern West. This issue is particularly problematic for Catholics within the English-speaking countries of Australia, Britain and the USA, which are historically Protestant in culture. Many Catholics in these societies were part of the diaspora from Ireland, where Catholic culture had been truncated by centuries of persecution.⁴ In a desire for social acceptance within their new lands, these Catholics tended to accept archetypically

¹ Joseph Ratzinger, *Christianity and the Crisis of Cultures*, (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2006), p. 27.

² Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 7 December, 1965, ed. Austin Flannery, (Dublin, Ireland: Dominican Publications, 1992).

³ Tracey Rowland, *Culture and the Thomist Tradition: After Vatican II*, (London: Routledge, 2003), p.18. (hereafter *CTT*).

⁴ Norman Davies has described how restrictions on land ownership for Catholics after the victory of William III in Ireland, in 1690, were ruinous in a predominantly peasant society. Norman Davies, *The Isles: A History*, (London: Macmillan, 1999), p. 629.

Protestant divisions between religion and culture. This meant that there was no development of a theological framework for understanding both Catholic culture and the alternative ontology of modern culture.

This complexity about the relationship between religion and culture is one of the main factors impacting on the second crisis, that of the transmission of the Catholic faith to the next generation. In countries such as Australia, Mass attendance figures for young people are now as low as six per cent.⁵ Associated with this phenomenon, is the increase in the number of young people who have ceased to identify themselves as Catholic.⁶ In addition, in 2005, Cardinal Pell expressed concerns about trends in religious observance and belief, when he referred to statistics which showed that large numbers of young Catholics believe that it is acceptable to pick and choose beliefs and that morals are relative.⁷ These problems contrast with the situation prior to the 1960s where the Church was continuing to grow in the countries with a large majority of non-Catholics such as Australia, the USA and Britain, but also to flourish in the 'old' Catholic countries such as France, Italy and Spain.⁸ In France there is evidence that religious observance had not only stabilized in the previous half century, but may have actually increased.⁹ The Church is now moving beyond the pastoral and doctrinal confusion associated with the documents of the Second Vatican Council.¹⁰ However, it is apparent that there is a need to

⁵ Robert E. Dixon, *The Catholic Community in Australia*, (Adelaide, South Australia: Openbook Publishers, 2005), p. 96.

⁶ Ibid, p. 91.

⁷ Cardinal George Pell, "The Spirit of Generation Y: the challenge for Catholic schools", Address to National Catholic Education Conference on September 28, 2005. *AD 2000*, November, 2006. p. 3. (Figures cited from Michael Mason, Andrew Singleton and Ruth Webber, *The Spirit of Generation Y: Young People's Spirituality in a Changing Australia*, (Mulgrave, Vic: John Garratt Publishing, 2007), p. 93.

⁸ Maurice Larkin, "The Catholic Church and Politics in Twentieth Century France", in *French History Since Napoleon*, ed. Martin S. Alexander, (London: Hodder, 1999), p. 148.

⁹ Hugh McLeod, *Secularization in Western Europe 1848-1914*, European Studies Series, (London: MacMillan Press, 2000), p. 288.

¹⁰ Michael Burleigh, *Sacred Causes: Religion and Politics from the European Dictators to Al Qaeda*, (London: Harper Press, 2006), p. 262. The publication of a new Catechism in 1994 was part of this renewed emphasis on doctrinal clarity.

evangelise not just one, but several generations at risk of what Glen Olsen has called ‘cultural suicide’.¹¹ Thus, the relationship between theology and culture urgently needs to be addressed, particularly within the English-speaking world.¹²

Recently, the debate on culture has reflected the divisions between ‘Whig Thomists’ and Catholic scholars clustered around a group associated with the *Communio* journal, who draw inspiration from the mid-twentieth century *ressourcement* theologians, such as Henri de Lubac (1896-1991), and Jean Danielou (1905-1974).¹³ In arguing against dualist anthropologies of the human person inherent in liberalism, *Communio* scholars have drawn upon the theology of the Patristic Age, particularly Patristic accounts of the relationship between grace and nature, and have subsequently applied these to the relationship between theology and culture. Some of the major figures in this group include David L. Schindler, Gagnon Professor of the John Paul II Institute for Marriage and Family, Washington DC, Stratford Caldecott, Director, Centre for Faith and Culture, Oxford, Aidan Nichols, John Paul II Lecturer in Catholic Theology, Oxford, and Tracey Rowland, Dean of the John Paul II Institute for Marriage and Family, Melbourne, Australia.

Whereas the Whig Thomists, such as Michael Novak and Robert Royal, have sought to promote Liberal capitalism and the U.S. political and constitutional order, the *Communio* scholars are much more critical of economic and political philosophies which flow from the eighteenth century. While the Whig Thomists tend to follow the Cold War mentality of Capitalism is Good,

¹¹ Glenn Olsen, “Secularization and Sacralization”, in *Christianity and Western Civilization: Christopher Dawson’s Insight: Can a Culture Survive the Loss of its Religious Roots*, Papers Presented at a Conference Sponsored by the Wethersfield Institute, New York City, October 15, 1993, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1995), p. 98.

¹² Gerald J. Russello, ed., in “Introduction”, to *Christianity and European Culture: Selections from the work of Christopher Dawson*, (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1998), p. xxv. (hereafter CEC).

¹³ The *Communio* journal was founded in 1972 by Hans Urs Von Balthasar (1905-1988), Henri de Lubac, and Joseph Ratzinger (born 1927), now Pope Benedict XVI.

Communism is Bad, the *Communio* scholars tend to regard Communism as absolutely evil and contemporary U.S. style capitalism as problematic.

Before the 1960s the main response to the challenge of modern culture by Catholic educators and pastoralists had been to draw upon neo-Thomist philosophy. The earlier philosophical approach was a response to the crisis that faced the Church in its heartlands, particularly France, from at least the time of the various national Enlightenments in the eighteenth century. During the pontificate of Leo XIII (1878-1903), it appeared that the Church had moderated its opposition to liberal and republican forms of government, especially within France, through the policy of the *Raillielement*.¹⁴ One of the most notable initiatives of this Papacy was the renewed emphasis on Thomist philosophy, especially after the promulgation of the Papal encyclical, *Aeterni Patris*, in 1879. This development would be revealed in the work of one of the most prominent of the Thomist philosophers during the mid-twentieth century, Jacques Maritain (1882-1973), who would influence the Church's attitude to American liberal democracy and to modern culture. In part, Maritain reflected the larger philosophical pre-occupations of the French tradition, and the fact that France's entrance into the modern world had been initiated by the political act of the French Revolution. In spite of the disruptions occasioned by the Revolution, French culture and society continued to be relatively stable and to exhibit continuities with the pre-1789 world.¹⁵

¹⁴ Denis Brogan, *The Development of Modern France: 1870-1939*, New and Revised Edition, (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1967), pp. 259-260. Brogan has described the *Raillielement* as meaning that French Catholics should accept that France had abandoned its ancient and modern dynasties and that the Republic would continue to exist in the future. Furthermore, "As Pope Zacharius had sanctioned the transfer of the crown of the Franks from the House of Clovis to the House of Pepin, a later Pope could ratify the definitive exclusion from power of two families that had succeeded the House of Pepin." p. 257.

¹⁵ Alfred Cobban, *A History of Modern France Volume 3: 1871-1962*, (Middlesex: Penguin, 1965), pp. 70-71.

However, in contrast to the philosophical and political challenges within France, a politically stable Britain had experienced the enormous social disruption and transformation engendered by the Industrial Revolution.¹⁶ As the modern world has been formed not only by the philosophical trends stemming from the French Enlightenment and Revolution, but also by the cultural factors associated with the liberal capitalism of the USA and Britain (the ‘Enlightenments’ of John Locke, 1632-1704, and Adam Smith, 1723-1790), a Catholic understanding of modernity needs to take into account broad meta-cultural issues, as well as philosophical and political ones.

The writings of the English Catholic convert, Christopher Dawson, such as *Progress and Religion* (1929), and *The Crisis of Western Education* (1961), reveal his concerns about these meta-cultural issues and about the underlying ontology of modern culture. He wrote at the same time as other English Catholic converts, such as G. K. Chesterton (1874-1936), and Evelyn Waugh (1903-1966), who exhibited a similar unease about modern culture.¹⁷ Dawson’s metahistorical understanding of cultures, and in particular European and Western culture, led him to believe that these could only be really understood in religious terms.¹⁸ Thus, in his first published book, *The Age of the Gods*, written in 1928, Dawson identified the rôle of religion in prehistoric cultures, and in *The Making of Europe* (1932), he examined how Christianity had

¹⁶ Carlton J. H. Hayes, *A Political and Cultural History of Modern Europe*, vol 2, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1939), p. 36. Carlton Hayes described the changed social conditions of many industrial workers who had been forced off the land and as a new proletariat had to adapt to a different way of life in the cities, where they owned no property and relied solely on daily wages for their survival.

¹⁷ Adam Schwartz, *The Third Spring: G. K. Chesterton, Graham Greene, Christopher Dawson, and David Jones*, (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2005), p. 375. Adam Schwartz has observed that this group were part of a ‘Third Spring’ of conversions which followed on from Newman’s ‘Second Spring’ of conversions in the nineteenth century.

¹⁸ Christopher Dawson, *Religion and Culture*, Gifford Lectures: Delivered in the University of Edinburgh, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1948), p. 50. (hereafter *RC*).

formed Europe.¹⁹ This appears to reflect the fact that in contrast to Maritain, who was primarily influenced by St Thomas Aquinas, Dawson drew from the works of St Augustine and such thinkers as the French nineteenth-century sociologist, Frédéric Le Play (1806-1882), whose best known work *Les Ouvriers Européens* (1855), had analyzed the importance of the family within society.²⁰ Dawson wrote at the same time as various Christian and conservative historians, such as Herbert Butterfield. Butterfield sought to counter what came to be known as the ‘Whig interpretation of history’, which in studying the past in order to justify the present, provided apologias for secularism and modern culture.²¹

However, whilst according to Nichols, the Catholic Church in England's real strength during this time lay in its theology of culture, the influence of neo-Thomism meant that the broader cultural and historical understandings of Christian and conservative English-speaking writers went comparatively unrecognized and undervalued.²² Thus, the debate within theological circles about the Church's rôle in the modern world is evident in the contrasting approaches of Christopher Dawson and Jacques Maritain. Fundamentally, Maritain appears to reflect what Roger Shinn states is a certain non-historical emphasis in Thomism, which transforms Christianity from an historical narrative to primarily a metaphysical doctrine.²³ However,

¹⁹ Christopher Dawson, *The Age of the Gods: A Study in the Origins of Culture in Prehistoric Europe and the Ancient East*, (Sheed and Ward: London, 1933), p. 22. (First published in 1928). Christopher Dawson, *The Making of Europe: An Introduction to the History of European Unity*, with Introduction by Alexander Murray, (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2003), p. 33. (First published in 1932). (hereafter *ME*).

²⁰ Christopher Olaf Blum, “Introduction”, to *Critics of the Enlightenment: Readings in the French Counter-Revolutionary Tradition*, trans. and ed. by Christopher Olaf Blum, (Wilmington, Delaware: ISI Books, 2004), p. xxxvii.

²¹ Herbert Butterfield, *The Whig Interpretation of History*, (London: G. Bell, 1931), p. v.

²² Aidan Nichols, “Christopher Dawson's Catholic Setting”, in *Eternity in Time: Christopher Dawson and the Catholic Idea of History*, eds. Stratford Caldecott and John Morrill, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997), p. 27.

²³ Roger L. Shinn, *Christianity and the Problem of History*, (St Louis, Missouri: Abbott Books, 1964), p. 70.

Dawson's deeply held Christian belief and his anthropological insights meant that he saw history as incarnational, and that he recognized culture as a 'bearer of truth'.²⁴

The contrast between Dawson and Maritain became more apparent during the 1950s and 1960s, especially in their attitudes to American culture. They would each move to North America as academics, Maritain during the 1940s to teach philosophy, and Dawson in 1958 as Harvard's first Professor of Roman Catholic Studies. Dawson wrote *The Crisis of Western Education* during this time, as America considered the election of its first Roman Catholic president. In Dawson's view, this political event was only marginally important as he was convinced that the communication of culture was the better way for predominantly Protestant Americans to understand the true nature of Catholicism and the real significance of Catholic values.²⁵ James Hitchcock has suggested that the difference between these figures may reflect that Maritain was an optimist about modern civilization, and Dawson a pessimist.²⁶ This assessment derives from Dawson's Augustinian view of the need for God's grace in history and society, which can be contrasted with some elements of Maritain's neo-Thomism with its focus on the autonomy of the natural and secular world. Indeed, when referring to Maritain's work, *True Humanism* (1937), Rowland comments that there was no reference to a particular theology of culture but rather a search for a *rapprochement* with the liberal-humanist tradition.²⁷ Thus, in Maritain's view, the new Christian order would be secular rather than sacred, and would exhibit its own 'autonomy'.²⁸ However, the *ressourcement* theologians, especially de Lubac, suggested that this attitude could

²⁴ Dermot Quinn, "Introduction", to *Dynamics of World History*, by Christopher Dawson, ed. John J. Mulloy, with a new Introduction by Dermot Quinn, (Wilmington, Delaware: ISI Books, 2002), p. xxiii. (hereafter *DWH*).

²⁵ Christopher Dawson, *The Crisis of Western Education*, with Specific Programs for the Study of Christian Culture, by John J. Mulloy, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1961), p. 98. (hereafter *CWE*).

²⁶ James Hitchcock, "Prospects for a New Christendom", in *Modernity and Religion*, by Ralph McInerny, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), p. 125.

²⁷ Rowland, *CTT*, p. 22.

²⁸ *Ibid*, p. 31.

lead to a dichotomy between theology and culture, and therefore contribute to the secularization of societies.²⁹

In spite of concerns being expressed by Dawson and the *ressourcement* scholars, in the years after 1945, Catholicism was growing in the predominantly Protestant and English-speaking countries such as the USA and Australia. In this period a partial *rapprochement* with the liberal democracies of the West may have been considered to be necessary because of the fact that these nations, in particular the USA, were crucial to the defeat of a neo-pagan Nazi Germany during World War II. There was also a need to make common cause against Marxist totalitarianism, which was especially important after the establishment of Communist regimes within the mainly Catholic countries of Eastern Europe. Thus, there existed a greater need to seek a harmonious relationship with an apparently benign liberal capitalism, rather than to develop a critique of its cultural manifestations. Furthermore, it would have been difficult to predict the challenge that secularism and liberalism, whether represented by a type of soft totalitarianism in the modern state, or in the mores of the popular culture, would present for the Church in the following decades.

Both the apparent success of the Church in the English-speaking world and the earlier influence of neo-Thomism may be the reason why, since the 1960s, the predominant post-Conciliar *Zeitgeist* has either ignored the influence of modern culture or sought a form of accommodation with it. Those seeking some form of accommodation have often drawn from the

²⁹ Henri de Lubac, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man*, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988), p. 313. cited in Nicholas J. Healey, “*Communio*: A Theological Journey”, in *Communio*, vol. 33, (Spring 2006), p. 120. and Henri de Lubac, in “Nature and Grace”, in *The Word in History: The St Xavier Symposium*, ed. Patrick Burke, (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1966), pp. 24-60.

works of Karl Rahner and have become known as the ‘transcendental Thomists’.³⁰ The general adoption of Rahner’s view, that culture is a ‘given’ requiring acceptance, led to calls for the Church to jettison what were considered unnecessary cultural accoutrements and to assimilate to the modern cultural milieu.³¹ It was because certain strands of neo-Thomism did not develop accounts of the significance of the rôle of culture and history, that the concept of *aggiornamento* came to be interpreted as meaning ‘accommodation’. Furthermore, according to Rowland this came to mean accommodation to the prevailing cultural and societal norms.³²

However, this predominant interpretation has been a major factor in the marginalization of Christianity and the consequent problem of its transmission to the next generation in countries such as Australia. At the present time, members of the *Communio* school are developing new critiques of modern culture and, in particular, better ways for the Church to respond to this culture. This analysis of culture can be deepened by an historical focus which recognizes that modernity is based on a breach with the Christian past and an accompanying distortion of the historical narrative. The recent emphasis by the *Communio* scholars means that Dawson's work, which until now has been largely ignored by educators and historians, should be increasingly recognized as providing an important addition to the developing scholarship around the problem of modern culture. In this regard, Rowland has maintained that it is unfortunate that Christopher Dawson’s unique work on culture was not considered at the Second Vatican Council, or in the debates which followed in the immediate post-Conciliar era.³³ This work seeks to redress this lacuna by arguing that Dawson’s concept that religion has formed history can provide a means of deepening our understanding of the present cultural problem, and can form the basis of an

³⁰ Aidan Nichols, *Catholic Thought Since the Enlightenment: A Survey*, (Leominster, England: Gracewing, 1998), p. 143.

³¹ Rowland, *CTT*, p. 34.

³² *Ibid*, p. 18.

³³ *Ibid*, p. 22.

educational solution to this problem. In the last decades of his life, Dawson argued that the transmission of the spiritual heritage of our culture required an educational course that would increase student knowledge of Christian history. This thesis will argue that Dawson's proposal for a Christian culture course provides a particularly pertinent response to the pervasive and damaging lack of historical consciousness that exists within Australia.

Part One of this thesis analyses some of the key themes in the debate about the interaction between religion and culture. In doing so, it concludes that the culture of modernity faces a dilemma, as it attempts to deny that Christianity is the most vital and dynamic element in the Western tradition. In particular, Chapter One provides an analysis of the relationship between Church and culture from the eighteenth century, a time that Dawson refers to as secularized Christendom. It will also argue that there is a need to understand that Catholics in English-speaking countries face the added dilemma of being Catholic in faith, but Protestant in culture, moreover, a secularized and liberal Protestant culture.

A solution to the above difficulties is predicated on an acceptance of the fact that modern culture is neither impartial, nor neutral, in relation to Christianity. Indeed, in spite of drawing from the Christian tradition, it represents an alternative and antipathetic ontology. The rivalry between modern culture and Christianity is elucidated in Goran Rosenberg's statement about the double century between the French Revolution in 1789 and the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. He argues that in this time the Judeo-Christian religious messianic idea of fulfilment and redemption was replaced by a secular creed based upon a limited rational and scientific belief about humanity and nature.³⁴ This issue has been addressed by scholars of the *Communio* school,

³⁴ Goran Rosenberg, "The Heritage of a Century", in *Enlightenment and Genocide, Contradictions of Modernity*. Series Philosophy and Politics, eds. James Kaye and Bo Strath, (Brussels: No.5 PIE-Peter Lang S.A. 2000), p. 17.

such as Nichols, and by those of the 'Radical Orthodoxy' group.³⁵ Also in recent years, the broad philosophical school that has come to be known as postmodernism has sought to examine the intellectual pre-suppositions of modern culture, and in doing so, criticized the very idea that modernity was neutral.

Dawson argued that religions are like great rivers of sacred tradition which have irrigated and fertilized their historical landscapes and furthermore, that the social and intellectual life of a community is secondary to and dependent on this sacred tradition.³⁶ The dominance of philosophical schools which had not developed an account of the rôle of history and culture in society, meant that there was limited understanding of how the denial of this spiritual tradition had produced modern culture.³⁷ Thus, attempts at accepting an accommodation with modern culture have represented a major problematic for the Church. A response to these difficulties requires an overview of such areas as:

- I. The debate about the extent of secularization;
- II. the Church's reaction to this trend, including its focus on philosophy, and the more recent attempts at a *rapprochement* with modern culture ;
- III. The contemporary debate between Whig Thomists and members of the *Communio* school, within the English-speaking world, about the rôle of history and culture;

³⁵ Aidan Nichols, *Christendom Awake: On Re-energizing the Church in Culture*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999). According to John Milbank, Graham Ward and Catherine Pickstock, 'Radical Orthodoxy', is a recent theological approach which is committed to creedal Christianity and which seeks to use the Augustinian vision of all knowledge as Divine illumination to systematically critique modern society and culture. In John Milbank, Graham Ward and Catherine Pickstock, "Introduction: Suspending the material: the turn of radical orthodoxy", in *Radical Orthodoxy: a new theology*, eds. John Milbank, Graham Ward and Catherine Pickstock, (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 2.

³⁶ Christopher Dawson, *Religion and the Rise of Western Culture of Western Culture*, Gifford Lectures Delivered at the University of Edinburgh, 1948-1949, (New York: Image Books, 1958), p. 12. (hereafter RWC).

³⁷ Philip Trower, *The Catholic Church and the Counter-Faith: A Study of the Roots of Modern Secularism, Relativism and de-Christianization*, (Oxford: Family Publications, 2006), p. 116. William T. Cavanaugh has argued that Maritain's concept of a new Christendom is based on anachronisms and misreadings of history. In William T. Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist, Theology, Politics and the Body of Christ*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), p. 190.

- IV. Understanding modern culture as characterized by a breach with Christian history and tradition;
- V. Thus, for the English-speaking countries such as Australia, the need to build upon Dawson's historical emphasis and the cultural insights of the *Communio* school, regarding the problematic of being Catholic in faith and Protestant in culture.

This theme of the amnesiac nature of modern culture is investigated in Chapter Two, where the breaches with the past faced by the Church within the older Catholic countries such as France, were different to those in the predominantly Protestant world of the English-speaking nations. As regards France there is a need to understand that until the 1960s the Catholic culture had proved remarkably resilient. However, such key events as the French Revolution have had an enormous influence on the intellectual concepts and rhetoric of the modern world. Recent revisionist scholarship has challenged both Marxist and liberal perspectives that the Revolution was either desirable or necessary, or even suggested that it was the precursor of the political dystopian nightmares of the twentieth century.³⁸ This has led to a questioning of the use of the Revolution's 'rights' rhetoric. Rowland has drawn attention to the difficulty and confusion that occurs among Catholics when there is an attempt to transpose the substance of Christian beliefs into this modern rhetoric.³⁹ This chapter examines this phenomenon, and describes it as an uneasy truce with the alternative ontology of modernity. An examination of modernity's ontology suggests that major aspects of its political philosophy and rights rhetoric emanate from the French Enlightenment and Revolutionary tradition; its historiography from the English Whig view of progress; and its major cultural practices, including a focus on the therapeutic and on utilitarianism in areas as diverse as architecture and science, from the Liberal tradition generally. All of these features which are

³⁸ Ronald Schecter, ed., *The French Revolution: The Essential Readings*, (Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), p. 1.

³⁹ Rowland, *CTT*, p. 163.

based on, or foster a breach or rupture with the past, have a particularly strong impact within countries such as Australia, where there is no deep tradition of a well developed Catholic culture.

Part Two will draw upon the Dawsonian historical and cultural insights, and more recent scholarship, to examine the three domains of culture, history and the European tradition. Drawing upon an understanding that modernity is an alternative belief system to classical Christian culture, Chapter Three addresses the importance of cultural understandings to analyze the impact of secularization. It will also analyze the background and work of Christopher Dawson, and argue that the Dawsonian framework provides an historical perspective on areas that have been particularly contentious in recent decades. In particular this chapter will examine:

- I. The undeveloped understanding about modern culture; and,
- II. The Dawsonian understandings of culture. This also requires a recognition that a different ontology underlies the modern West's belief in the rôle and purpose of human existence, which particularly affects such areas as psychology, education and health care, through the development of what Christopher Lasch has termed a 'therapeutic sensibility'.⁴⁰

Chapter Four will continue to develop these themes by arguing that certain historical interpretations, especially those based upon a Whig view of progress, have provided an important apologetic for modern culture. Recent debates about the deficiencies of history in schools and the need to have a separate history course may reflect a return to this English liberal nineteenth-century view of the past. This view offers only a truncated version of the West's history. Furthermore, the dominance of this school of history, whether in school curricula or in university humanities courses, was itself a cause of the marginalization of Catholicism and the subsequent

⁴⁰ Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations*, (London: Abacus, 1980), p. 7.

ignorance and lack of confidence among individual Catholics, about the formative rôle of their religion in Western culture. In contrast to secular history's emphasis on the immanence and autonomy of human civilization, Dawson sought to acknowledge the spiritual roots of a culture.⁴¹ This complemented the artist David Jones' (1895-1974) search for a recovery of tradition by fostering a sense of the past living within us.⁴²

Using the Dawsonian framework, key areas to be addressed here include:

- I. The challenge of modern history writing;
- II. The Dawsonian analysis of other historians and schools of history;
- III. The Dawsonian alternative to the problems in modern history writing.

Thus, history courses in Catholic schools will need to include a renewed focus on narrative, in particular the eschatological narrative of Christianity which has formed the West, and not simply represent a return to a purely nationalistic or Anglo-centric Whig version of history. Chapter Five will argue that within Australia and indeed the rest of the English-speaking world, there is a need to highlight the importance of the European heritage and tradition. Besides seeking to redress a discontinuity with the past inherent within modern culture, this is important in illustrating the most striking example of Christianity forming a culture. However, it also reveals the attempt, and failure, of a secularized Europe to reconstruct itself, by the denial of its most important and dynamic element.

Finally, given the crisis in Catholic practice and understanding among the young, there is a need to address this situation through an educational response. This response cannot be solely

⁴¹Christopher Dawson, *Progress and Religion: An Historical Enquiry*, (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2001), p. 3. (hereafter *PR*).

⁴²Nichols, in *Eternity in Time*, p. 31.

based on the philosophical approach, common in the past, but needs to be mediated through a focus on the relationships between religion, history and culture. Thus, Chapter Six, which is the last chapter of this work, proposes one possible solution to the current dilemma of Western culture, especially as it affects the English-speaking world. It examines the Dawsonian educational response, specifically his proposal for a Christian culture course, which provides a framework for a consistent response to the Church's present educational and cultural problem. At the present time there exists a unique window of opportunity for the Church to address this problematic, because of the vigorous debate about the substance and importance of history. In contrast to the Enlightenment's threefold division into Ancient, Medieval and Modern history, a Christian culture course would allow students to develop an understanding of the religious foundations of Western culture through an examination of six stages of Christian culture.⁴³ Rather than attempts to restrict the focus of history, this multi-disciplinary course, with its study of history, philosophy, and theology, as well as art, architecture and literature, would let Christian culture be studied as a harmonious whole, in a similar fashion to the older classical courses on ancient Greece and Rome. This study would build upon the Dawsonian belief that culture is inseparable from education, and by engaging the heart as well as the head, deepen the understanding and appreciation of religion.⁴⁴

In an investigation of the seminal nature of Dawson's work, this thesis will place it within a larger Catholic understanding of modernity. This involves a reflection both on the works of other Catholic historians such as Henri Massis (1886-1970), of Catholic philosophers such as Maritain, and of Catholic theologians such as de Lubac and Hans Urs von Balthasar. According to

⁴³ Russell Hittinger, "The Metahistorical Vision of Christopher Dawson", in *The Dynamic Character of Christian Culture: Essays on Dawsonian Themes*, ed. Peter J. Cataldo, (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1984), p. 11. Hittinger asserts that this Enlightenment threefold division is itself a hermeneutic that requires questioning.

⁴⁴ Christina Scott, "Introduction", to *PR*, by Dawson, p. 20.

Rowland, the issue of culture and its rôle in moral formation has been a problematical one for neo-Thomist philosophy, as St. Thomas Aquinas wrote in a time when society and culture was overtly Christian.⁴⁵ However, by the beginning of the third Millenium, the Church and its educational system is contending with a culture where,

Christendom is but an historical memory for a significant proportion of the population and the Christian soul is forged within a complex matrix of institutions founded upon a mixture of theistic, quasi-theistic and anti-theistic traditions.⁴⁶

At the beginning of the 1960s, the cultural questions addressed by Dawson and others with concerns about modernity in Britain may not have seemed particularly relevant to the issues facing the Church. Following the Vatican Council many in the Church focused on matters that were either political, or with specific political implications, in areas such as social justice, or ‘liberation theology’ (partly in a belief that these would provide greater relevance for the Church). However, given recent works by the present Pope, it is becoming evident that the Church considers its rôle vis-a-vis history and culture to be crucial to its task of evangelization.⁴⁷ This perspective helps in consideration of the rôle of history and, in particular, the unique work of Christopher Dawson. His emphasis on the theological formation of culture, alongside his broader critique of modernity, provides an alternative to viewing the modern world predominantly through the lens of either politics or philosophy.

⁴⁵ Rowland, *CTT*, p. 28.

⁴⁶ Rowland, *CTT*, p. 2.

⁴⁷ Joseph Ratzinger (Now Pope Benedict XVI) and Marcello Pera, *Without Roots: The West, Relativism, Christianity, Islam*, trans. Michael F. Moore, (New York: Basic Books, 2006).

PART I

CATHOLICISM AND THE MODERN WORLD

CHAPTER I

The Church and Culture

Introduction

The Papacy of Benedict XVI began at a time of continuing debate over the Church's interaction with the dominant culture of the contemporary period, particularly within Europe and other Western nations such as the USA and Australia. As he has lived all his life in Europe, it is clear that the Pope would be particularly aware of the challenges facing Catholicism in what was once known as Christendom.¹ As discussed in the Introduction to this work, the major challenge is not simply the decline of religious practice and the consequent loss of belief in the teachings of the Church on a range of family and personal morality issues, but the problematic of its relationship to modern culture's 'forced forgetting' of its Christian past.²

The marginalization that this breach with the past has engendered was obvious in the debate about the new European Constitution, when there was no mention made of the contribution of Christianity to the formation and development of Europe. In America, it often relates to a discussion about the historical meaning of the Constitution's separation of Church and state. Within Australia, the Church is confronted by two difficulties, the historic one of marginalization in a predominantly Protestant society and the more recent challenge posed by an increasingly secularized culture. Christopher Dawson's observation that the secularization of Western culture was almost complete in the nineteenth century shows that this trend of marginalization had been occurring for at least one hundred years.³

¹ Hugh McLeod, "Introduction", to *The Decline of Christendom in Western Europe, 1750-2000*, by eds. Hugh McLeod and Werner Ustorf, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 1. McLeod writes that most people (in Europe), for fifteen hundred years following the conversion of Constantine were in Christendom, "... where the laws purported to be based on Christian principles..."

² Rowland, *CTT*, p. 125. The French philosopher, Rémi Brague, has questioned whether the idea of a total rupture with the past is a type of cultural Marcionism, associated with the attempt by Marcion during the second century to abandon the writings of the Old Testament. In Rémi Brague, *Eccentric Culture: A Theory of Western Civilization*, trans. by Samuel Lester, (South Bend, Indiana: St Augustin's Press, 2002), p. 182.

³ Christopher Dawson, *Religion and the Modern State*, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1938), p. xxii. (hereafter *RMS*).

However, given the rise of a new militant Islam, the West has been forced to address the place of religion, not only in its relationship with the state, but also with the broader domains of society and history and culture.⁴ An historical focus informed by the thought of Christopher Dawson and paralleling the cultural perspectives of the *Communio* school provides a valuable framework for understanding this interaction, and a corrective to the difficulties that have become apparent in many post-Conciliar catechetical and pastoral strategies.⁵ In Chapter One, it will be argued that a response to the undeveloped understanding about the relationship between theology and history and culture, particularly within English-speaking countries needs to consider the following issues:

- I. The debate about the extent of secularization;
- II. The Church's response to this trend, including its tendency to focus solely on philosophy, and the more recent attempts at a *rapprochement* with modern culture;
- III. The contemporary debate between Whig Thomists and members of the *Communio* school within the English-speaking world about the rôle of history and culture;
- IV. Understanding modern culture as characterized by a breach with Christian history and tradition;
- V. Thus, for the English-speaking countries, such as Australia, the need to build on Dawson's historical emphasis and the cultural insights of the *Communio* School, regarding the problematic of being Catholic in faith and Protestant in culture.

⁴ Roger Scruton has argued that European and Islamic societies are based on differing concepts of religious creed and law. Roger Scruton, *The West and the Rest: Globalization and the Terror Threat*, (London: Continuum, 2003), p. 21.

⁵ One of the *Communio* scholars, Tracey Rowland, has used the term Postmodern Augustinian Thomism to describe a development which offers a critique of modernity and which draws the attention of the Thomist tradition onto issues of history and culture. In Rowland, *CTT*, p. 6.

I) The debate about the extent of secularization

The recent work of theologians such as Peter Berger and Harvey Cox has challenged the theory that secularization is an automatic component of modernity. In particular, Cox observes the continuing vitality of religion in the most modernised areas of the world.⁶ Thus, he refers to the influence of the Charismatic movement and the growth of the Pentecostal Churches in countries such as the USA.⁷ In regard to Catholicism, Cox also comments on the large number of people attending World Youth Days, as well as the increase in the popularity of pilgrimage centres such as Lourdes, Fatima and Santiago de Compostella.⁸

Cox's view parallels some of the thought of Samuel Huntington on the revival of religion in the West. Huntington describes this revival as the *revanche de Dieu*.⁹ This revival began strongly within the former Soviet Union after the fall of Communism and the demise of state-sponsored atheism. Thus, between 1988 and 1993, the number of churches in the Moscow area grew from 50 to 250, and in 1994, 30 per cent of young Russians under the age of 25 said they had changed from atheism to a belief in God.¹⁰ Another group of writers, classified as Whig Thomists for their belief that Catholicism can be synthesized with American liberalism, have also sought to question the secularization paradigm. For example, George Weigel has confidently asserted that one of the major social facts in the late twentieth century is actually the desecularisation of the world.¹¹

⁶ Harvey Cox, "The Myth of the Twentieth Century: The Rise and Fall of Secularisation", in *The Twentieth Century: A Theological Overview*, ed. Gregory Baum, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1999), p. 136.

⁷ Ibid, p. 137.

⁸ Ibid, pp. 138-139.

⁹ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilisations and the Remaking of World Order*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), p. 95.

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 96.

¹¹ George Weigel, "Religion and Peace: An Argument Complexified", *Washington Quarterly*, vol. 14, (Spring 1991), p. 27, cited in Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*, p. 96.

However, for Catholicism there are a number of problems with these arguments. Most of the figures that Huntington quotes relate to the growth of religion in such formerly non-Christian countries as Korea, or the growth of American-style evangelism within some of the South American countries, where he observes that the number of Protestants increased from about seven million in 1960, to 50 million in 1990.¹² Also, when an analysis is made of trends and figures for some European countries, Australia, and even for the USA, a much less positive situation is evident. First, a supposed renewed interest in general spirituality has not resulted in higher rates of religious practice, or in an increase in Christian beliefs. Indeed, the *Communio* scholar Glenn Olsen has stated that Christian optimism about this trend is so dependent on reframing the concept of religious belief, that the very concept of secularization loses its original meaning.¹³ Furthermore, the inability of modern culture to deal with criticism of its basic presuppositions is evident in Cox's assertion that, whereas a liberal/modernist critique of religion is considered legitimate, a religious critique of modernity is still considered inappropriate.¹⁴

In addition, Atkin and Tallett, referring to statistics on religious practice and belief, indicate that secularization during the last two centuries has not always been a continuous and steady process. However, they have described severe problems for the Church in Western European countries in recent decades.¹⁵ Thus, the process of secularisation appears to have increased markedly since the 1960s, particularly in countries such as France and the Netherlands, where there has been an enormous growth in the numbers indicating they belong to no religion. In the Netherlands, Atkin and Tallett observe that a completely new and secular society seems to be

¹² Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*, p. 99.

¹³ Glenn Olsen, "The Meaning of Christian Culture: A Historical View", in *Catholicism and Secularization in America: Essays on Nature, Grace and Culture*, ed. David L. Schindler, (Notre Dame, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor and Communio Books, 1990), p. 99.

¹⁴ Cox, *The Myth of the Twentieth Century*, p. 139.

¹⁵ Nicholas Atkin and Frank Tallett, *Priests, Prelates and People: A History of European Catholicism since 1750*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 299.

developing, which, in the process, is replacing the ‘old’ Catholic structures that had once been all-embracing.¹⁶ In France, the rates of attendance at weekly Mass fell dramatically, from one quarter of the population at the start of the 1960s, to under 10 per cent by the end of the 1980s.¹⁷

These statistics for France parallel McLeod’s argument that the 1960s provided a new and radical breach with the religious past.¹⁸ They can be contrasted with the observations of the French social historians, Yves-Marie Hilaire and Gerard Cholvy, who see the earlier period between 1930 and 1960, as ‘Thirty glorious years’ for the Catholic Church within France.¹⁹ Another debate to which McLeod refers is between those seeing broad changes in society as the reason for secularization, and those historians adopting a narrative approach which focuses on such events as the Second Vatican Council, or the radicalization of Protestant Theology.²⁰ Alan Gilbert has suggested that these narrative changes included a ‘de-Christianised’ working class, as well as works of radical theology, such as John Robertson’s 1963 book, *Honest to God*.²¹ This narrative approach is also evident in the work of Cholvy and Hilaire, for whom the crisis in French Catholicism in the later 1960s was mainly due to misguided pastoral experiments and certain interpretations of Vatican II, residual anti-Papal feeling, the Marxist radicalization of many Catholics and the general crisis in French society amplified by the political and social upheavals of 1968.²² The still developing scholarship of scholars associated with the *Communio* and the Radical Orthodoxy groups is seeking a deeper understanding of these cultural changes of the 1960s, and their continuing impact in the present period.

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 300.

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 301.

¹⁸ McLeod, “Introduction”, to *Decline of Christendom*, in eds. McLeod and Ustorf, p. 19.

¹⁹ Gerard Cholvy and Yves Marie Hilaire, *Histoire religieuse de la France contemporaine 1930-88*, (Toulouse: 1988), cited in McLeod, “Introduction”, to *The Decline of Christendom*, eds. McLeod and Ustorf, p. 19.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Cholvy and Hilaire, *Histoire religieuse de la France*, cited in McLeod, “Introduction”, to *The Decline of Christendom*, eds. McLeod and Ustorf, p. 19.

Besides the problems revealed in these figures, there are the broader challenges posed by such intellectual and cultural trends as postmodernism. In this regard, Pope Benedict has raised concerns about what he terms, ‘the danger of relativism’, which, by its denial of the concept of objective truth, undermines the very foundation of faith. Indeed, as relativism becomes the required norm, the Pope argues that it can tend towards intolerance of those faithful to traditional values and the knowledge that upholds them.²³ Aidan Nichols has identified the postmodern trend towards relativism as exhibiting a new form of ‘scientism’, which is represented in the English-speaking world by a number of high-profile scientists such as Richard Dawkins, who see no place for the truth claims of either Christianity or religion in general.²⁴

Steve Bruce has argued that secularization trends will continue to impact within Western societies, if they continue to be prosperous and stable.²⁵ His work and an analysis of general statistics and intellectual and cultural trends reveals that in contrast to those suggesting that secularization is decreasing, there continues to be a crisis of faith and belief for the Christian churches in the West.

II) A response to modern culture: including the influence of philosophy and more recent attempts at *rapprochement*

From the latter half of the nineteenth century, ‘a turn to philosophy’ was one of the most dominant reactions by the Church to the problem it saw in modern culture.²⁶ This initial reaction occurred for a number of reasons, including: that anti-clerical secularism was initially stronger in countries, such as France, with a strong philosophical and intellectual background; that within

²³ Ratzinger and Pera, *Without Roots*, p. 128.

²⁴ Nichols, *Christendom Awake*, p. 13.

²⁵ Steve Bruce, *God is dead, Religion in the Modern World: Secularization in the West*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), p. 241.

²⁶ Gabriel Motzkin, *Time and Transcendence: Secular History, the Catholic Reaction and the Rediscovery of the Future*, (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1992), p. 197.

such countries, optimistic trends, because of the survival of an older Catholic culture after World War I (alongside the growth in the American church), meant that cultural and historical questions were not as important; and finally that history, from the nineteenth century onwards, was dominated by an historicism characterized by relativism, and by nationalistic views which often exhibited an anti-Catholic bias.²⁷

Anti-clericalism and the importance of philosophy for France and Catholic Europe

The scale of intellectual and political opposition to the Church from the anti-clerical regimes in such traditionally Catholic countries as France, Italy, Spain and Mexico, was reflected in the Church's exclusion from a range of its traditional rôles in areas such as education and health, within apparently neutral or lay states. However, as these cultures retained major elements of Catholic understandings well into the twentieth century, the initial areas of conflict tended to be philosophical or political ones.

In France, and in other parts of Catholic Europe, one major political problem for the Church related to its interaction with the absolute monarchies in the two centuries before the French Revolution. The Church, and in particular the Papacy, often found herself restricted by these absolute monarchies, as the period was characterized by Gallicanism in France, and Josephism in Austria.²⁸ Indeed, it was the absolute monarchies which temporarily destroyed the Jesuits, a major bulwark of Tridentine and Baroque Catholicism and of the Papacy. Furthermore, the classical culture of the absolute monarchies, especially in France, would provide the cultural

²⁷ Ibid, p. 203.

²⁸ Gerald A. McCool, *Nineteenth Century Scholasticism: The Search for a Unitary Method*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 1989), p. 21-22. McCool states that Gallicanism could be traced back to the Declaration of the Assembly of the Clergy in 1682, which restricted the primacy and jurisdiction of the Pope in favour of the local bishops. Josephism refers to the attempt of Emperor Joseph II to subordinate the Church to the imperial throne and to bring liturgy and clerical education under the control of the imperial bureaucracy.

milieu for the eighteenth-century Enlightenments and the 'Age of Reason'.²⁹ The attempt at state control of the Church was exacerbated during the French Revolution, when the Constitutional Church was established under the Napoleonic regime, and also, throughout the nineteenth century when prefects appointed by the central government attempted to limit the independence of the Church.

Motzkin contends that one reason the Church espoused philosophy is its perception that Ancient Pagan culture, incorporated in the guise of Aristotle could be used in the battle against modern secular culture.³⁰ He quotes research showing that the reluctance of Catholic schools to teach classical culture early in the nineteenth century had been reversed by the late nineteenth century.³¹ Furthermore, Motzkin asserts that the Church turned to Thomism as it provided a philosophy, or *philosophia perennis*, which could not be relativised by the trends in nineteenth-century history.³² In contrast, this author suggests that the secularization of science was seen as much less of a problem for Catholicism than was the secularization of history.

The turn towards philosophy may also reflect the importance given to particular periods in history. In particular, Motzkin argues that medieval Catholicism and the Counter-Reformation offer alternative 'models of the past'.³³ In this regard, Dawson expressed concerns that some neo-Thomist thought prior to the Second Vatican Council focused too much on the medieval period and tended to ignore other periods. Dawson saw the Middle Ages as a classical period, but argued for the significance and influence of other periods to be considered such as the Patristic (which he thought more like our own), and the Baroque periods.

²⁹ Christopher Dawson, *The Dividing of Christendom*, (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1965), p. 263. (hereafter DC).

³⁰ Motzkin, *Time and Transcendence*, p. 199.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid, p. 228.

³³ Ibid, p. 203.

However, by the middle of the twentieth century, scholars such as de Lubac were concerned about what he termed ‘directions’ in neo-Thomism towards a type of rationalism that had begun during the time of the theologians, Thomas Cajetan (1469-1534) and Francis Suarez (1548-1647), after the Council of Trent.³⁴ This ‘rationalism’ rested on a sharp dichotomy between the orders of nature and supernature and unwittingly fostered the forces of secularism.³⁵ According to Motzkin, the strength of this secularism was to increase during the modern period, because there was no unified schema of historical interpretation to interpret everyday events or the contexts in which the faithful were living. The adoption of a secular approach with regard to such areas as medicine resulted in a change in the intuition of events by Catholics.³⁶ In other words the confrontation with the secular world was interpreted in sacralized terms, while the content of daily life, despite the increasing militancy of religious identification, became increasingly secular.³⁷ Therefore, as Motzkin argued, the lack of a religious interpretation of modern history rather than the lack of a secular philosophy was the real factor limiting the ability of the Church to understand secular society.³⁸

Similarly, Voderholzer states that neo-scholasticism did not have the resources to respond to the new challenges of history.³⁹ Thus, scholasticism gained in scientific ‘rigour and coherence’, but with some loss of the historical element evident in Revelation.⁴⁰ However, Voderholzer goes on to argue that both the Christian faith and the Old Covenant between God and His people Israel are based on historical events.⁴¹ Voderholzer also observes that neo-

³⁴ Rudolph Voderholzer, “Dogma and History: Henri de Lubac and the Retrieval of Historicity”, *Communio*, (Winter 2001), p. 651.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Motzkin, *Time and Transcendence*, p. 203.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 222.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Voderholzer, “Dogma and History”, *Communio*, p. 649.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 650.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

scholasticism is characterized by what he terms an ‘instruction theory’ of Revelation, which deals with true propositions about God without an emphasis on what he describes as ‘faith generated interior insight’.⁴²

Renewed optimism

In France, many within the Church may have felt a renewed optimism engendered by a Catholic revival evident after 1918, and also after 1945. There had been a practising Catholic majority in the post-World War I parliament, the so-called ‘*Chambre horizon bleu*’, and as mentioned in the Introduction, there are figures suggesting that rates of practice actually increased during the mid-twentieth century, particularly among men.⁴³ Larkin notes that General De Gaulle and successive presidents were the first heads of state to be practising Catholics since the 1870s.⁴⁴ It may have appeared that the earlier concerns about the Republic and modern civilization had been unduly pessimistic as the Church was now in a stronger position.

There are even figures suggesting that the roots of this revival can be found before 1914, in spite of the crisis facing the Church during the 1905 abrogation of the Concordat. McLeod quotes figures suggesting that at the anti-clerical *École Normale Supérieure*, a third of the student population attended the Catholic retreat at Easter, 1914.⁴⁵ The revival is also evident in a great increase in church building as, without state control, the Church was free to respond to the population increase in cities such as Paris.⁴⁶ The increase in conversions of intellectuals, such as Charles Péguy (1873-1914) and Ernest Psichari (1883-1914), the grandson of Ernest Renan, also

⁴² Ibid, p. 649.

⁴³ Larkin, *French History Since Napoleon*, p. 148.

⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 168.

⁴⁵ McLeod, *Secularisation in Western Europe*, p. 214.

⁴⁶ Roger Aubert, *The Christian Centuries: The Church in a Secularized Society*, vol. 5, (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1978), p. 98. Aubert has observed that ‘More churches were built in Paris between 1906 and 1914 than through the entire century under the Concordat.’

would have had considerable impact within Maritain's world before 1914, and would have promoted a confidence about the future. By the 1940s and 1950s, the renewed vigour in the Church would be revealed in an increase of 26 per cent in the number of religious priests, between 1948 and 1958.⁴⁷

Thus, by the 1950s, there were good grounds for optimism about the modern world and modern culture, especially in the immediate post-war period prior to the advent of the youth culture of the 1960s.⁴⁸ After 1945, as the old anti-clericalism diminished, many in the Church saw the rise of the Christian Democratic parties as the new and perhaps long-term solution to the Church's rôle in the modern world. Italy and Germany were prosperous and stable under Christian Democratic governments which were sympathetic to the Church, and France had a Catholic President when the Vatican Council began in 1962. Also, many of the leading bishops and theologians associated with the Council were from Germany and France, where cultural trends (including higher divorce rates and the teenage rock culture) were not as evident as in Britain and the USA.⁴⁹ Even in the 1980s, John Ardagh, in his book, *The New France*, noted stronger familial ties within France than in other countries such as England.⁵⁰ In providing a greater sense of continuity with the past, this orientation to the family assisted in the resiliency of a Catholic culture.

However, instead of indicating that changes were needed to Catholic culture to speed up a *rapprochement* with modern culture, these positive trends actually revealed the continued

⁴⁷ Ibid, pp. 289-292.

⁴⁸ It can be argued that within the English-speaking countries such as Australia and the USA, political conservatism hid the fact that developments in popular culture were already dissolving many cultural and social traditions.

⁴⁹ Tosco R. Fyvel, *The Insecure Offenders: Rebellious Youth in the Welfare State*, (London: Chatto and Windus, 1961), pp. 138-144. Fyvel in this book on post-1945 societal changes had observed how family-orientated cultures in Germany, Italy and France held out longer against the increase in juvenile crime that occurred in the USA and Britain.

⁵⁰ John Ardagh, *The New France*, (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1973), p. 348.

strength and resilience of the previous post-Tridentine synthesis. Furthermore, the detachment and indifference to the past evident in modern culture meant that this older culture was often ignored and undermined, rather than considered as providing a range of useful theological and anthropological insights for both catechists and educationalists.

The Church also appeared to be doing well with regard to the modern liberal culture that characterized the USA. Maritain would have observed apparently positive trends in America during and after the Second World War. The marginalization of the Church within society seemed to be coming to an end with the increase in high profile converts, such as Clare Booth Luce, wife of the founder of a major publishing empire, Thomas Merton, who went on to become a Cistercian monk, and the best-selling author, Frances Parkinson Keyes. It is also likely that movies such as *The Bells of St Mary* and *Song of Bernadette* were changing popular perceptions of Catholicism. Furthermore, a higher Catholic birth rate, a growth in vocations to the priesthood and religious life, and the political success of the Kennedy family seemed to herald a new beginning for Catholicism in America. In the 1950s the Church and society in general had yet to face the changes in accepted mores engendered by the advent of the contraceptive pill and by the subsequent sexual and cultural revolutions. Also, the apparently benign nature of liberal capitalism could be contrasted with the threat of totalitarianism, such as Communism after 1917 and Nazism from 1933. These factors no doubt encouraged many of the pre-1960s generation to believe that modern culture was not a major problem, nor that it presented any major obstacle for the Church's traditional focus on the salvation of the individual soul, or its broader concern of forming a society based upon Christian values. However, both Rowland and Nichols point out that since the 1970s, and especially following the commencement of the pontificate of John Paul II in 1978, the former optimistic view of modern culture has been overtaken by a much more

realistic critique of the effects of this culture on the possibilities for the flourishing of the Catholic faith.⁵¹

The limitations of various historical schools

However, attempts to use an historical perspective have been hampered by the deficiencies in the predominant schools of history. History writing in the nineteenth century came to be characterized by a focus on nationalistic histories and by the historicist emphasis on the uniqueness of individual national groupings, which was particularly evident within Germany. Thus, Schorske observes that by the nineteenth century, history had superseded philosophy's rôle as the major intellectual force within society.⁵² However, Motzkin notes that during the early nineteenth century, the Church would reject one aspect of this history associated with Traditionalism, because of a concern that it reflected ultimately an historical account from 'outside' that was anti-Papal and which did not present an apocalyptic account associated with Christianity.⁵³ This rejection may explain why attempts at a retrieval of history by writers of the Tübingen School, such as Johann Mohler, did not have a broad impact within the Church.⁵⁴

In the early part of the twentieth century the crisis of the modernist heresy led to a suspicion that history could be used to undermine theology and dogma.⁵⁵ At the same time the prominent Catholic scholar, Maurice Blondel (1861-1949), critically examined the work of Alfred Loisy (1857-1940).⁵⁶ Blondel seemed to take a position between pure neo-scholasticism and the historicists (who might weaken the concept of truth and dogma), by observing that, whilst

⁵¹ Rowland, *CTT*, p. 35.

⁵² Carl E. Schorske, *Thinking with History: Explorations in the Passage to Modernism*, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998), p. 4.

⁵³ Motzkin, *Time and Transcendence*, p. 227.

⁵⁴ Voderholzer, "Dogma and History", *Communio*, pp. 648-671.

⁵⁵ McCool, *Nineteenth Century Scholasticism*, p. 248.

⁵⁶ Loisy had set out to counter the work of the liberal Protestant Adolph von Harnack.

historical knowledge could not be ignored, a sole focus on the historical and an accompanying criticism of dogma risked the ‘philosophical’ error of an inappropriate use of the historical method.⁵⁷

Whilst Germany had been at the forefront of the development of nationalistic histories in the nineteenth century, within France more stridently nationalistic views were evident from the early years of the twentieth century. Thus, whilst Jacques Bainville (1879-1936), one of the most popular historians in the inter-war period, emphasized the intrinsic merit of the cultural values of Western civilization, which were necessary to stop society plunging into an era of barbarism, he did so from a French nationalistic perspective.⁵⁸ Bainville’s work continues to have a contemporary resonance because of his assessment that the Revolution had been a national disaster for France and was the reason for its decline from its earlier position of pre-eminence.⁵⁹ This view was later to be emphasized by the revisionist scholars during the 1980s.

Bainville drew his inspiration from Charles Maurras (1868-1952), who, at the beginning of the twentieth century, founded the royalist and nationalist movement, *Action Française*. Maurras wanted to base this movement on the sound scientific and positivistic foundations associated with the philosopher, Auguste Comte (1798-1857), which contrasted with the romantic and ‘sentimental’ royalists associated with Chateaubriand and the time of the Bourbon Restoration.⁶⁰ However, an emphasis in his work on the period of the absolutist national monarchy as providing the ideal socio-political framework for France, and a lack of recognition of the Dawsonian notion of Europe as a commonwealth of peoples sharing a common spiritual tradition, meant that his

⁵⁷ Voderholzer, “Dogma and History”, *Communio*, p. 654.

⁵⁸ William Keylor, *Jacques Bainville and the Renaissance of Royalist History in Twentieth Century France*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979), p. xvi.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, p. xx.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, p. xxv.

views could not provide the missing historical perspective for Catholic philosophers such as Maritain.⁶¹ The underlying assumptions of these nationalistic and liberal histories meant that many in the Church perceived an historical focus as one being prone to relativism. Thus, McIntire has identified history as a problem because of concerns around such issues as relativity, the constancy of truth, and the continuity of ancient traditions.⁶²

The fact that history seemed to be less of a problem in Protestant countries was only a temporary phenomena. Motzkin has observed that in Protestant lands the earlier separation of the religious and secular orders suggested that nineteenth-century Protestants might be able to accommodate to secular culture. He also argued that whilst no explicitly anti-religious secularization developed in Protestant lands, the policy of appeasement of secularism resulted in the implosion of Protestantism's internal religious basis.⁶³ This helps to explain why the seemingly comfortable position of Protestantism in much of Protestant Europe in the nineteenth century was challenged during the twentieth century, as countries such as Sweden, Denmark and England became increasingly secularized.

In particular, a sole focus on philosophical understandings meant that scholars such as Maritain did not develop a cultural and historical critique of modern culture. Furthermore, the dominance of nationalistic histories, in contrast to those focusing on the crucial importance of Christianity in the formation and unity of European culture, left Maritain without the historical and cultural framework to understand the development of modern liberal culture as a truncation of the Christian tradition.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² C.T. McIntire, *God, History and Historians: Modern Christian Views of History*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 7.

⁶³ Ibid, p. 189.

The response of accommodationist approaches

Unfortunately, for many educationalists and pastoralists the need for a broader understanding of cultural and historical factors, often disregarded in a sole focus on philosophy, would not be met by a renewed appreciation of the Dawsonian perspective, but by confused attempts at an accommodation with modern culture. Indeed, the lack of a framework for analysing culture and history can explain why accommodationist approaches became so prevalent in the decades following 1960. One of these approaches was the perceived need for the Church to accept the legitimate autonomy of the secular world in a number of spheres and to approach this secular world as representing a second *praeparatio evangelii*, in the manner of the classical world. This required that the apparent hostility between the Church and the world which was said to typify the Tridentine Church, could now be replaced by an acceptance of the neutrality of the modern world. As well, after 1926 and the Vatican condemnation of *Action Française*, for Maritain and many other French Catholic intellectuals, it seemed that the choice was between the monarchist and nationalist right-wing groups and an openness to liberal democracy on the American model. An emphasis on political solutions to the Church's difficulties may also have been characteristically French, given its tradition of a strong centralized state since at least the time of Richelieu and the first Bourbons.

In recent decades, one of the most influential groups in this debate based its thought on the work of German theologian, Karl Rahner (1904-1984), and the group has become known as the Transcendental Thomists. Rahner has had a major impact on theological trends in the post-Vatican II era, especially through such concepts as 'anonymous Christianity' and his work on the relationship between grace and nature. The manner in which these themes have developed has contributed to a greater openness to modern cultural trends. As modern culture is now a 'given', the Church can abandon those aspects of its life which are mere reflections of a 'dead' past and

assimilate itself to the modern cultural milieu. Thus, the term *aggiornamento* came to be interpreted as meaning accommodation. Rowland has suggested this occurred because:

The idea that *aggiornamento* might mean an updating or development of theological resources to provide a coherent critique of the culture of modernity, rather than simple accommodation to it— never succeeded in influencing the *Zeitgeist* of the Council, as the accommodationist interpretation did.⁶⁴

According to David Schindler, part of the solution to this problem is to read *Gaudium et Spes*, one of the influential documents from the Second Vatican Council dealing with the modern world, in the light of a key paragraph that is Christocentric in its emphasis.⁶⁵ If this is done, then there can be a clearer distinction between ‘autonomy’ in an ontological sense, and that in a juridical sense.⁶⁶ The misunderstanding of the term ‘autonomy’ within English-speaking countries, where there was no memory of the forms of a Catholic culture and even a sense of cultural inferiority about this culture, meant that a certain interpretation of *Gaudium et Spes*, which emphasized accommodation, would become the predominant *zeitgeist*. However, continued problems associated with these pastoral and catechetical approaches have led to a reappraisal of the post-1960s *zeitgeist* of accommodation to the surrounding culture. In particular, *aggiornamento* has sought to explain traditional doctrine in modern idioms and is allied to a more optimistic view of the modern world. Rowland has also observed that the influence of this view on liturgical and catechetical strategies in the decades following the Council is the reason for some of the difficulties faced by the Church in the West.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Rowland, *CTT*, p. 19.

⁶⁵ Ibid, p. 37.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid, p. 16.

III) History and Culture in the debate between Whig Thomism and the *Communio* school

In the contemporary period the debate about history, culture and the Church's relationship with modern culture has been highlighted by the difference between two major schools. The differences between these schools have been more pronounced since the beginning of the Second Iraq War, which reflects deep divisions about culture and history. As previously mentioned these two groups are Whig Thomism, which represents a development of Jacques Maritain's thought, and the *Communio* school, which draws upon the earlier scholarship of the *nouvelle théologie* group and scholars such as de Lubac and von Balthasar.

Whig Thomism refers to the ideas of a group of Catholic scholars, such as George Weigel and Robert Royal, who see themselves as representing an orthodox and pro-Papal position, albeit one which seeks to synthesize elements of the Liberal and classical Thomist traditions. The term Whig Thomism broadly reflects their intellectual heritage in drawing from neo-Thomist thought and in attempting a broad synthesis with a Liberal democratic model associated with the USA. Indeed, neo-Thomist philosophers such as Jacques Maritain believed that since the disintegration of the Middle Ages, American civilization was the focus towards which all really progressive energies at work in history had been tending.⁶⁸ The compatibility of Catholicism with American democracy was argued by John Courtney Murray in his book, *We Hold These Truths*, published the same year as John Kennedy's election to the presidency in 1963. This compatibility had come about because of an American consensus on government which could be traced back to the medieval natural law tradition.⁶⁹ Michael Baxter has observed that Murray's view gained the near

⁶⁸ Jacques Maritain, *Reflections on America*, (New York: Garden City, 1964), pp. 110-111, cited in Joseph Amato, *Mounier and Maritain: A French Catholic Understanding of the Modern World*, (Alabama: The University of Alabama Press, 1975), p. 156.

⁶⁹ Michael J. Baxter, "John Courtney Murray", in *The Blackwell Companion to Political Theology*, eds. Peter Scott and William T. Cavanaugh, (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), p. 152.

universal support of Catholic intellectuals and made its way into the deliberations of the Second Vatican Council.⁷⁰

However, Baxter observes that this compatibility has become increasingly implausible within an American society characterized by unlimited access to abortion, high divorce rates and a deterioration in public discourse and a sense of the common good.⁷¹ In contrast to the argument for compatibility, the *Communio* scholar Schindler has stated that America's true philosophic underpinning is a type of Enlightenment liberalism. Furthermore, he quotes Alasdair MacIntyre, who insists that the culture of America is essentially Liberal, and that the only choice is between conservative liberals, liberal liberals and progressive liberals.⁷² In the same article, in *The Catholic World Report*, Schindler provides a critique of the Whig Thomist attempt at a *rapprochement* with America's liberal tradition, and although acknowledging that American liberalism with its mixture of Calvinism and Scottish Enlightenment thought is different from the atheistic liberalism of continental Europe, Schindler insists that it still stands in tension with Papal teaching.⁷³ For writers such as Rowland the *rapprochement* envisaged by Whig Thomism presents a problem if the 'pedigrees' of ideas matter, and particularly if these ideas are ontologically opposed to the Catholic concept of the human person and human society.⁷⁴ Thus, in particular, whilst the Church is acutely aware of the challenges facing Catholicism in the older Catholic heartlands such as southern and western Germany, and France and Italy, there needs to be further analyses of the significant challenges facing Catholics living within a traditionally Protestant culture.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² David Schindler, "Interview", *Catholic World Report*, (October 1994), p. 48.

⁷³ Ibid, p. 43.

⁷⁴ Rowland, *CTT*, p. 165.

The divisions within the West were highlighted by an article in the English magazine, *The Spectator*, in 2003.⁷⁵ The author, Gerald Warner, suggested that part of the division between the Papacy and the U.S. government over Iraq could be explained in religious and cultural terms. Warner suggested that Whig Thomists Michael Novak and Robert Royal would have more understanding of the Vatican disapproval of the American-led invasion if they understood these vital cultural factors. Furthermore, Warner believes that the alliance between the Vatican and the USA could only be understood in terms of their common concern about the threat of communism between 1917 and 1989. Thus, the close working relationship between the Polish John Paul II and the neo-conservative Reagan administration was always bound to become weaker after the fall of Communism in Eastern Europe in 1989. Suggesting that the Church would have more sympathy with traditional Islamic societies than with the secularized West, Warner observes that the alternative to Islamic culture tends to mean, “McDonald’s, burger bars, rap music, sexual license and individualism demolishing family life...”⁷⁶

Rowland has asserted that an inability to critique the forms and effect of American mass culture reflects some confusion about the concept of the autonomy of culture.⁷⁷ She has observed that this concept has frequently been interpreted as meaning not only the independence of secular undertakings from direct ecclesiastical governance, but also as a denial that an ontology underlies all thought and institutions.⁷⁸ Rowland points out that although an autonomous secular order can be justified if it is understood as meaning independence from ecclesiastical governance in a range of spheres, it should not imply an ontological independence from religious and ethical understandings.⁷⁹ Similarly, Glenn Olsen insists that with regard to philosophy and history, the

⁷⁵ Gerald Warner, *The Spectator*, (15 March, 2003), p. 23.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Rowland, *CTT*, p. 31.

⁷⁸ Rowland, *CTT*, p. 37.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

Enlightenment concept of the neutrality of these areas fails to take account of the fact that all thought starts with a prior belief about reality.⁸⁰ In particular, Rowland observes that the concept of ‘autonomy of the secular’ is a philosophically and theologically complex term, which can lead to an extrinicism with regard to the nature and grace relationship and foster the view that theology needs to be relevant to the time.⁸¹ She argues that such views are counter-productive in that they marginalize the prophetic mission of the Church.⁸²

Thus, both Rowland and Nichols perceive that the last thirty years have witnessed basic misunderstandings about the importance of culture in relationship to the Church. In *Culture and the Thomist Tradition after Vatican II*, Rowland has pointed out that modernity is itself a specific cultural formation and does not simply mean what is contemporary, but that it has definite theological and philosophical understandings.⁸³ In this respect, she suggests that modernity is not a *praeparatio evangelii*, as was the classical world, but in contrast is actually a hostile medium for the flourishing of a Christian culture.⁸⁴ Thus, for the Church to continue its work of evangelization there is a need to address the dichotomy between a Christian and a modern culture. Her view is that an inability, or unwillingness to examine this fundamental dichotomy has led to a widespread loss of faith, both in Europe and in the European cultures such as Canada, the USA and Australia.⁸⁵

Rowland has also observed that the modern emphasis on activity rather than on contemplation draws from differing emphases in the Catholic and Protestant traditions. She

⁸⁰ Glenn Olsen, “Christian philosophy Christian history: parallel ideas?” in *Eternity in Time*, eds. Caldecott and Morrill, p. 140.

⁸¹ Rowland, *CTT*, p. 94.

⁸² Ibid, p. 32.

⁸³ Ibid, p. 18.

⁸⁴ Ibid, p. 159.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

maintains that an over-emphasis on activity, which is characteristic of modern culture, stands in contrast to Catholicism's understanding of the importance of contemplation.⁸⁶ Rowland also cites the Apostolic Letter on Americanism, *Testem benevolentiae*, from Pope Leo XIII to Cardinal Gibbons, in 1889, and notes the Pope's concern about a tendency to emphasise the natural virtues and to privatise the supernatural ones.⁸⁷ Rowland argues that these tendencies reflect differing approaches to the relationship between nature and grace, and between Catholicism and Protestantism.⁸⁸ A sole focus, therefore, on the natural virtues entails a danger that Catholic assimilation to the mainstream of American life will result in a decline in those characteristics of Catholic culture which have distinguished it from the broader Protestant society. As regards this development in Western society, Dawson's work provides an important historical perspective. He maintained that Western civilization since the Renaissance and the Reformation had separated itself from all dependence upon, or contact with, the East, and instead had focused on the specifically Occidental characteristics of extroversion and material organization which had marked the Graeco-Roman world.⁸⁹

Rowland goes on to suggest that at the very least, some proponents of the Whig Thomism project have continued to exhibit a confusion about the basis and guiding principles of modern American culture. In drawing on Michael Novak's statement that democratic capitalism gives rise to not only a new theology, but a new type of religion, Rowland observes that both Novak and the Communitio scholar David Schindler are in agreement about this precise point.⁹⁰ Both would

⁸⁶ Ibid, p. 105.

⁸⁷ Ibid, p. 106.

⁸⁸ Aidan Nichols believes that some of this strong emphasis on technique and activity rather than contemplation in modern culture, reflects the underlying logic of the Enlightenment. In "Foreword", to *CTT*, by Rowland, p. xiii.

⁸⁹ Christopher Dawson, "The Revolt of the East and the Catholic Tradition", in *The Dublin Review*, vol. 183, no. 366, (July 1928), pp. 1-14.

⁹⁰ Rowland, *CTT*, p. 103.

concur that the liberal democratic system of America implies an ethos, or way of life, but the difference is that Schindler perceives this ‘new type of religion’ to be anti-Catholic.⁹¹

Furthermore, Rowland believes that much of the difficulty stems from the fact that the Thomist tradition had not fully developed a theological hermeneutic of culture, which resulted in concepts such as ‘the autonomy of the secular’ becoming an ‘explosive problematic’ for the Church in the years following the Second Vatican Council.⁹² Rowland also contends that this failure relates to those men such as Charles de Montalbert (1810-1870) in France, and Baron John Acton (1834-1902), in England, who considered that it was possible to reconcile the Liberal and Thomist traditions and the manner in which this theme was continued during the twentieth century by prominent Catholics such as Jacques Maritain.⁹³ Rowland observes that as St Thomas wrote at a time when all the arts, the working week, the holidays and the laws were based on Christianity, the rôle of culture did not have to be specifically addressed.⁹⁴ However, by the beginning of the twenty-first century, large numbers of people in the West have forgotten that Christendom really did exist and that the institutions of society reflect a complex mixture of religious and secularist versions of reality.⁹⁵ In contrast to the old idea of Christendom, by the 1940s Maritain was proposing the building of a ‘New Christendom’, which would not be based on the old idea of the confessional state, but on political democracy and Christian inspiration.⁹⁶ However, William Cavanaugh has argued that Maritain has failed to understand that this desacralized modern state, on which the New Christendom would be based, is not the natural outcome of a pure Christian ideal.⁹⁷ Rather, it is a result of the Enlightenment’s explicit rejection

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid, p. 161.

⁹³ Ibid, p. 16.

⁹⁴ Ibid, p. 1.

⁹⁵ Ibid, p. 2.

⁹⁶ Trower, *The Catholic Church and the Counter-Faith*, p. 119.

⁹⁷ Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist*, p. 190.

of Christianity and a reflection of the rising nation states' ambitions for power.⁹⁸ Furthermore, Cavanaugh maintains that the dualism involved in Maritain's dualism of the temporal and spiritual orders serves to preclude the supernatural virtues from any transformative effect in history, and to banish the Gospel from any explicit insertion into public discourse.⁹⁹

Rowland has proposed that Whig Thomism begin to develop theories of culture and that in any attempt to engage with the rival liberal and postmodern traditions, the followers of the Thomist tradition need to identify their own beliefs about the culture of modernity and its particular conception of rationality.¹⁰⁰ As well, since the Second Vatican Council, one of the *ressourcement* group's major concerns about the Western world has been that because of its separation of religion from culture and ultimately, the division of grace from nature, there has developed the empty secularism and materialism of the twentieth century. Dawson's historical insights and understandings provide crucial and important additions to these cultural tasks.

IV) Understanding the characteristics of modern culture as based on a breach with Catholic history and tradition

Dawson understood the modern world as a secularized world which has both discarded Christianity because it is perceived as being part of the dead past, and which has lost the sense of the spiritual values of the Christian tradition.¹⁰¹ In particular, Dawson's belief that modernity is in denial about its own past and the current scholarship of key thinkers of the *Communio* school assist in the identification of features of modern culture. These include that modern culture is

⁹⁸ Ibid, p. 191.

⁹⁹ Ibid, pp. 183-187. Cardinal George Pell has also maintained that Catholics and Christians have a right to use religious language when arguing in the public domain. In *God and Caesar: Selected Essays on Religion, Politics and Society*, ed. Michael Casey, (Victoria: Connor Court, 2007), pp. 166-167.

¹⁰⁰ Rowland, *CTT*, p. 2.

¹⁰¹ Christopher Dawson, *The Judgement of the Nations*, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1943), p. 90. (hereafter *JN*). (Another Dawson view on secularism was that, "It is religious emotion divorced from religious belief." Christopher Dawson, "Prevision in Religion", cited in "Introduction", to *DWH*, p. xix.

actually a truncation and reduction of the classical Christian view of society and the human person; that modern culture represents an alternative belief system; and that, therefore, modern culture is not neutral with regard to Christianity.

Modern culture as a truncation and reduction of the classical Christian view on society and the human person

Scholars such as Dawson have insisted that the attempt to use and secularize Christian ideas and the denial of the spiritual element have meant that the culture of the modern world is cramped and darkened.¹⁰² Furthermore, Dawson argued for the importance of religion in the broader culture when he wrote that the loss of an historic religion caused a society to lose its principle of inner cohesion. Thus, this loss was a sign that the society was actually in a process of dissolution.¹⁰³ The American writer, George Rutler, has also observed that modernity, through its denial of God, has led to a society that is characterized by a sense of alienation both in time and space.¹⁰⁴

Rowland has continued this theme of secularization as being a distortion of society's original meaning and has summarized the positions of a number of theorists, including William Cavanaugh.¹⁰⁵ Cavanaugh has argued that modernity is actually a secular parody of classical Christian culture.¹⁰⁶ The truncated aspect of modern culture is also evident in Romano Guardini's assertion that modern culture is inherently unstable and therefore secularism will fail as it uses up the spiritual capital that is necessary for its own existence. He argued that when this happens, the

¹⁰² Dawson, "What is a Christian Civilization", *CEC*, p. 31.

¹⁰³ Dawson, "Prevision in Religion", in *DWH*, p. 105.

¹⁰⁴ George Rutler, *Beyond Modernity: Reflections of a Post-Modern Catholic*, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987), p. 35.

¹⁰⁵ Rowland, *CTT*, p. 13.

¹⁰⁶ William T. Cavanaugh, "The City: Beyond Secular Parodies", in *Radical Orthodoxy: A New Theology*, eds. John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock and Graham Ward, (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 182.

unbeliever will no longer derive any benefit from the values of the very Christian Revelation that he seeks to deny.¹⁰⁷ Complementing Dawson's perspective, Guardini observes that this denial of the religious foundation will lead to the breakdown of the engine or very basis of society.¹⁰⁸ Similarly, John Paul II described the destructive or negative effects of secularization as leading to 'a culture of death', and he further observed that:

The reduction inherent in the Enlightenment view of man, of 'man in the world', to the dimensions of an absolute immanence of man in relation to the world, ushers in not only Nietzsche's issue of the death of God, but the prospect of the death of man.¹⁰⁹

The understanding that religion is not only necessary for the individual, but necessary for society's very survival contrasts with the emphasis on the past wrongdoings of Christians.¹¹⁰ When this focus becomes the predominant emphasis in Catholic education, it obscures the fact that Christianity is crucial to the survival of Western culture.¹¹¹ This focus, when presented within a framework which considers culture either unimportant or simply 'a given', has further undermined belief and practice.

The reductionist aspect of modern culture is also evident in the way in which universal values have been applied across different cultural settings. Universal values, when interpreted within the limitations of Enlightenment thought, can be characterised by a belief that features of Western culture such as liberal democracy and its particular parliamentary forms can be readily transposed to other cultures. This view, which has often been vigorously expounded by the USA,

¹⁰⁷ Romano Guardini, *The End of the Modern World*, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1957), p. 124.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, p. 119.

¹⁰⁹ John Paul II, "Speech to scholars of Lublin University", *Christian Life in Poland*, (November 1987), cited in Rowland, *CTT*, p. 39.

¹¹⁰ Pera and Ratzinger, *Without Roots*, p. 48. (Pera says there is a risk of sending mixed signals in continual apologies for wrongdoings of the past).

¹¹¹ Russell Hittinger, when discussing the work of Hume has observed that, "He saw that there is no better way to turn men's minds against Christianity than to suggest that it has played either an insignificant or harmful rôle in history and culture." In "The Two Cities and the Modern World: A Dawsonian Assessment", *Modern Age*, 28; 2/3, (Spring/Summer 1984) p. 193.

the nation most clearly founded on Enlightenment principles, explains the neo-conservative position on the Iraq war of 2003.

Some interpretations of the Second Vatican Council understood this liberal democratic framework of values as creating a cultural milieu which would provide the same support for evangelization as had the classical world of the first centuries in the Christian era.¹¹² During the 1940s and the 1950s, the universal values approach would tend to become characteristic of a strand of thought within neo-Thomism and would influence Jacques Maritain's involvement with a key twentieth-century document, the 1948 United Nation's *Declaration of Human Rights*. His own views had been shaped by the Vatican condemnation of *Action Française*, in 1926, and also by the collaboration of Vichy France with Nazi Germany during World War II. Conservative history in France became associated with a particular nationalistic perspective exemplified by Jacques Bainville. His model period of history was not medieval Christendom, but the era of the absolutist Bourbon monarchies in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and of a Gallican Church and the 'balance-of-power' politics associated with the post-1648 settlement which followed the Treaty of Westphalia.¹¹³ Bainville's predominant nationalistic focus reflected political developments in the inter-war period, which meant, according to Dawson, that the parties of the 'right' that espoused loyalty to the traditions of the past were those most bound by national particularism and vested economic interests.¹¹⁴

Thus, there was an underdevelopment of a historiography within France which acknowledged the broader spiritual and cultural factors in European Christendom. This lacuna, and Maritain's own focus on philosophy, meant he became more open to the world in his writings

¹¹² Rowland, *CTT*, p. 159.

¹¹³ Keylor, *Jacques Bainville and the Renaissance of Royalist History*, p. 57.

¹¹⁴ Dawson, *PR*, p. 107.

and views.¹¹⁵ In contrast, Christopher Dawson was aware of the importance of both universal values associated with natural law and of historical and cultural factors in understanding the modern world.¹¹⁶ Dawson's views provide a moderate position in regard to the debate about respect for particular cultures. The historicist school of thought associated with German figures such as Herder has criticized missionaries for not taking into account the specific framework of different cultures.¹¹⁷ However, Nichols has observed that whilst a sole emphasis on Enlightenment universalism can result in rationalism and an autonomous view of the self, historicism, which is a product of the Romantic era, can lead to an exclusive focus on the particular rather than the universal.¹¹⁸ The fact that these secularizing processes were well under way before 1960, but had not reached their apotheosis, may explain some of the naïve pastoral and catechetical experiments of that decade.¹¹⁹

Modern culture as an alternative belief system

The second characteristic of modern culture relates to the understanding of modern culture as an alternative ideology represented in such beliefs as Progress, Nationalism, Nazism and Marxism. This concept of an alternative ideology is expressed in René Rémond's assertion that the principles of 1789 represented a different and contradictory Messianism to Christianity.¹²⁰ Gabriel Motzkin has suggested that the very concept of a perfect human society, or the concept of Progress, contradicts Christian beliefs. In particular, the Christian belief on original sin and its eschatological understanding of human history meant that the Church saw that the imperfect accord between self, society and nature was only a temporary stage before people entered into eternal life.¹²¹ Motzkin

¹¹⁵ Amato, *A French Catholic Understanding of the Modern World*, p. 75.

¹¹⁶ Dawson, *JN*, p. 96.

¹¹⁷ Rowland, *CTT*, p. 23.

¹¹⁸ Nichols, *Christendom Awake*, p. 16.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 13.

¹²⁰ René Rémond, *Religion and Society in Modern Europe*, trans. Antonia Nevill, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), p. 114.

¹²¹ Motzkin, *Time and Transcendence*, p. 145.

also observes that the Church would find it difficult to accept the paradoxical anti-egalitarianism within the theory of Progress, which suggests that human beings today are somehow more superior to those at the time of Christ.¹²²

Dawson's early views of modern culture were described in *Progress and Religion*, written in 1929. In particular, he stated that the theory of Progress is the working faith of the modern world.¹²³ Given the need for every culture to have a religion to survive, he saw this theory as providing a substitute religion to Christianity.¹²⁴ Dawson also took the view that Progress had drawn many features from religion and was, in fact, a form of secularised Christianity. Thus, the theory of Progress was an alternative belief system, which attempted to use certain aspects of Christian thought, but to deny its spiritual essence. Dawson developed this theme further in *Religion and the Modern State*, when he observed that typically Western ideals such as the supremacy of law and the moral rights of the individual were not the inventions of modern democracy, but products of the Christian tradition.¹²⁵ He saw that one of the major flaws of the Enlightenment view of Progress was the attempt to ignore this religious element and its relationship with the broader society.¹²⁶ However, Dawson believed that secularisation was only a transitory phase in human history and that Christianity and religion would be likely to grow stronger in the future.¹²⁷

¹²² Ibid, p. 193.

¹²³ Dawson, *PR*, p. 15.

¹²⁴ Ernst Troeltsch, in writing before the First World War, asserted that one of the characteristics of the modern world is its belief in progress and that, "The old cosmic conceptions dominated by the Fall, the Redemption of the world, and the final Judgment have fallen away." Ernst Troeltsch, in *Protestantism and Progress: A Historical Study of the Relation of Protestantism to the Modern World*, trans. W. Montgomery, (Boston: B.D. Beacon Press, 1966), p. 25.

¹²⁵ Dawson, *RMS*, p. 140.

¹²⁶ Ibid, p. 81.

¹²⁷ Dawson, "The Modern Dilemma", *CEC*, p. 123. Dawson also wrote "I would even suggest that the return to religion promises to be one of the dominant characteristics of the coming age." p. 123.

Whilst World War I may have diminished the belief in a predetermined movement of human improvement, the influence of the idea of Progress continued to impact on the twentieth century. Rosenberg observes the impact of the War in radicalizing and dehumanizing Progress, as well as providing it with increasingly destructive weapons. He also suggests that ultimately, the establishment of both Fascism and Communism could be traced back to Rousseau or Marx, and that both World War II and the Cold War represented continuing struggles against radical, millennial forces within Western society.¹²⁸ Similarly, J. L. Talmon, writing in the early 1950s had suggested that Rousseau, through the promotion of such concepts as the ‘general will’, was instrumental in the development of totalitarianism in the West.¹²⁹ However, even earlier, in the late 1930s, Dawson had observed that both totalitarian dictatorships and continental democracy were the twin children of the Rousseau-inspired French Revolution.¹³⁰ Furthermore, he argued that the continental democratic concept of the ‘general will’, which emphasized equality and the sovereignty of the people, could be contrasted with the freedom and toleration of minorities which characterized the English liberal and aristocratic democratic tradition.¹³¹

Besides the ideal of Progress, another alternative belief system was offered by Nationalism, and in the aftermath of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars, this was to be one of the most characteristic and destructive features of nineteenth-century Europe. The theme of the quasi-religious rôle played by Nationalism was one developed both by Dawson and by one of his contemporaries, Arnold Toynbee. The parallel theme of a need in the human person for a belief system characterized the work of some of the theologians associated with the *nouvelle théologie* group, such as Danielou. Similarly, Motzkin observes that in spite of the development of

¹²⁸ Rosenberg, “The Heritage of a Century”, in *Enlightenment and Genocide*, eds. Kaye and Strath, p. 247.

¹²⁹ J.L.Talmon, *The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy*, (London: Secker and Warburg, 1966), (First Published 1952), p. 43.

¹³⁰ Christopher Dawson, *Beyond Politics*, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1939), pp. 40-41, pp. 70-71. (hereafter *BP*).

¹³¹ *Ibid*, p. 41.

secularization, the human need for transcendence, or totality, did not simply disappear, but began to assume different forms, which were based on different assumptions about the meaning and nature of life.¹³² The different assumptions about the human condition are also dealt with in the work of the late Philip Rieff, who argued that some people are what he terms ‘sacred messengers’; those who are open to the transcendent, in contrast to the ‘world’ persons who are limited to a solely immanent view of reality.¹³³ Also, addressing the need for a belief system, the contemporary historian, Michael Burleigh, has asked whether, in an age of increasing disbelief or doubt, mass political movements such as Marxism and Nazism were actually surrogates for traditional religion.¹³⁴ Dawson considered that these modern ideologies were each based on different perceptions of history and that, therefore, this new approach to history was one of the main factors in the secularization of European society.¹³⁵

Modern culture is not neutral in regard to Christianity

Finally, the Dawsonian and the *Communio* scholarship have shown how modern culture has developed in opposition to the historic religion of the West, Christianity. This third major characteristic of modern culture has resulted in a privatization of religion which has meant that there is, ultimately, no rôle for religion within the public domain. Alongside this, there has developed a perception of religious beliefs and understandings as that of posing a threat to the dominant secular paradigm.¹³⁶ Therefore, scholars such as Nichols have identified a non-neutrality towards religion in modern culture because of the differing, and fundamental, metaphysical

¹³² Motzkin, *Time and Transcendence*, p. 8.

¹³³ Philip Reiff, *Sacred Order, Social Order: My Life Among the Deathworks, Illustrations of the Aesthetics of Authority*, vol. 1, General Editor Kenneth S. Piver, (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006), p. 174.

¹³⁴ Michael Burleigh, *Earthly Powers: Religion and Politics in Europe from the French Revolution to the Great War*, (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 2005), p. 10.

¹³⁵ Dawson, “The Christian View of History”, in *DWH*, p. 257.

¹³⁶ Dawson, “What is Christian Civilization”, in *CEC*, p. 28.

assumptions about human nature and about the ‘telos’ of human society.¹³⁷ Thus, secularism has not offered freedom from any particular faith and moral system, but rather, has simply built a new common life, on the basis of a new and alternative system.¹³⁸

Nichols has further developed this understanding by pointing out that every practice will have a kind of onto-logic and that, in the modern world, if it does not bear the form of love and therefore be Trinitarian, then it will, in contrast, be mechanistic and controlling.¹³⁹ As popular interpretations of the term, ‘autonomy of the secular’, have failed to distinguish between ‘autonomy in the ontological sense’ and ‘autonomy from ecclesiastical governance’, Rowland argues that there has been no theological framework for understanding the different presuppositions that underlie modern cultures and the manner in which they are destructive of the original Christian synthesis.¹⁴⁰ One area of the debate on the concept of neutrality has been about the meaning of the separation of Church and state, which in recent decades has developed to imply a separation of religion from culture. On this matter, Remi Brague has asserted that the Gospel injunction, ‘render unto Caesar’, should not imply that the authority of God was to be excluded from society and the human domain, and that therefore, there is no need for a reference to ethics within the profane order.¹⁴¹

¹³⁷ L. Bratherton and J. Casson, “Politics in Denial”, *Denios II*, (1997), p. 36, cited in Nichols, *Christendom Awake*, p. 87.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Nichols, “Foreword” to *CTT*, p. xiii.

¹⁴⁰ Rowland, *CTT*, p. 31.

¹⁴¹ Brague, *Eccentric Culture*, p. 162.

Modern culture and denial of the past

These three major characteristics of modern culture are reflections of a rupture with the past.¹⁴² As regards this trend, Dawson's work provides a critical historical perspective on the antecedents of modern culture. Dawson believed that secularization began as a result of the breakdown of European unity during the Reformation period.¹⁴³ He argued that this loss of unity created a neutral territory which gradually expanded till it came to include almost the whole of social life.¹⁴⁴ Further developments in countries such as seventeenth-century France, particularly the conflict over the Abbé de Saint-Cyran and Jansenist theology, were also critical.¹⁴⁵ According to Norman Ravitch, the imprisonment of Saint Cyran occurred because he represented the *dévot* party, which was considered a danger to the nation state through its subordination of politics and dynastic objectives to international Catholic interests.¹⁴⁶ As well, Orest Ranum has identified the disruption engendered by the Saint-Cyran dispute as leading to a breakdown in support for the religious revival by the government and to the dissipation of the force and unity of the religious movement throughout the latter part of the seventeenth century.¹⁴⁷ Dawson's work provides an important addition to the more recent scholarship of the *Communio* school, which has expressed concerns about the way in which theology developed in the same period.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴² Aidan Nichols, "Foreword", to *The Thought of Benedict XVI: An Introduction to the Theology of Joseph Ratzinger*, (London: Burns and Oates, 2005), p. 7. Nichols' understanding of history as 'the great illuminator' is particularly useful when seeking to understand how secularization developed.

¹⁴³ Dawson, "The Secularization of Western Culture", *CEC*, p. 179.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p. 179.

¹⁴⁵ Orest Ranum, *Paris in the Age of Absolutism: An Essay*, (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1968), p. 126. In regard to Jansenism, Dawson notes that, "It would be difficult to exaggerate the extent to which it divided the Christian mind and depressed the Christian spirit. Furthermore, he asserts that in regard to Calvin and Saint-Cyran, the practical effect of their teaching was to erect a barrier between religion and life, which contributed so largely to the progressive secularization of Western culture." Dawson, in "Christian Culture as a Culture of Hope", in *CEC*, p. 52.

¹⁴⁶ Norman Ravitch, *The Catholic Church and the French Nation 1589-1989*, (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 17.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid*, p. 126.

¹⁴⁸ The *Communio* scholar, Peter Henrici, has argued that between the Council of Trent and Vatican II, there existed a specifically modern Catholic theology characterized by a concern for certainty and methods in the spiritual life, and focused on a semi-Pelagian concept of duties. In Peter Henrici, "Modernity and Christianity", in *Communio*, 17 (Summer 1990), p. 150.

In contrast to the situation in France, Dawson believed that the Baroque culture, which developed during the seventeenth century in places such as Austria, Bavaria, Flanders and Quebec, provided the most enduring example of an authentic Christian culture. The resiliency of this culture would be revealed in certain areas, such as the Vendée or in the Tyrol, where, during the French Revolutionary period, Dawson observed that the populace fought desperately for the traditional Catholic order.¹⁴⁹ However, this culture was threatened almost from its beginning by the rise of the absolutist monarchies, and later, by the court-and-salon-fostered Enlightenment philosophers. Eventually this combination of political, cultural and intellectual trends would destroy the Baroque culture.

The importance of the political sphere and the decisive rôle of certain political leaders were particularly evident within France. Thus, in the period after the assassination of the first Bourbon monarch, Henry IV (1553-1610), Cardinal Richelieu (1585-1642) became the classical representative of *raison d'état*. Dawson argued that Richelieu was to be more important than the Swedish king, Gustavus Adolphus, or Oliver Cromwell, in the defeat of the international policy of the Counter-Reformation and in the destruction of Catholic Europe's political unity.¹⁵⁰ These political decisions were paralleled by, and possibly caused, the cultural move away from the Baroque. Furthermore, according to Dawson, this move away from the Baroque at the end of the seventeenth century and the accompanying 'victory' for classicism was intimately connected with the defeat of mysticism, which Henri Bremond referred to as '*la retrait des mystiques*'.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹ Dawson, "Catholicism and the Bourgeois Mind", in *DWH*, p. 220.

¹⁵⁰ Christopher Dawson, "Christianity in a Rationalist World", in *Religion and World History*, (New York: Image Books, 1975), p. 215.

¹⁵¹ Christopher Dawson, *The Gods of Revolution*, (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1972), p. 140. (hereafter *GR*).

As well as identifying the cultural and political factors in the breakdown of the original Christian culture, Dawson also noted the influence of ideas that were espoused by intellectuals, such as John Locke (1632-1704) in England, and René Descartes (1596-1650) in France.¹⁵² Dawson argued that the widespread influence of Lockean empiricism and Cartesian rationality in both France and Britain showed that, in spite of national and political differences, both cultures were reacting against mysticism and religious enthusiasm and, instead, moving towards a purely scientific rationalism.¹⁵³ Finally, Dawson believed that the defeat of the inherently uneconomic Baroque culture by a new commercial and bourgeois society paralleled the way in which Greece had succumbed to Rome's superior organization in the ancient world.¹⁵⁴ The outcome of this process was that the West, without its unifying spiritual factor, would be increasingly unstable.¹⁵⁵ This meant that even the liberal humanitarian and bourgeois culture associated with the nineteenth century was to be a temporary phenomenon before the advent of the mechanized culture of the twentieth century.¹⁵⁶

How much the ethos of individualism, associated with the heroic figure of either the early nineteenth-century Romantic movement or the later Nietzschean thought, contributed to the rise of secularism has also been a matter of debate. Motzkin has argued that the primacy given to the liberation of the individual was more important than other factors, such as science's emancipation of nature from its theological bondage, or society's freedom from the constraints of an inherited religious and political order.¹⁵⁷ However, in contrast, Catholicism, with its tradition of a realist

¹⁵² Christopher Dawson, *Religion and World History*, p. 217.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Dawson, "Catholicism and the Bourgeois Mind", in *DWH*, p. 221.

¹⁵⁵ Dawson, "The Secularization of Western Culture", in *CEC*, p. 179.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Motzkin, *Time and Transcendence*, p. 144.

epistemology, and its theology of the Church, could never accept the subjectivity on which modern secularism was based.¹⁵⁸

The influence of ideas and broad societal trends in fostering a turn away from the past is also evident in the work of Hugh McLeod. He has examined a number of different theories about secularization, including what he terms, 'the march of science', modernization and postmodernity.¹⁵⁹ By 'the march of science', McLeod is referring to a trend, particularly evident in the nineteenth century, whereby an encompassing scientific world view would somehow supersede the need for religious explanations of life. He draws attention to the influence of figures such as Darwin and his scientific theories, groups such as the Social Democrats in Germany, and the secular Republicans in France.¹⁶⁰ However, whereas science was concerned with the growth of particular types of knowledge, McLeod believes that modernization is a broader social trend influenced by the breakdown of the old agrarian society and the rise of an urban and industrialized culture.¹⁶¹ The idea that secularization has occurred because of the relativism fostered by postmodernity suggests that the real changes concerning religion have occurred since the late 1960s and that, prior to that time, evidence is inconclusive about the impact of secularization.¹⁶² In particular, McLeod identifies factors such as the development of a rebellious and hedonistic youth culture after the 1950s, which was strongly influenced by popular music, and the rejection of older models of femininity and their replacement by new ideals of individual self-fulfillment.¹⁶³

¹⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 145.

¹⁵⁹ McLeod, *Secularization in Western Europe*, p. 5.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Ibid, p. 6.

¹⁶² Ibid, p. 7.

¹⁶³ Ibid, p. 8.

The identification of the problems associated with a breach with the past had been apparent in the 1950s in Romano Guardini's assertion that modern culture had made revolution a perpetual institution.¹⁶⁴ In particular, he argued that the loss of the belief in the centrality of the Incarnation raised fresh problems about the relationships between historical facts and the very purpose of human existence.¹⁶⁵ Carl Schorske argues that the turn away from history, which occurred at the beginning of the twentieth century, meant that modern architecture, modern music and modern science have detached themselves from the past in a new autonomous space.¹⁶⁶ Thus, the modern mind increasingly viewed history as a useless project, which no longer provided a continuous nourishing tradition.¹⁶⁷ Similarly, John Thornhill has commented on a twentieth-century trend to disregard the intellectual and spiritual achievements of the past.¹⁶⁸ The importance of an acknowledgement of these achievements is evident in Christopher Lasch's argument that destructive trends evident in the concept of self, of family, and of education have at their base the loss of a sense of historical time and of the sense of continuity with generations in the past and future.¹⁶⁹

This lack of a sense of continuity also reflects modern culture's questioning of the very use and importance of history and memory. In response to this type of thinking, Dawson had written to *The Times*, in 1956, that there was no more sense in asking what is the use of history, than in asking what is the use of memory, and that societies that have no history and memory are barbarous societies.¹⁷⁰ Russello writes that Dawson was acutely aware of the loss of historical

¹⁶⁴ Guardini, *The End of the Modern World*, p. 43.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid, p. 50.

¹⁶⁶ Schorske, *Thinking with History*, p. 4.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ John Thornhill, *Modernity: Christianity's Estranged Child Reconstructed*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2000), p. viii.

¹⁶⁹ Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism*, p. 5.

¹⁷⁰ Scott, *HHW*, p. 171. In this regard, J.C.D. Clarke has written that, "It may indeed be that the leading characteristic of barbarism is not violence or insecurity but historical amnesia, the imprisonment of mankind's ancient self within a

memory, as the West's rejection of Christianity had led to ideologies such as Nazism and communism and, ultimately, to 'cultural suicide'.¹⁷¹

This concept parallels Danielle Hervieu-Leger's classification of modern societies as societies that are characterized by 'amnesia'.¹⁷² Hervieu-Leger argues that modern European societies are being increasingly secularized because they are no longer, 'societies of memory', but societies based on change.¹⁷³ The effect of this change is to erode social, cultural and psychological continuity and to undermine the lineage of belief.¹⁷⁴ Similarly, Rowland's view of modern culture as being characterized by a 'forced forgetting', reflects the move to identify history and memory as necessary correctives to secularization's harmful breaches with Western thought and tradition. This importance of having an awareness of the past had previously been expressed in Shinn's assertion that, "Christianity requires history as a soul requires a body."¹⁷⁵

Thus, interpretations by modern scholars of trends and statistics relating to religious practice and belief indicate that secularization did indeed begin in the post-Reformation period, but that the cultural and social changes of the 1960s accelerated this process. Any response to the problematic of secularization needs to be aware of difficulties with the philosophical approaches used prior to the 1960s and the predominant accommodationist approach used since that time.

two-dimensional present, the invention of a world without legacy and without foresight." In J.C.D. Clark, *Our Shadowed Present: Modernism, Postmodernism and History*, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2004), p. 12.

¹⁷¹ Russello, "Introduction", *CEC*, p. xxv.

¹⁷² Danièle Hervieu-Léger, *Religion as a Chain of Memory*, trans. Simon Lee, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), p. 140.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 123.

¹⁷⁴ Grace Davie, in "Foreword", to Hervieu-Léger, *Religion as a Chain of Memory*, p. 9.

¹⁷⁵ Shinn, *Christianity and the Problem of History*, p. 165.

The survival of Catholic cultures

The lack of a developed historical sense has been a factor in the English-speaking countries' failure to take account of successes associated with both general non-accommodationist strategies, and the survival of Catholic cultures prior to 1960. Again, one of the most powerful examples of the strength of a non-accommodationist stance was within France. In that country, anti-clericalist governments under Pierre Waldeck-Rousseau (1846-1904), and Émile Combes (1835-1921), used the conflict around the Dreyfus case to limit the Church's rôle in areas such as education. The heightened suspicion and antagonism towards Catholics was evident in the *Affaire des fiches*, when it was revealed that secret dossiers of the Masonic Lodge of the Grand Orient, which detailed army officers who attended Mass, or had their children at church schools, was being used by the War Minister, General André, when making decisions on promotions.¹⁷⁶ The disclosure of these dossiers caused the fall of the Combes cabinet. From a military point of view, the short sightedness of these moves was revealed during World War I, when there was a need to quickly promote competent officers who had not previously been appointed to senior positions because they were practising Catholics.¹⁷⁷

However, following the abrogation of the Concordat in France in 1905, the dissolution of most religious orders and the subsequent closure of many Catholic schools, the Vatican, under Pope Pius X, strongly asserted its independence from the state, and refused to join in the lay associations that were suggested by the government for the control of the Church property. In fact, the development of a vigorous counterculture in schools, newspapers, and youth and sports clubs allowed the Church to flourish in the next decades. To Rémond, the appearance of a religious fourth estate and the expansion of these clubs was evidence of the Church's ability to

¹⁷⁶ Atkin and Tallett, *Priests, Prelates and People*, p. 153.

¹⁷⁷ Larkin, *French History Since Napoleon*, p. 155. Fourteen of the nineteen officers who were promoted quickly in 1914 had previously missed out on higher positions because of these files.

invent new forms of presence which broadened her influence in society.¹⁷⁸ The strength of the Church's reaction to this issue bore fruit in the revival of Catholicism, which began in the post-World War I era and lasted until at least 1960.¹⁷⁹ The evidence for this revival could be seen in the fact that many French parliamentarians attended the canonization of Joan of Arc in Rome in 1919, and that the religious orders expelled before 1914 were allowed to return. By 1940, the division between the lay state and the Church had diminished to such an extent that members of the government attended a religious ceremony at Notre Dame to pray for the nation.¹⁸⁰ When writing about the period before 1960, McLeod has suggested that, in spite of the fact that practising French Catholics had become a minority, they were able to use organization, militancy and shows of strength, to increase both their own confidence and their impact within the broader society.¹⁸¹

The resiliency of traditional Catholic culture is also evident in such countries as the Netherlands and Germany, which, although Protestant, had large Catholic minorities. These Catholic minorities tended to be settled more closely together than in the English-speaking world, partly because of the impact of the maxim, *Cuius regio, eius religio*, which had meant that rulers, particularly in the Holy Roman Empire, could impose their own religion on all their subjects. Many of these areas with strong Catholic minorities have continued, until recently, to exhibit traits of a flourishing Catholic culture. Some of the most prominent examples of these Catholic cultures could be found in the southern Netherlands, in Bavaria, and in Quebec in Canada, which

¹⁷⁸ Rémond, *Religion and Society in Modern Europe*, p. 70.

¹⁷⁹ Cholvy and Hilaire, *Histoire religieuse de la France*, cited in *Decline of Christendom*, ed. McLeod, p. 19.

¹⁸⁰ Rémond, *Religion and Society in Modern Europe*, p. 114.

¹⁸¹ McLeod, *Secularization in Western Europe*, p. 69. Another explanation is offered by Motzkin's observation that "The success that this rejection of this strong progressivism has experienced in Western culture is perhaps due to the survival of pre-modern religious prejudice", In Motzkin, *Time and Transcendence*, p. 193.

until quite recently had one of the highest rates of Catholic practice in the world.¹⁸² One of the benefits of developing scholarship in the area of culture would a better understanding of the resilience of Catholicism in areas such as Quebec, and of the factors which after the 1960s resulted in precipitous declines in religious practice and belief.

V) The problematic in the English-speaking world

Both Christopher Dawson's historical understandings and the more recent *Communio* school's perspective on culture provides useful insights on the particular implications in the English-speaking world of being Catholic in a Protestant culture. One of the strongest cultural and political influences in the modern world has been America. During Dawson's time in America, he drew attention to the impact on the country of the Enlightenment.¹⁸³ Furthermore, he argued that the non-conformist trend in American culture, stemming from an extremely individualistic type of Protestantism, meant that American religion tended to focus on a subjective world of religious feeling, which was separate from a supposedly objective world of business and politics.¹⁸⁴

The specific problem of living out the Catholic faith within a Protestant culture had been addressed by Christopher Dawson in *The Crisis of Western Education*, during the time that he was appointed the first Chauncey Stillman Chair of Catholic Studies at Harvard University. Dawson observed that the dilemma of Catholics living in traditionally Protestant countries such as America was that they became divided personalities, with a division between faith and

¹⁸² Jonathon Robinson, *The Mass and Modernity: Walking to Heaven Backward*, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005, p. 36. Robinson states that in 1957 weekly attendance at Mass was 88 per cent in Quebec.

¹⁸³ Dawson, *CWE*, p. 182.

¹⁸⁴ Christopher Dawson, "Catholicism, Secularism and the Modern World", in *Catholic Mind*, vol. LIX, no. 1155, (May-June 1961), pp. 261-268.

culture.¹⁸⁵ A similar perspective has recently been expressed by Cardinal Francis George of Chicago.¹⁸⁶ Dawsonian thought on this matter provides an invaluable guide for Catholic educators in understanding that the mental world of all those living within English-speaking countries has, to a large extent, been shaped by a liberal-Protestant view of history and culture. Thus, in Protestant countries such as England and the USA, an earlier division between religion and culture has influenced the development of a secular liberalism, which left religion as a purely private matter. In particular, Dawson suggested the anti-intellectualism in popular Protestantism, had led to a focus on extroversion and activism and to a denial of the importance of metaphysics.¹⁸⁷

As a result, the main issue is how to provide effective pastoral and catechetical solutions to a Catholic population living within a traditionally Protestant country, albeit a liberal or secularising one. The lack of an historical memory of a Christian culture, and the undeveloped account of culture before the 1960s, meant that Catholics were particularly influenced by Protestantism's division between religion and culture. Indeed, Dawson had asserted that this division helped form the modern secular West. One example of this problematic is the way in which it developed to mean the separation of religion from culture and thus, the complete disallowance of religious symbols and of its beliefs and ideas from entrance into the public domain. The way in which this separation has been interpreted within countries such as the USA, has led to a different, subtle and even more pervasive form of secularization than that within an older, predominantly Catholic Europe. In the contemporary period, examples of the older

¹⁸⁵ Dawson, *CWE*, p. 187.

¹⁸⁶ Cardinal Francis George, *Inculturation and Ecclesial Communion: Culture and Church in the Teaching of John Paul II*, (Rome: Urbaniana University Press, 1990), p. 107, cited in Rowland, *CTT*, p. 40.

¹⁸⁷ Dawson, "The Revolt of the East and the Catholic Tradition", *The Dublin Review*, pp. 12. However, Dawson saw this emphasis on extroversion and activity as also being evident in Latin secularism, which he argued was characterized by the absence of moral and ethical understandings.

Catholic culture continue to be apparent in the popularity of pilgrimages, processions and wayside shrines, within countries such as Bavaria, Italy and Spain.¹⁸⁸

Dawson, who had lived in both Britain and the USA, realized that both nations are predominantly Protestant, but in Britain's case, the existence of a national Anglican Church meant that traditional understandings of the religious rôle in the cultural life are much more readily accepted.¹⁸⁹ He asserted that one of the most obvious of these was the English Coronation service, which reflected the older Catholic understanding of the religious duty of the monarch.¹⁹⁰ The USA, by contrast, was founded on a Constitution that reflected Enlightenment thought, and which did not allow for a direct or formal rôle for religion in public life.¹⁹¹ As indicated previously, this has meant that although American culture is not specifically anti-religious, in the manner of European anti-clericalism, it does result in what has been termed, 'a practical atheism'.

The sociologist, Marcel Gauchet, has commented on this tendency when comparing French and American secularization. He has stated that this phenomenon can be addressed by examining the rôle of religion in societies at two levels, the 'superstructural', referring to rates of religious practice, and the 'infrastructural', which analyses the political and social forms of a society.¹⁹² Gauchet has analysed both the USA and France at an 'infrastructural' level and concluded that, in spite of a higher rate of religious practice in the USA, both societies are basically secular.¹⁹³

¹⁸⁸ Kevin J. Wright, *Catholic Shrines of Western Europe: A Pilgrim's Travel Guide*, (Ligouri, Missouri: Ligouri Publications, 2001), p. xiii.

¹⁸⁹ Dawson, *BP*, p. 98.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

¹⁹¹ Gertrude Himmelfarb, *The Roads to Modernity: The British, French and American Enlightenments*, (New York: Vintage Books, 2005), p. 204.

¹⁹² Marcel Gauchet, *The Disenchantment of the World: A Political History of Religion*, trans. by Oscar Burge, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), p. 164.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.* A similar theme is developed in an article by Thomas Fletcher, in the English *Spectator* magazine, in August 2005, entitled, 'Why America is not a Christian country?'

Whilst the Church needed to come to terms with the influence of American power and culture on a worldwide level, there was also the need for Catholics within the USA to deal with issues of national identity. The place of the Church, within the USA, was influenced by the fact that Catholics did not begin arriving in significant numbers until well into the nineteenth century, and that the mass Catholic migrations of the Irish, Italians and Eastern Europeans did not move towards the rural areas, but instead tended to gravitate towards cities, such as Boston and New York. Even today, the percentage of Catholics is lower in the so-called 'Bible belt' states than it is in the cities of the eastern seaboard, or in the western states such as California or Texas, which had Catholic populations from the time of the Spanish Empire. The first of these factors means that national identity was well established prior to any significant presence of Catholicism.¹⁹⁴ Because of this, it can be argued that many Catholics exhibited a confusion about their relationship with the surrounding culture, as was evident in the debate about 'Americanism' in the late nineteenth-century, and Senator Kennedy's comments during the Presidential election campaign of 1960. With regard to the latter, in a speech to the Greater Houston Ministerial Alliance, Kennedy said

I do not speak for my church....and my church does not speak for me... whatever issue may come before me as President - on birth control, divorce, censorship, gambling or any other subject - I will make my decision in accordance with what my conscience tells me to be the national interest and without regard to outside religious pressures or dictates.¹⁹⁵

Besides the privatisation of religion inherent in Protestant culture, the other important issue for the Church within the English-speaking world is the rôle of beauty and aesthetics, particularly as it impacts on areas such as the liturgy and church architecture. Scholars, such as Aidan Nichols believe that there is a need to 're-enchant the liturgy' and that this, "... is the single most urgent

¹⁹⁴ Samuel Huntington, *Who are we? America's Great Debate*, (London: The Free Press, 2005), pp. 96-97. Huntington has asserted that Catholics have become assimilated into American culture as they now exhibit Protestant characteristics.

¹⁹⁵ John F. Kennedy, Address of Senator John F. Kennedy to the Greater Houston Ministerial Associations September 12, 1960. <http://www.jfklibrary.org/Historical+Desk/Speeches/JFK>. (Accessed June, 2006).

ecclesial need of our time.”¹⁹⁶ Again, in conjunction with Rowland, he argues that worship is central to the way we believe and that it influences our actions and attitudes in a deeply symbolic way. Rowland believes that the concept of beauty, which exists alongside the other transcendentals of truth and goodness, has an essential relationship with the theological virtue of hope.¹⁹⁷ She argues that the liturgy is the most important area for the average ‘lay’ Catholic, who exists inside the culture of modernity, to experience this beauty.¹⁹⁸ The debate about this area has been occurring at the highest levels in the Church. Indeed, throughout the 1990s, a movement known as, ‘the reform of the reforms’ began to develop. Rowland quotes a number of works by the new Pope, whilst he was still Cardinal Ratzinger, on the liturgy, which would seem to suggest that it may well be an area of renewed reform.¹⁹⁹

Dawson’s focus on the importance of the liturgy had been evident in his assertion that modern education was defective, as it failed to give a sense of the revelation of a new and wonderful reality, and that it was impossible to separate the sphere of worship and education.²⁰⁰ He further noted that, “The first Christian education was the initiation into the divine mysteries in the liturgical sense, and it brought with it a development of religious poetry and music and art which was the first fruits of Christian culture.”²⁰¹ His awareness of the importance of the liturgy explains his concerns about the translations used as the language of the Mass changed from Latin to English, during the 1960s.²⁰²

¹⁹⁶ Nichols, *Christendom Awake*, p. 21.

¹⁹⁷ Rowland, *CTT*, p. 83.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 168.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 176.

²⁰⁰ Christopher Dawson, *Understanding Europe*, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1952), p. 244. (hereafter *UE*).

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*

²⁰² Scott, *HHW*, p. 205.

As regards these issues, the contemporary religious sociologist, Alister McGrath, has contended that ‘an imaginative failure’ has been a major problem for Protestantism, and actually encouraged secularism.²⁰³ However, it appears that this ‘imaginative failure’ has not only been a problem for Protestantism. E. Michael Jones has argued that the social marginalization of Catholics within the English-speaking world meant that they ‘lusted after modernity’.²⁰⁴ This has resulted in the development of a negative attitude toward the rôle of beauty and aesthetics among English-speaking Catholics, similar to that exhibited by Protestantism. This tendency was most obvious within the realms of art and architecture. Thus, the 1960s saw the wholesale renovation of many traditional Catholic churches and the construction of newer ones, particularly in the burgeoning middle class suburbs, which drew on a modernist, functionalist view of architecture, rather than a traditional Catholic emphasis on aesthetics and beauty in worship. It could be conjectured that Catholics within the USA in particular, were dealing with two distinct, but related trends. On the one hand, there was an older Protestant, or more particularly, Calvinist tradition of austerity and plainness in places of worship, and there was the new or modernist ethos, associated with such luminaries of the Bauhaus school as Walter Gropius and Le Corbusier. In the rapidly expanding American cities after 1945, it was this type of architecture that tended to remake the inner urban fabric. This trend would be mirrored in other English-speaking countries such as Australia and Britain. The remaking of such cities as New York and London, in comparison to the conservation focus within inner Paris, has been analysed by Tung.²⁰⁵ He suggests that modern architecture is based on, “... a philosophy of design that consciously sought a lack of relationship with the long continuum of preceding form.”²⁰⁶ These

²⁰³ Alister McGrath, *The Twilight of Atheism: The Rise and Fall of Disbelief in the Modern World*, (London: Rider, 2004), p. 213.

²⁰⁴ E. Michael Jones, *Living Machines*, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1995), p. 42.

²⁰⁵ Anthony M. Tung, *Preserving the World's Cities: The Destruction and Renewal of the Historic Metropolis*, (New York: Clarkson Potter Publishers, 2001), p. 5.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid*, p. 21.

contrasting approaches to the external, material features of life reflect deeper and more enduring cultural perspectives about the rôle of aesthetics between Calvinist and Catholic cultures.

One of the most potent examples of the rôle and importance of aesthetics and architecture in preserving a cultural tradition was demonstrated during the Nazi's attempted destruction of Warsaw during World War II. In doing this, they were attempting to destroy the memory, the culture and the very identity of the nation, by eliminating the cultural patrimony inherent in architecture and urban design.²⁰⁷ Similarly, Roger Scruton has claimed that Bauhaus and Le Corbusier saw their new modernist architecture as symbolizing, and causing, a radical break with the past.²⁰⁸ Scruton observes that the process of using architecture for cultural repudiation is most clearly illustrated in Germany's commitment to architectural modernism.²⁰⁹ Thus, in contrast to Italy, Spain and France, where churches still dominate the skyline and streets are still bordered by humane facades, Germany's turn to the new international style reflects a rejection and a denial, of its own national identity, after the humiliation of defeat in World War II.²¹⁰ After the 1960s, it would become increasingly apparent that a failure to recognize the importance of a living tradition in areas such as the liturgy, and in the arts and architecture, had engendered a sense of spiritual and cultural dislocation. This dislocation has been the major factor, both in the marginalization of religion within the culture, and in the rapid declines in religious belief and practice.

As previously mentioned, there is some confusion about the precise nature and origins of modern culture and whether there exists a need, or right, to critique its ontology and its external

²⁰⁷ Ibid, p. 82.

²⁰⁸ Scruton, *The West and the Rest*, p. 129.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Ibid, pp. 129-130.

manifestations, and whether these, because of their relationship to the transcendental of beauty, contribute to the flourishing of the human person. In this regard Philip Rieff, in his last work, published in 2006, sought to emphasize that areas such as the arts and literature do not exist in a separate sphere to the social and moral order.²¹¹ This suggests, therefore, that a different ontology underlies the modern West's belief in the purpose of human existence, and that this affects our way of life and our behaviour, through the development of what Lasch has termed, 'a therapeutic sensibility'.²¹²

Conclusion

This chapter has identified some key background issues and problems evident in the interaction of the Church with modern culture. In particular, modern culture's denial of the spiritual element, its reductionist and limited view of human nature, history and culture, its alternative ontology, and its non-neutral nature with regard to Christianity are all in some sense based on a rupture with the original Christian tradition. In order to respond to this problem there is a critical need for new approaches to pastoral, catechetical and educational decisions. These approaches will be further assisted by drawing upon a range of scholarship about the forms and characteristics of Catholic culture, the problem of minimal external evidence of Catholic culture and the ongoing dilemmas of Catholics living with post-Protestant cultures.

This chapter has also emphasized that the denial of history, memory and tradition in education and catechesis has had different impacts in English-speaking countries from that in the older, and predominantly Catholic Europe. This reflects that the older Catholic culture of pre-Reformation Britain is separated from the present time by over five hundred years, and that

²¹¹ James Davison Hunter, "Introduction", in Rieff, *Sacred Order/Social Order: My Life among the Deathworks*, p. xvii.

²¹² Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism*, p. 7.

Catholicism was not a major factor in the formation of the modern American culture. Thus, a new catechetical and pastoral approach in the English-speaking world needs to take account of this fact, and to consider the suggestions offered by a Dawsonian historical emphasis alongside the perspectives of the *Communio* scholars.

Whereas as John Paul II's Papacy dealt, of necessity, with the problem of Marxism in Russia and Eastern Europe, now that the Communist era is effectively over, there is a need for a much more acute analysis of the ontology of Western secular and liberal culture. As the American journalist, John Allen predicted, the Pope has continued to concentrate on Europe.²¹³ If this is the case, the English-speaking world needs to be aware of its own spiritual and cultural debt to European Christendom, to understand the characteristics of a Catholic culture, and to learn from any strategies that will be used to reinvigorate this culture within Europe.

The historical and educational perspectives of Christopher Dawson can be used to challenge the assumptions of the post-Conciliar *zeitgeist*, especially within the English-speaking world. Chapter One analysed some of the key internal debates within the Church about defining and responding to modern culture. Chapter Two will further develop these themes by examining the major breaches that occurred in the tradition of a Christian culture, and how these have had a particularly acute impact on Catholics living within the English-speaking world.

²¹³ John L. Allen, Jr. *The Rise of Benedict XVI*, (Camberwell, Victoria: Penguin Books, 2005), p. 188. Allen quotes one Cardinal, who says that Europe is too big to be lost to the faith.

CHAPTER II

Modernity's Breach with the Past

Introduction

Chapter One identified some of the key issues around the Church's response to the challenge of modern culture. Prior to the Second Vatican Council, this response was primarily through a focus on philosophy, whilst following the Council, an accommodationist approach has prevailed. However, because of an ambivalence about the rôle of history and culture, these approaches have not solved the problems, either of marginalization of the Church or of the continuing declines in religious practice and understanding. This has meant that such Augustinian and Dawsonian insights as the rôle of religion in forming culture, and the significance of the past and memory for the survival of culture, have not been well developed among Catholics, particularly within the English-speaking world.

This underdeveloped historical awareness has resulted in a failure to recognize how events and trends within the three major Western countries of France, Britain and the USA have helped to foster a breach with the memory and tradition of the Catholic past.¹ As well as examining these events and trends, this chapter will maintain that the strengths and weaknesses of different Catholic responses to these disconnections contain important lessons for Catholic pastoralists, educationalists and catechists, within English-speaking countries such as Australia.

- I. In particular, a rejection of the past was evident in the French Revolution. The French Revolution was to influence the concept of the completely secular state and its accompanying political philosophy and 'rights' rhetoric. However, whilst Cartesian rationalism and the French Revolutionary tradition have had an enormous impact

¹ In this regard, Pope Benedict has analysed two European models, the first a 'laicist' model, evident in the Latin countries where the state is strictly separated from the religious bodies which are in the private sphere, and a second model associated with Great Britain and Scandinavia, in which religious bodies suffer from amnesia. He also notes the existence of a third model, associated with the strict separation of Church and state in the USA, which allowed religious values to be expressed in the political sphere. In Joseph Ratzinger, (Pope Benedict XVI), *Values in a Time of Upheaval*, trans. Brian McNeil, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), p. 142.

throughout the world, their impact, at least until the 1960s, was mitigated within France by the underlying strength of the original Catholic culture.

- II. English Liberalism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, especially as it became expressed in an English Whig view of history and progress, also contributed to a repudiation of a Catholic background. In particular, the Whig view built on an earlier historiography, associated with the Reformation, which either ignored, or tended to misinterpret, the place of Catholicism and Europe in the formation of the British identity. However, the lingering persistence of older medieval and Catholic traditions within England, in such forms as the Coronation Rite, and the continued acceptance and cogency of a type of 'Burkean' conservatism, meant that the more radical breaches with the past inherent in modern thought were resisted within that country.²
- III. The American experience is different from that of France and Britain, as its culture was to a large extent formed during the Enlightenment period, and built on aspects of the earlier Calvinist tradition of separating religion from culture. During the twentieth century, American culture, predicated on an emancipation from the past and characterized by a universal and positivistic worldview, became the most powerful and influential example of modern culture. These factors, along with the American understanding of the separation of Church and state, are particularly dissolvent of the rôle of religion and tradition in culture. Also, whilst there have been critiques of individual features of American culture such as its focus on the therapeutic, on functionalism in areas as diverse as architecture and science, and its individualism in business and commercial ideas; an understanding of the ontology of its culture, as

² Dawson, *GR*, Dawson refers to secularization as Enlightenment and to its accompanying ideology as liberalism. p. 14. Dawson also wrote that, "The Coronation represents the most solemn and definite consecration of the State to Religion that we can conceive." In Dawson, *BP*, p. 95. Edmund Burke (1729-1797) was a British parliamentarian and writer. One of his most influential works was *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), where he emphasized the importance of continuity and tradition for the survival of societies.

representing an alternative understanding to Christianity, is still being developed, particularly by the *Communio* school.

Thus, the development of three alternative cultures in these countries was marked, in varying degrees, by an antagonism to the pivotal place of Christianity in Western culture. The denial of this problematic in the post-Vatican II era has led to the further marginalization of the Church, and has been the major cause of an educational and catechetical crisis, particularly in English-speaking countries such as Australia. One further reason for this marginalization is that, whilst critiques of the French Revolutionary tradition and nineteenth century Liberalism are well developed, if little understood by Catholic educationalists, a deeper understanding of how American modern culture also represents a break with Catholic tradition, is still in the process of being formed.³

Catholic Culture

It is important to understand the forms and substance of the earlier Catholic cultures and the factors that led to their demise. As well, an analysis of the strengths of these earlier Catholic cultures has implications for contemporary educationalists and catechists. Dawson classified the period since the eighteenth century as Secularized Christendom, which he contrasted to the previous Patristic, Scholastic and the Baroque Christian cultures. Whilst the Patristic Period from the fourth century was noted for theological thought, as represented by St. Augustine and St. Gregory the Great, and the Scholastic Period of the High Middle Ages for philosophy, associated with St Thomas Aquinas, the Baroque period's strength lay in mysticism and the use of art,

³ R.C. Zaehner, "Foreword", to Christopher Dawson, *Religion and World History: A Selection from the Works of Christopher Dawson*, eds. James Oliver and Christina Scott, (New York: Image Books, 1975), p. 7. Zaehner observes that Dawson understood the 'modern age' as beginning with the three revolutions of the eighteenth century, the Industrial, the French and the American, which ended the age of Christian civilization's dominance.

architecture and music to emphasize the rôle of beauty and aesthetics.⁴ A renewed focus on the importance of history, memory and tradition among Catholic educationalists and pastoralists needs to build on the theological and philosophical strengths of the Patristic and Scholastic Periods, and on the Baroque emphasis on mysticism and beauty in the liturgy, architecture, music and art. Each of these periods were able to build on the base provided by Christianity's birth in the classical world and to use a particular focus to Christianize aspects of culture.⁵

Within the Church there has been debate over the strengths of one particular period in comparison to another. Dawson observed that this was reflected in the nineteenth-century neo-Thomist emphasis on the Middle Ages and in the 1950s debate about the culture associated with the Baroque period.⁶ With regard to Fr Louis Bouyer's, book, *Du Protestantisme à L'Église*, written about this period, Dawson was concerned that it equated Protestantism and Baroque Catholicism and, in doing so, ignored the achievement of Baroque Catholicism in mysticism and the interior life.⁷ According to Dawson, this focus on mysticism and the creative employment of art, architecture, painting and sculpture, literature and music stood in contrast to the pedestrian tone of bourgeois culture with its search for a 'respectable', average standard of behaviour.⁸ Baroque culture, therefore, was not an ideological movement, such as the eighteenth-century Enlightenment or nineteenth-century liberalism, but a culture that, by its appeal to the heart as well as the head, was able to satisfy the emotional as well as the intellectual needs of human

⁴ Dawson, "Civilization in Crisis", in *CEC*, p. 79. Dawson has noted that, "To understand the development of Christian culture it must be studied in all its three major phases- Ancient, Medieval and Modern: Patristic, Scholastic and Humanist: Byzantine, Gothic and Baroque."

⁵ Pope John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, (London: Burns & Oates, 1985), Chapters 2 and 4, cited in Rowland, *CTT*, p. 47.

⁶ Dawson, "Civilization in Crisis", in *CEC*, pp. 79-80.

⁷ Dawson, cited in Scott, *HHW*, p. 175.

⁸ Dawson, "Catholicism and the Bourgeois Mind", in *DWH*, p. 218. He also observes about the Baroque culture that, "Where its traditions survived into the nineteenth century, as in Austria and Spain and parts of Italy and South Germany, one still feels that life has a richer savour and a more vital rhythm than in the lands where the bourgeois spirit is triumphant." p. 220.

nature.⁹ Thus, Dawson claimed that part of the attraction of this era, which had influenced his own conversion, was that it was able to ally the humanist tradition of the Renaissance with the traditions of medieval Catholicism as revived or restored by the Counter-Reformation.¹⁰

The beginning of the Baroque period in the early seventeenth century saw a new religious revival within France, represented by such figures as Cardinal de Bérulle (1575-1629), founder of the French Oratory, St Vincent de Paul (1576-1660) and Jean Jacques Olier (1608-1659), founder of the Seminary of St Sulpice. With regard to de Bérulle and Olier, Dawson referred to their importance for French religious thought. By a focus on the theology of the Incarnation and on the Pauline doctrine of man's incorporation within the Divine Humanity, they created a new school of mysticism.¹¹ Alongside this, another of the strengths of the Baroque period was that it saw the beginning of 'positive' theology, which Dawson defined as Patristic studies.¹²

All of these factors contributed to the flourishing of a newly invigorated Catholic culture. Thus, Dawson observed that although the Reformation had destroyed the unity of medieval Europe, the Baroque culture was able to compensate for this loss by a vigorous and deep re-evangelisation of Catholic Europe, which occurred at the same time as the conversion of areas such as South America.¹³ Jean Delumeau argued that in this period there was a serious attempt to Christianize the masses and to overcome a deep-seated and persistent paganism.¹⁴ Thus, the major religious orders such as the Jesuits, not only managed to use the splendour of Baroque art, architecture and music to reinforce a Catholic ethos and sensibility in Spain, France, Italy and the

⁹ Dawson, *Religion and World History*, p. 211.

¹⁰ Dawson, *DC*, pp. 197-198.

¹¹ Dawson, *DC*, p. 213.

¹² Christopher Dawson, Letter to John J. Mulloy, 22 April, 1954, Dawson Correspondence, University of St Thomas, St Paul, Minn., cited in Schwartz, *The Third Spring*, p. 258.

¹³ Dawson, *DC*, p. 203.

¹⁴ Jean Delumeau, *Catholicism between Luther and Voltaire: a new view of the Counter Reformation*, (London: Burns and Oates, 1977), p. 225.

Hapsburg dominions, but alongside teaching orders such as the De La Salle brothers in France also taught the doctrines of the faith in their extensive network of schools more effectively than had been done during the Middle Ages. Mullet observes that De La Salle's Institute had 116 establishments in France by the time of the Revolution, and was involved in about 500 Catholic elementary schools within Paris.¹⁵ The continuing strength of the Catholic culture associated with the Baroque period was to be illustrated by the resistance to the French Revolution in areas such as the Vendée, the religious revival of the nineteenth century, and even the high rates of Catholic practice in areas such as Flanders, western France and Quebec until the middle of the twentieth century.¹⁶

However, Dawson considered that the weakening of Baroque culture can be traced to a combination of political factors, the effects of theological controversies, and the intellectual and cultural trends associated with Cartesian rationalism and French neo-classicism. Thus, in Gallican France in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Bourbon kings and their ministers, including Richelieu, developed a much stronger concept of the nation state.¹⁷ In spite of the fact that France's new centralized monarchical state was directed by a Roman Catholic cardinal, its quasi-pagan cult of the monarchy would help to undermine the traditional Catholic order.¹⁸ In Britain, Henry VIII initiated a breach with the Catholic past and established the Anglican Church, and in Germany, the influence of princes was to be a decisive factor in the success and establishment of a state-sponsored Lutheranism.

¹⁵ Michael A. Mullett, *The Catholic Reformation*, (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 164.

¹⁶ McLeod, *Secularization in Western Europe*, p. 21.

¹⁷ The resistance to Papal authority evident in the Gallican Church meant that the decrees of the Council of Trent were not implemented until 1615.

¹⁸ Caroline Marshall, "Christopher Dawson", in *Historians of the Christian Tradition: Their Methodology and Influence On Western Thought*, eds. Michael Bauman and Martin Klauber, (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995), p. 443.

Mullett argues that the main theological controversy was initiated by the Jansenist movement, which subsequently became immersed in an anti-Jesuit and anti-Papal trend.¹⁹ This was eventually to lead to the successful suppression of the Jesuits in 1773, and to the anti-ultramontane works of Febronius (1701-90), a pseudonym for a professor at Trier von Hontheim.²⁰ Dawson regarded the reaction to these doctrinal disputes as fostering a European turn to rationalism.²¹ Thus, the influence of Calvinism and Jansenism in France contributed to the popularity of this new thought, associated with René Descartes. Dawson asserts that this French philosopher, in his separation of the human mind from the body of society and the conditions of physical existence, was the founder of modern rationalism.²² Finally, Dawson also observed that a semi-Baroque type of culture developed in a bourgeois France with strong tendencies towards both classicism and Jansenism.²³ According to Marshall, Dawson believed that the rationalist bourgeois society of the eighteenth century was a major factor in the subsequent destruction of Christian culture and the human person's open and emotional nature, which had always been nourished by Christianity.²⁴

Characteristics of Enlightenment thought

Thus, all of these factors, in weakening the Baroque culture prepared the way for the Enlightenment. This movement, popularized by the 'philosophers' in France, is generally accepted as having begun in the eighteenth century and, by its attitudes to reason, history and the rôle of religion, to have represented a major turning point in European culture. Benedict XVI, before he

¹⁹ Mullett, *The Catholic Reformation*, p. 165.

²⁰ Dawson, *DC*, p. 208.

²¹ Marshall, "Christopher Dawson", in *Historians of the Christian Tradition*, eds. Bauman and Klauber, p. 444.

²² Dawson, *PR*, p. 20. About this matter Hittinger asserts "This not only leads to the distorted idea that there can be a traditionless body of knowledge, but it also hides the fact that culture is a second nature, in the womb of which virtually all our thinking is formed. In Russell Hittinger, "Christopher Dawson: A View from the Social Sciences", in *The Catholic Writer: Volume 2*, Papers Presented at a Conference sponsored by the Wethersfield Institute, New York City, September 29-30, 1989, edited with a preface by Ralph McNerny, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991), p. 37.

²³ Dawson, *GR*, p. 12

²⁴ Marshall, "Christopher Dawson", in *Historians of the Christian Tradition*, eds. Bauman and Klauber, p. 444.

became Pope, identified Enlightenment thought as exhibiting positivist and anti-metaphysical characteristics which left no place for God.²⁵ Furthermore, whilst a self-limitation of positive reason was adequate in the technological sphere, it entailed a mutilation of man if it is generalized.²⁶

Another strain of Enlightenment thought has emphasized themes such as emancipation from the past and society. J. C. D. Clark traces this tendency back to Rousseau who, in his work *Émile*, had stated that the whole sum of human wisdom consisted in servile prejudices, and that the human being lives and dies in slavery, and is continually fettered by societal institutions.²⁷ However, Pope Benedict XVI has argued that for society to cut itself off consciously from its historical roots is a destructive act, as it means it deprives itself of the powerful sources from which it sprang.²⁸ This can lead to a denial of the rôle that religion and history play in all European thought, even in such developments as secularism. Thus, Pope Benedict has commented that the debate about the entrance of Turkey to the European Union fails to acknowledge that secularism itself grew out of the original Christian matrix, which infers that secularism in former Christian societies will always be different from secularism in post-Islamic societies.²⁹

The attempts at an accommodation with modernity have tended to ignore the fact that modern thought represents an alternative ontology predicated both on a denial of the spiritual factor in human culture and history, as well as on a reductionist view of the human person which ultimately, either directly or indirectly, contradicts the original Christian foundation of Western

²⁵ Joseph, Cardinal Ratzinger, *Christianity and the Crisis of Cultures*, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press 2006), p. 40.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Clark, *Our Shadowed Present*, p. 9.

²⁸ Ratzinger, *Christianity and the Crisis of Cultures*, Pope Benedict has referred to the Enlightenment as incomplete as, "It consciously cuts off its own historical roots, depriving itself of the powerful sources from which it sprang. It detaches itself from what we might call the basic memory of mankind, without which reason loses its orientation..." p. 41.

²⁹ Ibid, p. 36.

culture.³⁰ Each of these three factors exists to varying degrees within the three modern cultures of France, Britain and the USA. However, the Dawsonian historical perspective, the new revisionist trend in historical writing and *Communio's* developing scholarship on culture have provided a new nexus to draw upon to interpret and respond to the challenge of modern culture.

France: Catholicism and the Revolutionary Tradition

French influence on Europe had been evident since the Middle Ages and was reflected in such areas as philosophy, Gothic architecture, and even in such manners and mores as the concepts of chivalry and of courtly love. During the eighteenth century French cultural influence would help spread Enlightenment ideas throughout Europe. Indeed, French philosophers such as Voltaire were to be welcomed in the Prussia of Frederick and in the Russia of the Empress Catherine the Great.³¹ Furthermore, Enlightenment thought influenced the Austrian Emperor, Joseph II, in his anti-clerical programs such as the dissolution of monasteries, in the latter part of the eighteenth century. As previously mentioned, the most striking indication of this impact was the successful pressure that the Enlightenment-influenced absolutist monarchs and their ministers brought on the Papacy with regard to the dissolution of the Jesuits. This action severely weakened the Church's ability to provide an alternative defence against Enlightenment thought and the ideas associated with the French Revolution.

The French Revolution exhibited the characteristic of a reductionist or truncated view of the original Christian synthesis by an attempted breach with the past. According to Burleigh, the attempts in the Revolutionary period to obliterate eighteen centuries of history amounted to a

³⁰ Ibid, p. 44. "The coming clash will be between this radical emancipation of man and the great historical cultures."

³¹ Indeed, Frederick the Great wrote that, "The nations will write in their histories that Voltaire was the promoter of the revolution that took place in men's minds during the eighteenth century..." cited in Joseph De Maistre, "The Necessity of the Theocratic State", In *The Influence of the Enlightenment on the French Revolution: Creative, Disastrous or Non-Existent?*, (Boston: D. C. Heath and Company, 1964), p. 18.

cultural revolution.³² Thus, in seeking to abolish symbolic reminders of the old order, the word ‘Saint’ was removed from places and streets, so that Rue-Saint-Jacques became simply Rue Jacques and Mont-Saint-Michel was changed into Mont-Libre.³³ Another example of change was the attempt to start a new system of dating from the beginning of the Revolution. The Legislative Assembly eventually decided that January, 1792, was to be classified as Year I of the French Republic and that the Revolutionary calendar would have new names that were drawn from nature for each month, such as Brumaire (fog), and Thermidor (heat).³⁴ One of the most obvious attempts to sabotage the original Christian culture was to divide each month into three ten day weeks and, in the process, seek to abolish Christmas and Sundays.³⁵ Furthermore, this attempt to emancipate ideas from the historical milieu in which they were formed can explain why Enlightenment ideas and values were open to radically different interpretations during the Revolutionary period. Thus, Bronislaw Baszko has described how the ideology of the Revolution was open to transmutation, so that cosmopolitanism changed into bellicose nationalism, tolerance into fanaticism and liberty became Terror.³⁶ As well, Burleigh has argued that the Revolution was characterized by an attempt to use the original religious language, such as catechism, gospel, martyr and missionary in a new, political way.³⁷ By 1792, Mirabeau was claiming that the declaration of the Rights of Man represented a political Gospel, and that the French Constitution was a ‘religion’ for which people were prepared to die.³⁸

³² Burleigh, *Earthly Powers*, p. 83.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid, p. 86.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Bronislaw Baszko, “Enlightenment”, in *A Critical Dictionary of the French Revolution*, eds. Françoise Furet and Mona Ozouf, trans. Arthur Goldhammer, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1989), p. 667.

³⁷ Burleigh, *Earthly Powers*, p. 81.

³⁸ Ibid.

The French Revolution as non-neutral: The persecution of the Church

For Pope Benedict XVI, part of the reason for the dichotomy between Christianity and the modern world can be explained by the fact that the French Revolution was the beginning of “... the birth of the ideology according to which Christianity, because it believes in the end of the world, in judgement, and the like, is by nature pessimistic, whereas modernity, which has discovered progress as the law of history, is by nature optimistic.”³⁹ These differences were to be reflected in the havoc unleashed by the Revolution, which Dawson observes caused more destruction than even the Reformation.⁴⁰ With regard to the impact on the clergy, Doyle has observed that in 1792, 233 priests were the first victims of the September Massacres and that, as well as the almost 1000 who died during the Terror, about one in six, or approximately 25,000 priests, left France either voluntarily, or through deportation.⁴¹

One of the most potent examples of the Revolution’s attitude to the older Catholic culture can be found in the brutal suppression of the uprising in the Vendée. This event, which was virtually ignored by historians throughout most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, has been described by the historian, Steven Kaplan, as ‘the Counter-revolution incarnate’.⁴² For the Marxist and liberal histories which dominated French Revolutionary historiography until recently, the Vendéan uprising unsettled a perception of the Revolution as a battle between the aristocratic forces of reaction and a popular desire for an overthrow of the old order. However, Dawson had argued that the uprising was an example of a just war, as the Revolutionary government was violating the rights of freedom of opinion and religious liberty that supposedly

³⁹ Joseph Ratzinger, *Salt of the Earth: The Church at the End of the Millenium*, An Interview with Peter Seewald, trans. Adrian Walker, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1997), p. 25.

⁴⁰ Dawson, *GR*, p. 130.

⁴¹ William Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 397.

⁴² Steven Laurant Kaplan, *Farewell Revolution: Disputed Legacies France, 1789-1989*, (London: Cornell University Press, 1995), p. 84.

existed in the constitution.⁴³ The scale of this suppression by Revolutionary soldiers and Generals such as Hugo, the father of the nineteenth-century author, Victor Hugo, has led to a recent debate among scholars about whether events such as the Holocaust during World War II can be traced to Enlightenment thought and the French Revolution. Thus, one scholar, Zygmunt Bauman, has described the Holocaust as “little more than a banal consequence of modernity and its *Zweckrationalitat* (ie. instrument rationality)”.⁴⁴

During the bi-centenary of the French Revolution in 1989, attention was drawn to the numbers killed in this area during the uprisings of the 1790s. Both Dawson and Furet have focused on the rôle of religion in this conflict and the fact that these revolts were initiated by peasant farmers, in response to moves by the government against the Church.⁴⁵ Whilst Furet notes the importance of popular resentment against conscription, he argues that the most important factor in the rebellions of 1793, was the resistance to the imposition of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, and the pressure on priests to take the accompanying oath.⁴⁶ In answering those who argued that the Republican government was simply defending itself, Furet writes that the Terror in western France was begun in January to March, 1794, and that this occurred after Republican successes against the rebels, in October of the previous year.⁴⁷ He adds that this Terror led to hundreds of thousands of deaths and attempted the destructions of entire populations, either by mass drownings in the Loire, or by the fact that the Republican troops, who were divided into several columns, had been ordered to burn all the homes and murder entire

⁴³ Dawson, *BP*, p. 125.

⁴⁴ James Kaye and Bo Strath, eds., “Introduction”, to *Enlightenment and Genocide: Contradictions of Modernity*, Series Philosophy and Politics, (Brussels: PIE-Peter Lang Presses Interuniversitaires Europeennes, 2000), p. 12.

⁴⁵ Francoise Furet, “Chouannerie”, in *A Critical Dictionary of the French Revolution*, eds. Francoise Furet and Mona Ozouf, p. 9.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Furet, “Terror”, in *A Critical Dictionary of the French Revolution*, eds. Furet and Ozouf, p. 144.

populations of particular areas.⁴⁸ Whilst there has been an ongoing debate over the numbers killed during this time, Furet states that Tureau's 'infernal columns', left more than one hundred thousand dead.⁴⁹

Alternate cultures within France

Dawson had previously observed that the new social idealism, in the years before the Revolution, resembled a religious revival, which had its ecclesiastical hierarchy in the Order of Freemasons.⁵⁰ Indeed, at the beginning of the Revolution, the influence of Freemasonry was to be evident among all classes and even in the Army and the Church.⁵¹ In France, the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century and the positivism of the nineteenth century (as expounded by Auguste Comte, with human development divided into the stages of theology, metaphysics and science), provided the ideological and philosophical background to an alternative culture. One outcome of the Revolution was the divisive debate within France for the next two hundred years, between the Church and an anti-clerical secular culture.

These divisions were evident in the attempted secularisation of French life and culture, particularly in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. McLeod lists a number of major changes at this time, including the repeal of Sunday rest laws in 1880, the removal of the university status from Catholic higher education institutes, the abolition of religious teaching in state schools in 1852, the exclusion of nuns and priests from teaching in state schools in 1886, the removal of the exemption from military service for seminarians in 1899, and the banning of religious orders from teaching in any religious or state school from 1901-1904.⁵² By 1914, this

⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 145.

⁴⁹ Furet, "Vendée", in *A Critical Dictionary of the French Revolution*, eds. Furet and Ozouf, p. 169.

⁵⁰ Dawson, *GR*, p. 58.

⁵¹ Ibid, p. 59.

⁵² McLeod, *Secularisation in Western Europe*, p. 66.

anti-clerical legislation had closed thousands of Catholic schools and banned most religious orders.⁵³ Those forced to attend the supposedly neutral state schools found themselves being taught views of history that were based on a negative attitude to Catholicism.⁵⁴

Another factor in the development of a secularized lay culture within France was that, after the 1802 Concordat, the government power over the formation of parishes meant that the Church was not free to respond to the need for more Churches in the growing working class districts of the cities. Thus, as Rémond has observed, the time lapse in the provision of churches and the consequent lack of opportunities to receive the sacraments, or to obtain religious instruction, was a factor in the de-Christianization of the *prolétariat*.⁵⁵ In particular, Thomas Kselman questions whether, in Paris, the scarcity of churches in some of the working class districts was a factor in the lower rate of church attendance, evident in the fact that, whilst 45.9 per cent of the population in the aristocratic seventh *arrondissement* received Easter communion in 1909-1914, only 5.8 per cent did so in the working class twentieth *arrondissement* of eastern Paris.⁵⁶

As a result, there developed two different ideas of France.⁵⁷ On the one side was ‘Catholic France’, with heroes such as Joan of Arc and Saint Louis and an often fervent belief in the importance of the monarchy, and on the other, ‘Republican France’, which, since the Revolution and the attempt to impose the Constitutional Church, had a history of being both secularist and anti-clerical. Even in the 1950s these differences were obvious geographically, with analyses by

⁵³ Larkin, “The Catholic Church and Politics in Twentieth Century France”, *French History Since Napoleon*, eds. Alexander, p. 147. McLeod, in *Secularization in Western Europe*, p. 267. McLeod provides detailed information on the attempt in the 1880s in France to ban traditional Catholic symbols such as wayside crucifixes and religious processions. p. 267.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p. 65.

⁵⁵ Rémond, *Religion and Society in Modern Europe*, p. 48.

⁵⁶ Thomas Kselman, “The Varieties of Religious Experience in Urban France”, *European Religion in the Age of Great Cities*, ed. Hugh McLeod, (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 170.

⁵⁷ Alan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), p. 52.

area indicating that areas that were more strongly Catholic before the Revolution, such as in the west, the Massif Central, and on the eastern border, continued to have higher rates of religious observance.⁵⁸

However, within Catholic France, there was division between those who, drawing from the tradition of the *dévots*, were pro-Papacy and more conscious of the religious unity of Europe, and the nationalistic Catholics, who were associated with the *politiques* during the time of Cardinal Richelieu, the Gallicanism of the eighteenth century, and with *Action Française* in the twentieth century.⁵⁹ One of the heirs to the *dévo*t emphasis on a Catholic and federalist understanding of Europe was the politician, Robert Schumann (1886-1963). Schumann, who was from the disputed province of Alsace, had been both a German and French citizen. Alongside others from the borders of nation states, such as de Gasperi from Trentino and Adenauer from the Rhineland, Schumann was one of the key figures behind the movement towards European integration after 1945.⁶⁰ Recently, Pope Benedict has described him as one of the ‘fathers’ of European unification.⁶¹ Catholics associated with the *Action Française* were drawing on a nationalist tradition associated with the rise of the absolutist monarchs and the balance-of-power policies following the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia.⁶²

⁵⁸ Maurice Larkin, *Church and State after the Dreyfus Affair: The Separation Issue in France*, (London: MacMillan, 1974), p. 9-14.

⁵⁹ Christopher Dawson points out that the French absolutist monarchy was actually a factor in the weakening of the Counter-Reformation and Baroque world.

⁶⁰ Terence Prittie argued that Adenauer saw Schuman as a latter day inheritor of the Middle Kingdom of Lothar, who was the grandson of Charlemagne. In Terence Prittie, *Konrad Adenauer: 1876-1967*, (Chicago, Illinois: Cowles Book Company, 1971), p. 178. During the crisis in European culture and society after the Second World War, significant political figures like Robert Schumann, Charles de Gaulle (1890-1970), Alcide de Gasperi (1881-1954), Conrad Adenauer (1876-1976), and Jean Monet (1888-1979), understood the importance of Christianity for the idea of Europe, and that this vision was broader than that provided by national or economic motives.

⁶¹ Ratzinger, (Pope Benedict XVI), *Values in a Time of Upheaval*, p. 145.

⁶² In this regard Paul Johnson cited the statement of Alcide de Gasperi, the Christian Democratic leader of Italy after the Second World War, who was credited with bringing about the Italian economic miracle. He called for people, “to be Catholic first and Italian second.” In Paul Johnson, *A History of the Modern World: From 1917 to the 1980s*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1983), p. 578.

For the Church, the continuing problematic of the influence of secularism within France is revealed in statistics since the 1960s.⁶³ Thus, McLeod states that the proportion of Catholic baptisms of babies declined from 91 per cent to 51 per cent during the last few decades.⁶⁴ Alongside these figures are the political and social trends evident in the fact that the former leader of the Gaullist conservative party within France, Jacques Chirac, opposed the recognition of Christianity in the European Constitution, and both major parties subscribe to the idea of the completely laicised state.

Impact outside of France

Throughout Europe, the impact of the Revolution was to be felt almost immediately, because of the various military campaigns against other European powers. The reaction of the German states, Spain and Russia to these French invasions was expressed in a new nationalistic spirit, which would be one of the defining factors in nineteenth century life. Alongside this was the interest in some of the key principles of 1789, summed up in the *Declaration of Rights*. Because of this impact, one author has claimed that,

The barest enumeration of some of the principal consequences of 1789 enforces the realization that the world as we know it today, and not only in the essentially democratized and industrialized west, is the composite of reflexes, political assumptions and structures, rhetorical postulates, bred by the French Revolution.⁶⁵

Paradoxically, one other influence of the French Revolution, particularly in Germany, was the promotion of counter-revolutionary thought, which would later impact on both the left and the right-wing of politics. Dawson believed that the German philosopher, Hegel (1770-1813), was

⁶³ McLeod, and Ustorf, *The Decline of Christendom in Western Europe*, p. 3.

⁶⁴ Yves-Marie Hilaire, *La Sociologie religieuse du catholicisme française au vingtième siècle*, cited in 'Catholicism, Politics and Society in Twentieth Century France', ed. Kay Chadwick, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000), p. 256.

⁶⁵ George Steiner, "Aspects of Counter Revolution", in *The Permanent Revolution: The French Revolution and its Legacy 1789-1989*, ed. Geoffrey Best, (London: Fontana Paperbacks, 1988), p. 151.

particularly influential, because of his glorification of the state and his impact on Karl Marx (1818-1883) and the modern Communist ideology. This meant that as his work, *Philosophy of Right* (1821), would be a factor in both conservative and revolutionary thought, there was not any modern political movement that had not been affected by it.⁶⁶ Furthermore, Dawson argues that Hegel's pamphlet on the Constitution of Germany emphasized such Prussian characteristics as 'Machiavellianism' in politics and a focus on the necessity of war for the health of a society.⁶⁷ When Dawson visited Germany before the First World War, he observed that it was like the state of society in the *Lord of the World* (Robert Hugh Benson's 1908 novel about the end of the world) and that, in contrast to bigoted English 'undenominationalists', they examined Christianity as if it was a kind of a beetle.⁶⁸

As previously mentioned, the French Revolution also had a significant impact through its 'laicist' model, on the traditionally Catholic countries of Italy, Spain and Mexico, where the Church found itself marginalized and excluded from a range of its traditional rôles, in areas such as education. During the 1930s, the civil war in Spain would serve to highlight the differences of opinion among Christians about modern society. Many Christians in Britain perceived the war to be a battle between democracy and autocratic and military oppression. However, Pearce, in commenting on the differences between C. S. Lewis and the Catholic convert Roy Campbell, maintains that in seeing the war in Spain as a fight to the death between traditional Christianity and secular atheism, Campbell was closer to reality than was Lewis, with his simplified depiction of a battle between 'left' and 'right'.⁶⁹ Dawson, arguing from an historical and cultural awareness of the rôle of Catholicism in Spain, took a similar view, which contrasted with the support for the

⁶⁶ Dawson, "Intellectual Antecedents: Hegel and the German Ideology", in *UE*, p. 189.

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, p. 195.

⁶⁸ Dawson, Letter to his sister, cited in Scott, *HHW*, p. 40.

⁶⁹ Joseph Pearce, "From the Prancing Pony to the Bird and Baby: Roy "Strider" Campbell and the Inklings", *St. Austin Review*, vol. 2, no. 6, (June 2002), p. 32.

Republican cause by the French philosopher Maritain. The differences in the perspectives of these two Catholic thinkers represent different analyses to the challenge posed by secularization. Maritain, from Catholic France, was aware of the problems of politics and philosophy, whereas Dawson, from Protestant Britain, focused more on cultural and historical issues.⁷⁰ The theme of either conflict, or a possible *rapprochement*, between a Catholic view of the human person's existence and the nature of society, and that associated with a post-Enlightenment modernity, is one that has continued to be addressed in Catholic thought since the eighteenth century.

Response of the Catholic Church and revival in nineteenth century

As mentioned in Chapter One, in countries such as France, the Church responded to modern secularization through politics and philosophy. Both the response at a political level, evident in the negotiation of the 1802 Concordat with the Napoleonic government, and that of the philosophical provided the background to a greater focus on education. Thus, after the passing of the Falloux law in 1851, the Church was allowed to establish secondary schools, which benefited from the rapid growth in numbers in religious orders in the nineteenth century.⁷¹ Prior to that time Catholic secondary education, as an alternative to the official state system, had only been allowed within the minor or 'petit' seminaries.

This growth also built on the strength of the earlier Catholic culture, which had survived the persecutions of the Revolutionary period. Dawson commented that during the 1790s, religious belief continued to be stronger among the general populace than among the intellectuals and the upper classes.⁷² Thus, the immediate post-Revolutionary period proved that the attempt at

⁷⁰ Burleigh, *Earthly Powers*, p. 23. France had been known as 'the eldest daughter of the Church'. Catholicism continued to be a significant part of French culture into the twentieth century.

⁷¹ Denis Brogan, *The Development of Modern France, 1870-1939*, New and Revised Edition, (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1967), p. 147.

⁷² Dawson, *GR*, p. 30.

complete de-Christianization had been unsuccessful. Mass, which had not been allowed to be said since October, 1793, was again allowed to be said publicly in Paris from early 1795, and one Parisian reported that rooms, apartments, halls and some monastic chapels were filled with congregations from early morning until midday.⁷³ Indeed, Dawson maintained that the suffering of the clergy during the Revolution had served to increase the prestige of religion because,

If it was difficult to take seriously the religion of the frivolous and well-dressed abbés of the old regime, it was just the opposite with men like the Abbe Pinot, who mounted the scaffold like a priest going to the altar in his ecclesiastical vestments, with the words '*Introibo ad altare Dei*' on his lips.⁷⁴

Dawson perceived that this revival of belief in religion, or at least a respect for religion, was the more remarkable when contrasted with the external losses that religion had suffered during the preceding period. This was because the Revolutionary era, which was characterized by an aggressively anti-religious trend, was even more destructive in both material terms and in loss of privileges, than the Reformation had been.⁷⁵

The destruction and chaos surrounding the Revolutionary period did challenge many of the Enlightenment perceptions and understandings of society that had been strong prior to 1789. Dawson records one of the writers of the French emigration, who marched over the frozen Zuyder Zee with the defeated English army in 1796, writing that, "... he felt all the illusions of the Enlightenment falling away from him under the cold light of the winter stars until he realized with a flash of blinding conviction that his life had been hitherto based on a lie."⁷⁶ This disillusionment with the Revolution and Enlightenment ideas was also to be revealed in the works of Joseph de

⁷³ Roger Aubert, ed. *Journal de Celestin Guittard de Floriban, bourgeois de Paris sous la Revolution*, (Paris: 1974), p. 495, cited in Doyle, *Oxford History of the French Revolution*, p. 288.

⁷⁴ Dawson, *GR*, p. 133.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, p. 130.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, p. 133.

Maistre (1753-1821) and Françoise René Chateaubriand (1768-1848).⁷⁷ In particular, de Maistre asserted the need for a stronger Papacy in his book *Du Pape*, published in 1820, and he argued that soon the Pontiffs would be universally proclaimed as supreme agents of civilization and benefactors of the human race.⁷⁸ Dawson maintained that the works of de Maistre were immensely important in the increasing emphasis on the rôle of the Papacy during the nineteenth century.⁷⁹

Two contemporary scholars, Nicholas Atkin and Frank Tallett, in discussing the long term impact of the persecution of the Church have contended that, whilst Catholicism was not destroyed in France, its practice was to be qualitatively altered.⁸⁰ This meant that many lost the habit of religious observance, that children never had religious instruction, that religion became privatized and that a gender dimorphism of religion, evident in the eighteenth century, was to become a major feature of the nineteenth.⁸¹ This is particularly apparent in the much higher attendance rates for women in the nineteenth century and the immense growth in women's religious orders.⁸²

The Catholic revival after 1815 was also evident within Germany, Britain and the USA. Carl Strikwerda has listed the areas of traditionally strong Catholic practice as being Quebec, the Rhineland, the Netherlands, and the Nord in France and Flanders in Belgium.⁸³ Indeed, he argues that the fact that the Flemish regions of Belgium had been a particular stronghold of Baroque

⁷⁷ Alfred Cobban, *A History of Modern France, Volume 3: 1871-1962*, (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1965), p.15. This author noted the religious revival after the Revolution, particularly among the aristocracy, who had been among the most ardent followers of the Enlightenment thinkers.

⁷⁸ Joseph de Maistre, *Du Pape*, It. Tr. *Del Papa*, Beneacci, Imola, II, pp. 228-9, cited in Roberto de Mattei, *Blessed Pius IX*, trans. John Laughland, (Leominster, Herefordshire: Gracewing, 2004), p. 151.

⁷⁹ Dawson, *GR*, p. 137.

⁸⁰ Atkin and Tallett, *Priests, Prelates and People*, p. 61.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Aubert, *The Christian Centuries: The Church in a Secularized Society*, p. 29. This author notes that in one decade between 1851 and 1861, membership of religious orders for women rose from 34,208 to 89,243.

⁸³ Carl Strikwerda, "A Resurgent Religion – The rise of Catholic social movements in nineteenth-century Belgian cities" in *European Religion in the Age of Great Cities 1830-1930*, ed. McLeod, p. 83.

Catholicism explains why Belgian Catholicism was so successful in resisting secularization until the middle of the twentieth century.⁸⁴

The Catholic revival in the twentieth century:

According to the historian, Hugh Brogan, the generally anti-clerical and secularist victory in France gave the Catholics a sharpened edge in dealing with intellectual issues.⁸⁵ In the twentieth century, some key people in this revival included Charles Peguy, George Bernanos, François Mauriac, a winner of the Nobel Prize for literature and Jacques and Raissa Maritain. Given that these conversions occurred during the modernist crisis in the Church, James Hitchcock believes that the conversions reflected a deliberate rejection of the rational scepticism associated with the Enlightenment.⁸⁶ These converts were attracted to the Church, not in spite of the condemnation of modernism, but because of it, and because they found the modernist doctrines either untrue or uninteresting.⁸⁷

As stated earlier, these patterns and trends in part reflected the historically strong influence of ideas and philosophers within France. In discussing the importance of philosophy, it is thus necessary to examine the personality and work of the neo-Thomist philosopher, Jacques Maritain, who represents a particular and influential interpretation of Thomism. To understand Maritain's background and work is to understand why neo-Thomism still had not developed an account of the importance of history and culture during the twentieth century. Indeed, this gap represents a major problematic, as this period required not only philosophical perspectives, but also an

⁸⁴ Ibid, p. 61.

⁸⁵ Denis Brogan, *France*, (Nederland (NV): Time-Life International, 1967), p. 117.

⁸⁶ James Hitchcock, "Postmortem on a rebirth: The Catholic Intellectual Renaissance", in *Years of Crisis: Collected Essays, 1970-1983*, pp. 203-116. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1985), pp. 203-216.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

eschatological focus on history which would provide a basis with which to understand this time of war and societal and cultural crisis.

Maritain was born in France at the beginning of yet another struggle between the Church and the French state over the rôle of Catholicism on both a political and cultural level. He grew up in this world of crisis for the Church, but had had no real contact with Catholicism as his mother, the daughter of Jules Favre (the noted Republican, involved in the anti-clerical campaigns of the early 1880s), had reared him in an atmosphere of liberal Protestantism. After leaving secondary school, the prestigious *Lycée Henri IV*, he entered the Sorbonne in 1889. Despite the fact that this was the time of the most aggressive moves against the Church, the intellectual climate was in some ways moving against the positivist and secularist ethos of the nineteenth century. Jacques and his future wife, Raissa Ousmanoff (from a Russian Jewish background), were dismayed by the seeming futility and meaninglessness of life, but the subsequent influence of Léon Bloy (1846-1917) would be crucial in leading to their conversions to Catholicism in 1906.⁸⁸ Most significantly, these years also saw Maritain, on the suggestion of his confessor Fr Clerissac, introduced to neo-Thomism. He would subsequently become one of its most eloquent and dedicated proponents.⁸⁹ His belief in the importance of ideas was to be reflected in his book, *Three Reformers: Luther, Descartes, and Rousseau*, published in 1926, which examined the thought of Luther, Descartes and Rousseau and their influence on the modern world.

⁸⁸ Amato, *Mounier and Maritain*, pp. 48-49. Amato states that the Maritain's received their Catholicism from Léon Bloy, a reactionary critic of the modern bourgeois world, who believed that the history since the Renaissance had been characterized by man's revolt against God.

⁸⁹ Hitchcock, *Postmortem on a rebirth*, p. 6. In regard to the influence of neo-Thomism on the converts Jacques and Raissa Maritain, Hitchcock notes "A probably apocryphal story has Raissa Maritain asking a woman, "Are you a Thomist?" "No, but I'm a Catholic". "Well, at least that's a start".

The lacuna in the response and new directions

The lacuna in a French Catholic understanding of modernity is most clearly illustrated in the next phase of Jacques Maritain's career. He had some involvement with *Action Française*, and also with the Catholic historian, Henri Massis before and after World War I. The relationship between the Church and *Action Française* was influenced by the crisis in French Catholicism during 1905. At this time, *Action Française* was to be one of the most militant supporters of the Church against the government's new laic laws. Indeed, it was the leader of the *Versaille* branch of *Action Française*, Bernard de Vesins, who led one of the most publicised acts of resistance to the new laws when he barricaded the Church of St Symphorien and, after the entry of troops, hurled a chair from the choir loft on to the head of the Prefect of Seine-et-Oise.⁹⁰ However, even before 1914, many prominent French Catholics such as the philosopher, Maurice Blondel, were expressing concerns about *Action Française*. Blondel's writings criticizing *Action Française* were sent to the bishop of Fejus and to the Archbishop of Albi. These two bishops were to denounce to the Vatican, just before World War I, the influence of Maurras over Catholics.

In 1920, Maritain had been a co-founder with Maurras of the *Revue universelle*, which was edited by both Massis and Bainville. Furthermore, Michael Sutton has suggested that Maritain's book, *Three Reformers*, had a definite Maurrassian bias and flavour.⁹¹ In 1927, Massis wrote, *The Defence of the West*, which had decried the barbarism associated with both Russian Bolshevism and German culture.⁹² Furthermore, he described this barbarism as emanating from Eastern values, which stood in opposition to those of the West.⁹³ However, a deeper understanding of the complexity of Western civilization and, indeed, of its rejection of many Christian values, was

⁹⁰ Michael Sutton, *Nationalism, Positivism and Catholicism: The Politics of Charles Maurras and French Catholics 1890-1914*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 94.

⁹¹ Ibid, p. 9.

⁹² Henri Massis, *The Defence of the West*, Preface by G. K. Chesterton, trans. by F.S. Flint, (London: Faber and Gwyer, 1927), pp. 47-56.

⁹³ Ibid, p. 14.

evident in a review that Dawson wrote of this book in 1928.⁹⁴ Thus, in opposition to a characterization of the West as a unified and Catholic bloc, clashing with the East, Dawson insisted in *The Dublin Review* that, “Western civilization is not a single unity, and in the eyes of the Asiatic, it stands not for Catholicism and the Latin tradition, but primarily for the industrial and financial power of the two great English-speaking peoples.”⁹⁵

As mentioned earlier the other prominent historian associated with *Action Française* besides Massis, was Jacques Bainville. Although he was an atheist, he believed that Catholicism was an essential component of the French nation and that this should be recognized through a study of French history. However, whilst Bainville critiqued many of the results of the Revolution, he did so from the philosophical and nationalistic assumptions of *Action Française*, which the Church believed were incompatible with Catholicism.⁹⁶ It was the belief that the Church was being manipulated for political purposes and also the extreme nationalistic views of *Action Française* which contributed to the Vatican condemnation of the movement in 1926. Its ‘politics first’ slogan was criticized and it was reliably accused of leading young French Catholics away from the broader Catholic action youth groups, whose members were to play such a vital rôle in post-World War II governments.⁹⁷

After the condemnation, Maritain began to express a greater admiration for liberal democracy. The move away from his former position would become more evident during the debate over the Spanish Civil War, when he came out in support of the Republican cause. His

⁹⁴ Christopher Dawson, “The Revolt of the East and the Catholic Tradition”, in *The Dublin Review*. vol. 183, no. 366, (July 1928), p. 4. As well Dawson argued that there had always been elements from the East in the Church, whether associated with monasticism or with the Greek Fathers.

⁹⁵ Ibid, pp. 3-4.

⁹⁶ Keylor, *Jacques Bainville*, p. xxv. “His mentor Maurras had set out to liberate royalist political theory from the romantic, irrationalist political tradition of Chateaubriand and the ‘sentimental’ royalists of the Bourbon Restoration by identifying it with the positivist philosophy of that ‘scientific’ royalist, Auguste Comte.”

⁹⁷ Aubert, *The Christian Centuries: The Church in a Secularized Society*, p. 550.

major work, *True Humanism*, was published during this time.⁹⁸ Maritain's viewpoints would be further developed during the 1940s and 1950s, when he spent considerable time in America (which he came to admire) in the diplomatic and political worlds, as ambassador to the Vatican for De Gaulle's post-war government, and in helping to formulate the 1948 *Declaration on Human Rights*. Thus, the lack of a coherent Catholic historiography in France which was also able to critique the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, the on-going strength of Catholic culture within France, alongside the religious revival after World War I, and the strength of Catholicism in America evident during the 1940s and 1950s were all factors in Maritain's greater admiration for American liberalism and his view about a possible *rapprochement* with its culture.

Therefore, the fact that prominent philosophers like Maritain had no realistic and rigorous framework with which to analyse modern culture, meant that there was no apparent alternative to the prevailing climate of opinion which suggested that the Church and modernity were compatible. This optimism was to be noticeable in interpretations of the Second Vatican Council.⁹⁹ In particular, a perception of the Council as demanding an accommodation with modern culture meant the removal of many of the continuing characteristics of Baroque culture where it had existed strongly, as in Flanders, Bavaria and Austria. Ultimately, these actions proved more destructive of religious practice and belief than the earlier external challenges of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic armies.

⁹⁸ Jacques Maritain, *True Humanism*, (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1938).

⁹⁹ In this regard, Schreier has observed that Vatican II was an attempt to engage with modernity which he states, "...arises out of the consequences of the Enlightenment and which proposed an emancipatory program for humankind based on reason and democratic participation of people in the decisions that affect their lives." Robert J. Schreier, "The Impact of Vatican II", in *The Twentieth Century: A Theological Overview*, ed. Baum, p. 159.

Church and current debate

As one of the major aspects of this lacuna was the lack of a deep understanding of the French Revolution, a trend in history from the late 1970's has had important implications for the Church. Whilst the dominant historical view of the French Revolution may have influenced the attitude of Catholics towards aspects of modern culture and, consequently, their perceptions of the most appropriate catechetical and educational strategies for the Church, revisionist scholarship has meant that many of the positive assumptions about these events have been questioned by a range of prominent French historians, such as the former Marxist, Françoise Furet. Also, it is to be expected that the challenge to these events would eventually lead to a questioning of the use of the rhetoric that was used for their justification.

The bi-centennial celebrations of the Revolution, in 1989, indicated the evolving and, at times, ambivalent nature of Catholic attitudes towards the Revolution. Thus, Steven Kaplan suggests that Cardinal Lustiger was surprised that the early Revolution was not immediately antireligious, given that it was based on an Enlightenment ideology.¹⁰⁰ According to Jean-François Lyotard, the year 1968 was a time of crisis for the modern world.¹⁰¹ It also saw the rise to prominence within France of a revisionist trend in historiography. This trend emphasized a range of factors, including the rôle of ideas and the part they played in the subsequent displays of violence during the Terror, especially in the Vendée. This challenged the prevailing Marxist and deterministic interpretation of the Revolution as a necessary and positive stage in the overthrow of feudalism by the bourgeoisie. Ronald Schecter maintains that the rôle of the Sixth Section of the *École Pratiques des Hautes Etudes* meant a declining influence for Marxism in intellectual

¹⁰⁰ Kaplan, *Farewell Revolution: Disputed Legacies*, p. 123.

¹⁰¹ Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, eds. Geoffrey Bennington and Brian Massumi, (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1984), p. xxiv, p. 52. Rowland, *CTT*, p. 16. Rowland notes that, "The watershed year of 1968 is now commonly held to mark the beginning of the period of post-modernity and a growing recognition of the internal contradictions within the Liberal tradition..."

circles after 1968, and an opportunity for a deeper and more diverse revisionist historiography of the Revolution.¹⁰² In particular, Francois Furet was able to draw from the scholarship of the historian, Augustin Cochin (1876-1916), to analyse the ‘channels’, or mechanisms, which were factors in the way in which the new revolutionary ideology influenced French society.¹⁰³ This view of the significance of the intellectual factor in the Revolution paralleled Dawson’s thought as expressed in his last book.¹⁰⁴

The French Protestant historian, Pierre Chanau, has analysed the French Revolution in demographic, economic and social terms as representing a disaster for France, which meant that she slipped from being a first-rate power on the European continent, to a third-rate one by 1914. Chanau’s views on the *Declaration of Rights* and the ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity have been summarized as meaning that if the Revolutionary trinity were removed from the Judeo-Christian context, it would be unreal and dangerous, and that if a person recited the Our Father and respected the Ten Commandments he or she didn’t need the Declaration of 1789.¹⁰⁵

In summary, the experience of Catholicism with regard to the Revolution, when considered alongside recent revisionist scholarship and the Dawsonian historical perspective contains important lessons for Catholics in other countries. These can be summarized as follows:

- I. The need for Catholics to have continued access to their own history and culture. Maintaining the continuities with the original culture in a range of areas including liturgy, art, music and architecture acts as an antidote to the dissolvent effects of a secular culture.

¹⁰² Schechter, *The French Revolution*, p. 1.

¹⁰³ Ibid, p. 3.

¹⁰⁴ Dawson, *GR*, p. 57.

¹⁰⁵ Steven Laurant Kaplan, *Farewell Revolution: The Historians Feud, France, 1789/1989*, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1995), p. 40.

- II. This factor will enable Catholics to understand the pivotal rôle of Christianity in the formation of Western society. This lack of understanding has fostered an ignorance and a crisis of confidence in Catholic culture, and engendered the marginalization evident in recent decades.
- III. In spite of the cultural, geographical and language isolation of living in Australia, the intellectual and spiritual 'duty of care' that Catholic educationalists and catechists owe to their students requires that they understand the new developments in scholarship, which have challenged earlier jejune ideas and formulas about the Enlightenment and modern culture. However, given these factors of isolation, it is doubtful that there has been any real challenge to the intellectual assumptions of those still determining Catholicism's relationship with modern culture in Australia.

England: Whig History, Liberalism and Catholicism

Within Britain an erroneous view of history has also led to the construction of an alternative secular culture which is showing a growing antagonism to the Church.¹⁰⁶ British history writing was initially based on particular forms of Protestantism and the rejection of a European Catholic heritage. Thus, whilst the Church in France was confronted by philosophical challenges, within Britain the debate centred on history, and a specifically British Protestant history. Britain was the first country to industrialize and with its enormous empire and power, it became an important influence on the modern world. At the same time, a conflict did develop between traditional religious views and an alternative belief system provided by the doctrine of Progress. This was reflected in nationalistic history writing, which following the trend set by eighteenth-century figures such as Gibbon, tended to either ignore or negatively interpret Christianity's rôle in European history.

¹⁰⁶ Nichols, *Christendom Awake*, p. 13.

England had been part of European Christendom in religious and cultural terms, since the time of Augustine's conversion of the English, from about AD 596. English saints played an important rôle in the conversion of Europe and Dawson believed that St Boniface in particular, "... had a deeper influence on the history of Europe than any other Englishman who ever lived."¹⁰⁷ Later, during the eleventh century, the Norman Conquest reinforced England's relationship with Europe. Edwin Jones maintains that until the Reformation, England remained very much a part of Europe in terms of its religion, language and culture.¹⁰⁸

However, England has been a predominantly Protestant nation since the Reformation and the Elizabethan Age. Edwin Jones has argued that the Reformation constituted a turning point for England, away from continental Europe and towards an image of itself as a self-contained, Protestant nation.¹⁰⁹ He further contends that Henry VIII's minister, Thomas Cromwell, created a new national and political theology with an erroneous view of the past. Some of the features of this post-Reformation Britain included the suppression of the monasteries (the ruins of which were a reminder to the young Dawson in Yorkshire of an earlier Catholic past), the Act of Supremacy (1534), making the king Supreme Head of the Church of England, and the establishment of a state church and the Restraint of Appeals, which made it an offence to appeal to a court outside England (Papal or otherwise). One of the most radical breaches was evident in the dissolution of the monasteries. Thus, the 825 religious houses of monks, friars and nuns in 1535 had been reduced to none by 1540.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ Dawson, *ME*, p. 189.

¹⁰⁸ Edwin Jones, *The English Nation: The Great Myth*, (Gloucestershire: Sutton Publishing, 1998), p. 5.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*, p. vii.

¹¹⁰ John Vidmar, *The Catholic Church Through the Ages: A History*, (New York: Paulist Press, 2005), p. 210.

Other factors which continued to shape England's identity as a Protestant nation included Foxes' *Book of Martyrs*, published in 1563, which catalogued the Protestants executed during the reign of the Catholic Mary Tudor, and Milton's concept of England as an 'elect nation'. During the seventeenth century, the 'Cromwellian' Puritan Revolution and the 'Glorious Revolution' against James II, further eroded any popular awareness of England's Catholic past. The rôle of anti-Papal and anti-Catholic rhetoric in English life was evident as late as the 1780's, during the Gordon riots, which followed tentative moves towards Catholic emancipation. Indeed, the symbolic exclusion of Catholics from the mainstream of English life, evident in the Act of Settlement, in 1689, and in the yearly celebration of Guy Fawkes' night has remained a continuing feature of the national life today.

The 'Whig view of history' best chronicled this Protestant viewpoint. As mentioned in the Introduction, this term was popularized by the historian, Herbert Butterfield, in the 1930s, and came to mean an almost religious idea of Progress, which involved a reading of history backwards in order to justify the present. By the middle of the nineteenth century the burgeoning middle class in Britain was pro-liberal, laissez-faire, anti-protection in economics and tending to be non-conformist and evangelical.¹¹¹ In fact, it was the new evangelical and non-conformist middle class who promoted legislation that would help to further undermine the old rural Anglican and Tory England. This new middle class tended to be reading writers such as Macaulay, who interpreted the history of England as a history of Progress.¹¹² In this regard, Stuchey contends that Macaulay was suggesting that there was a continuous line of English civilization, stretching from the time of the Norman Conquest in 1066, and the Domesday Book

¹¹¹ R.C.K. Ensor, *England 1870-1914*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1949), p. 137.

¹¹² Thomas Babington Macaulay, "Sir James Mackintosh's History of the Revolution", in idem, "Critical and Historical Essays", vol. ii, p. 298. cited in Stefan Berger, Mark Donovan and Kevin Passmore, eds., *Writing National Histories: Western Europe Since 1800*, (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 33.

in 1086, through to the Reform Act of 1832.¹¹³ Furthermore, the introduction of compulsory education after 1870 meant that this idea of Progress, which paralleled perspectives that were, nationalistic, ‘Whiggish’ and Protestant, would provide the basis for school curricula and textbooks.¹¹⁴

In general, by the 1870s, religion was being challenged by increased secularization. In addition, the twin pillars of English society, Anglicanism and the old rural aristocracy were facing new challenges to their position in a country characterized by laissez-faire economics and the influence of non-conformist religion. After 1870, religious attendance figures began a slow decline, which increased during the twentieth century. Industrialization by engendering changes to traditional communities in Britain was a major factor in secularization.¹¹⁵ This meant that change in Britain was driven mainly by social and economic factors, in contrast to the situation in France, where a powerful rôle for intellectuals meant philosophy and ideas had a greater impact.

Whilst the construction of a completely secular and lay culture appears to have arrived later in Britain than in France, the figures suggest it has become extremely problematic for the Christian Church there, too, in recent years. For example, Callum Brown quoted figures from the year 2000 which showed that less than 8 per cent of British people are regular Sunday church-goers, that only about one in four are members of any church and that only 50 per cent of couples get married in church, whilst about a third of couples are living together without marriage.¹¹⁶ These figures correlate with other surveys and indicate major declines in the Christian

¹¹³ Berger, Donovan and Passmore, eds., *Writing National Histories*, p. 33.

¹¹⁴ Jones, *The English Nation*, p. 218.

¹¹⁵ McLeod, “Introduction”, to *The Decline of Christendom in Western Europe*, eds. McLeod and Ustorf, p. 17.

¹¹⁶ Callum Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain: Understanding Secularization 1800-2000*, (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 3.

consciousness evident since the formation of Western Christendom.¹¹⁷ This is reflected in the fact that although 74 per cent of people express a belief in the existence of some kind of God or ‘higher power’, only 50 per cent or fewer believe in such Christian doctrines as the existence of sin, heaven, hell or a life after death.¹¹⁸

Furthermore, Herbert observes that Britain is quite exceptional even in European terms, because of high rates of positive disbelief in God at 27 per cent and in life after death at 41 per cent.¹¹⁹ Callum Brown has also focused on the 1960s as presenting a watershed in British life and he suggests that the cultural changes of that decade represent a major break in Christianity’s rôle in forming the identity of British women.¹²⁰ In summary, Brown observes that,

Then, really quite suddenly in 1963, something very profound recaptured the character of the nation and its people, sending organized Christianity on a downward spiral to the margins of social significance. In unprecedented numbers, the British people since the 1960s have stopped going to church, have allowed their church membership to lapse, have stopped marrying in church and have neglected to baptise their children.¹²¹

Thus, although church-going had been in decline from the 1870s, the decades following the 1960s showed rapidly increased secularization which was reflected in declines in church weddings, rates of baptism and religious funerals and Sunday school enrolments. Brown observes that although the level of Sunday school enrolments by the 1990s was difficult to identify, it was probably only about 5-8 per cent of children.¹²² As the children born to the ‘baby boomers’ in Britain were largely raised in homes where there was no regular contact with religion, it is

¹¹⁷ Peter Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom: Triumph and Diversity AD 200-1000*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2002), p. 265.

¹¹⁸ Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain*, p. 4.

¹¹⁹ David Herbert, *Religion and Civil Society: Rethinking Public Religion in the Contemporary World*, (Hampshire, England: Ashgate, 2003), p. 11.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

¹²¹ Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain*, p. 1.

¹²² Callum Brown, “The Secularization Debate: what the 1960’s have done to the study of religious history”, in *The Decline of Christendom in Western Europe*, eds., McLeod and Ustorf, p. 32.

expected that they will be even more distant from the churches in the future.¹²³ Brown argues that the Christian-infused public culture, and the influence of the complex web of legally and socially accepted rules which helped form individuals before the 1960s, had been destroyed since that time.¹²⁴ These figures are paralleled in other parts of Europe such as Sweden. The European Values Studies has suggested that Sweden is one of the most secularised countries in Western Europe because of the minimal rates of belief and attendance at public worship.¹²⁵ Thus, figures cited by Hambey reveal that, in 1990, only 15 per cent believed in the existence of a personal God and only 19 per cent in the resurrection of the dead.¹²⁶

Whilst secularization has speeded up in English society since the eighteenth century, it is necessary to understand that this process is not automatic and that Christianity has also experienced revivals, such as the one that occurred in the nineteenth century. This period of revival was characterized by; the enthusiasm and influence of Methodism; the greater confidence of Catholics after the *Emancipation Act* of 1829; and the general evangelical tone of much of Anglicanism. The Catholic revival after 1829 was associated with the massive Irish immigration, especially from the 1840s, in the time of ‘the famine’, and also with the high-profile ‘Second Spring’ converts, such as Newman and the architect Augustus Pugin. Newman had originally been involved in the Oxford movement which grew up alongside a new romantic appreciation of the Middle Ages. Schwartz observes that this nineteenth-century Catholic revival was focused on the Papacy and was particularly aware of its separation from the predominant culture of

¹²³ Ibid, p. 34.

¹²⁴ Ibid, p. 30.

¹²⁵ Eva M. Hamberg, “Christendom in Decline”, in *The Decline of Christendom in Western Europe*, eds. McLeod and Ustorf, p. 47.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

Britain.¹²⁷ This can be contrasted with an earlier Cisalpine tendency in English Catholicism, which had survived persecution through a subdued and inward-looking approach.

By the middle decades of the twentieth century the number of converts, many of them high-profile intellectuals, was growing by about twelve thousand per year.¹²⁸ These intellectuals were a confident and articulate group who, alongside other Christians such as C. S. Lewis (1889-1963) and Dorothy Sayers (1893-1957), formed what has been termed, ‘a network of minds’.¹²⁹ Many of them exhibited an unease about the cultural trends they believed were inherent within modernity and they became part of what has been termed, ‘the Third Spring’ of conversions, in contrast to the ‘Second Spring’ revival of the nineteenth century.¹³⁰ The twentieth-century converts included Siegfried Sassoon (1886-19167), G. K. Chesterton and Edith Sitwell (1887-1964), Ronald Knox (1889-1974, the son of an Anglican bishop), Edward Ingram Watkins (1888-1981, Dawson’s friend), Evelyn Waugh (1903-1966) and the artist, David Jones (1895-1974).

However, their conversions also need to be understood against a background of general antagonism towards religion by other high-profile intellectuals. These included Virginia Wolfe of the Bloomsbury set, who, on hearing of the conversion of T.S. Eliot to Anglicanism, wrote to her sister saying,

I have had a most shameful and distressing interview with poor dear Tom Eliot, who may be called dead to us all from this day forward. He has become an Anglo-Catholic, believes in God and immortality and goes to church. I was really shocked. A corpse would seem to me more credible than he is. I mean, there’s something obscene in a living person sitting by the fire and believing in God.¹³¹

¹²⁷ Schwartz, *The Third Spring*, p. 19.

¹²⁸ Nichols, “Christopher Dawson’s Catholic Setting”, in *Eternity in Time*, eds. Caldecott and Morrill, p. 25.

¹²⁹ Joseph Pearce, *Literary Converts: Spiritual Inspiration in an Age of Unbelief*, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1999), p. 267.

¹³⁰ Schwartz, *The Third Spring*, p. 2. p. 7.

¹³¹ *Ibid*, p. 1.

When discussing English Catholicism in the first half of the twentieth century, Nichols has written that in contrast to an exclusive focus on theology or philosophy, the Church's real strength lay in its 'theology of culture'.¹³² This understanding and appreciation of the rôle of culture was evident in Waugh's novel, *Brideshead Revisited*, written in 1944, about a wealthy and aristocratic Catholic family. The novel was steeped with nostalgia for a gracious world which he thought that World War Two had ended. In particular, Waugh drew upon Chesterton's metaphors of 'an unseen hook' and 'a twitch upon the thread', to focus on the actions of grace in the lives of the main characters.¹³³

Catholic historians such as Hilaire Belloc (1870-1953), with a perhaps more aggressive and polemical style, had already attempted to counter what they determined was the blatant anti-Catholicism evident within English historiography.¹³⁴ In this, Belloc would not only be attacking the liberal industrial state, but the whole edifice associated with the landed gentry, who had done so well out of the despoliation of the monasteries. Indeed, to Belloc, the Reformation was a rising of the rich against the poor, when the mercantile and landed classes used Henry VIII's lust and the small number interested in a new religion in order to destroy the 'old' Catholic order.¹³⁵ Belloc and other key writers, such as G. K. Chesterton, were associated with a continuing romantic interest in the Middle Ages.

Dawson and many other English intellectual converts shared in a tradition stemming back to the Romantic movement of the nineteenth century, which had reacted so strongly against the

¹³² Nichols, "Christopher Dawson's Catholic Setting", in *Eternity in Time*, eds. Caldecott and Morrill, p. 27.

¹³³ Pearce, *Literary Converts*, p. 36.

¹³⁴ Frederick D. Wilhelmsen, "Hilaire Belloc", in *The Catholic Writer: Volume 2*, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989), p.89.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

Industrial Revolution and the destruction of the rural way of life.¹³⁶ They often seemed to be from Anglican backgrounds and to have been attracted to the Catholic Church for its doctrinal certainty, in contrast to what Dawson would call ‘the haze of uncertainty’ that hung about the Anglican Church.¹³⁷ Russell Hittinger suggests that the Catholic intellectual renaissance was marked in three main areas: first, the literary-aesthetic one, associated with writers such as Waugh, Bernanos, Greene and Mauriac; secondly, a philosophical one, associated with the renewal of Thomistic philosophy, following on from Pope Leo XIII’s encyclical, *Aeterni Patris*, in 1879, and whose main proponents were Jacques Maritain and Etienne Gilson; and finally, the area of theology associated with clerics such as Danielou, de Lubac, and von Balthasar.¹³⁸ Further, he contends that Chesterton managed to combine the strengths of all three areas.¹³⁹ However, Hittinger also argues that as only one figure, Christopher Dawson, stood out in the area of social science, the Catholic renaissance represented an incomplete response to the challenge of modernity.¹⁴⁰ Thus, this Catholic historian and cultural writer cannot easily be compared with other categories of the Catholic revival, whether these were from a literary, historical, theological, or philosophical perspective.

In the contemporary period, Dawson’s work also needs to be considered alongside the impact of revisionist historical scholarship. Conrad Russell has observed the influence of this historiographical trend in challenging the Whig and Marxist concept of Progress.¹⁴¹ One major area of revisionist scholarship has been about the Reformation era. Scholars here have included Christopher Haigh and Eamon Duffy, who have argued that England was not ripe for the

¹³⁶ Schwartz, *The Third Spring*, pp. 14-15.

¹³⁷ Christopher Dawson, “Why I am a Catholic”, cited in Scott, *HHW*, p. 37.

¹³⁸ Hittinger, “Christopher Dawson: A View from the Social Sciences”, in *The Catholic Writer*, ed. McInerny, pp. 31-32.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

¹⁴¹ Conrad Russell, *Unrevolutionary England: 1603-1642*, (London: Hambledon Press, 1990), pp. ix-x.

Reformation as many British historians over time have attempted to assert. Rather, these revisionist writers have shown that Catholicism was vital and flourishing in England in the early sixteenth century and, that Anglicanism was largely an imposed religion, undesired by much of the populace. As well, the English feeling of separateness from Europe, which these histories engendered, has been challenged in the last one hundred years by events such as the two World Wars and the advent, and continued expansion of the European Economic Community (now called the European Union).¹⁴²

In summary, the gaps and problems associated with the Catholic response to Whig history can be addressed by focusing on broadly based histories, rather than on nationalistic ones, and on the history and rôle of Catholicism in the formation of Europe. For Catholics living in the English-speaking world, apart from the USA, a number of lessons and conclusions can be drawn from the particular problematic of British modern liberal culture:

- I. First the need for a deeper knowledge of Britain's earlier Catholic heritage, which had existed prior to the Reformation for almost a thousand years and its continued impact into the modern era in such institutions as the monarchy.
- II. A corresponding emphasis on the European Catholic patrimony of the entire English-speaking world. This would help Catholics develop an awareness that they are heirs to a broad and deep, spiritual and intellectual tradition.
- III. Catholic educationalists and catechists need to be aware of the new developments in scholarship which have challenged events such as the Reformation, the English Civil War and the 1688 Revolution, as inevitable components of 'Progress'.

¹⁴² 2004 has also seen the one hundredth anniversary of the "*Entente Cordiale*", between Britain and France, an occasion marked by the Queen using French in a speech in Paris.

IV. Pastoralists and liturgists should consider that British popular culture of the 1960s was particularly dissolvent of the remnants of the Christian culture.

America: a new world culture

Christopher Dawson observed that the United States had achieved its independence in the heyday of the European Enlightenment and that therefore, the ideology of the Enlightenment was the foundation of its national existence.¹⁴³ This meant that the principles of the Constitution and the Declaration of Rights became seen as absolute truths upon which the American way of life was founded.¹⁴⁴ Furthermore, Alan Bloom's observed that the authority of the 'Founders' was based not on tradition, or revelation, but on nature grasped by reason.¹⁴⁵ Dawson thought that this background indicated that Europeans were committed to the past, whereas Americans saw the Revolution as the dawn of a new age.¹⁴⁶ These ideas influenced a concept of the nation as in some sense emancipated from the past. According to Clark, the fact that the circumstances associated with the 'Founding' have been such a powerful collective myth in America has meant,

The United States is therefore particularly vulnerable to post-modernism, since its public culture embodies few scenarios of fundamental change apart from revolutionary, emancipatory ones.¹⁴⁷

Dawson also claimed that the American Revolution was a pivotal event in world history, because it focused the Enlightenment on political matters and infused a 'revolutionary' purpose into the democratic idealism of Rousseau.¹⁴⁸ A similar understanding is evident in Louis

¹⁴³ Dawson, *CWE*, p. 182.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ Alan Bloom, *Confronting the Constitution: the challenge to Locke, Montesquieu, Jefferson and the Federalists from Utilitarianism, Historicism, Marxism, Freudianism, Pragmatism, Essentialism...* in ed. Alan Bloom, (Washington, 1990), cited in Clark, *Our Shadowed Present*, p. 247.

¹⁴⁶ Dawson, *CWE*, p. 182.

¹⁴⁷ Clark, *Our Shadowed Present*, p. 146.

¹⁴⁸ Dawson, *GR*, p. 51.

Gottschalk's contention that the American Revolution furnished the model and political philosophy that would, ultimately, be used by the leaders of the Revolution in France.¹⁴⁹

The other major feature of America's life stems from its foundation by Puritan settlers fleeing the 'old world' of Europe. Huntington, in his recent work, *Who Are We: America's Great Debate*, has maintained that America needs to be understood as a Protestant nation and furthermore, that it has successfully 'Protestantised' Catholics.¹⁵⁰ The American conservative thinker, Russell Kirk (1918-1994), has also argued that the founders had been influenced more by their Protestant Christianity than by political philosophy.¹⁵¹

The development of an American sense of patriotism, combining both Calvinistic Puritanism and the universalistic Enlightenment thought evident in the Constitution, produced a particular challenge for Catholicism. Thus, a religious understanding which fostered a rejection of a Catholic past and a privatization of religion's rôle, alongside the belief in the neutrality of the secular state meant that Catholics in America always face the challenge of what Dawson and, more recently, Cardinal Francis George termed, being 'Catholic in faith and Protestant in culture'.¹⁵² As well, Dawson argued that American education and intellectual life was predominantly secular, and this reflected the fact that the separation of the Church and state, which was meant to insure religious freedom, had become a major factor in the secularization of

¹⁴⁹ Louis Gottschalk, "The Place of the American Revolution", in *Pattern of the French Revolution in Problems in European Civilization: The Eighteenth Century Revolution French or Western*, (Boston: D.C. Heath and Company, 1963), p. 64.

¹⁵⁰ Huntington, *Who Are We?* p. 96.

¹⁵¹ Gerald J. Russello, *The Postmodern Imagination of Russell Kirk*, (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2007), p. 22.

¹⁵² Rowland, *CTT*, p. 40.

American society and the subsequent loss of influence over the religious formation of the people.¹⁵³

According to Clark, after the Revolution a new programmatic ‘civic religion’ was constructed, which was more ethical, but at the same time, more deferential to the sovereignty of collective opinion.¹⁵⁴ This tendency to social conformism in American life has been identified by commentators such as Alexis de Tocqueville, Dawson and Schindler. Thus, Schindler refers to Alexis de Tocqueville’s observation in *Democracy in America* that Americans are Cartesian in their individualism, but that when this concept is joined by equality, it means that they are vulnerable to a tyranny of the majority.¹⁵⁵ Schindler goes on to argue that this results in a peculiar vulnerability to mass opinion and that, “...mass opinion becomes the – now tyrannical – tradition of those who have no tradition.”¹⁵⁶

At the present time, the religious sociologist, Rodney Stark, insists that religion is doing well in the USA and this reflects the fact that, as there was no established religion, competition between religions encouraged vitality. This lack of a state church on the one hand, and a diversity of churches on the other, had also been considered during Alexis de Tocqueville’s visit to America in the 1840s when he noted the apparent strength of religion in the Americas compared to France. Steve Bruce has described this argument as suggesting that the religious vitality exists, not because of varying demand, but because of a type of religious marketplace that impacts on the ‘supply’ of religious goods.¹⁵⁷ However, he goes on to argue that the problem with this ‘free market’ model is that lower rates of church membership are evident in the more diverse areas of

¹⁵³ Dawson, *CWE*, p. 184.

¹⁵⁴ Clark, *The Language of Liberty*, p. 384.

¹⁵⁵ Schindler, “Introduction: Grace and the Form of Nature”, in *Catholicism and Secularization in America*, ed. Schindler, p. 28

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ Rodney Stark and Roger Finke, *The Churching of America*, 2000, cited in Bruce, *God is Dead*, p. 5.

the country, whereas areas where one church dominates exhibit higher church membership and rates of practice.¹⁵⁸ Thus Bruce observes that,

Diversity at the level of the nation state may determine issues of state subsidy and regulation, but, unless there is also considerable diversity lower down, in the places where ordinary people live and purportedly engage in maximizing behaviour, then we can hardly say that the typical American has any greater opportunity to choose a religion than the typical Briton.¹⁵⁹

Recently, Bruce has examined some of the data on religious practice and belief in the United States and discovered that these do not indicate as strongly religious a society as often thought, and that the privatization, individualism and relativism which impacted on British churches in the middle of the twentieth century are now beginning to affect the US churches in the same way.¹⁶⁰ Bruce also refers to a trend in America to view religion as a form of therapy and suggests this change began in the 1930s with the work of a liberal Presbyterian minister, Norman Vincent Peale.¹⁶¹ Bruce argues that Peale's influence meant that the Christian message about the battle between good and evil no longer concerned realities that were external to us.¹⁶² Rather that,

Evil was a lack of self-confidence; good was positive thinking. Those people who think positively (while conforming to the norms of suburban middle class 1950s America) will be successful; this is salvation.¹⁶³

With regard to optimism about religion in contemporary society, Olsen observes that those who argue that deep secularization is not taking place win their argument by definition, if they accept as Catholic, modes of practice and belief that in previous times would have been

¹⁵⁸ Bruce, *God is Dead*, p. 221.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Bruce, *God is Dead*, p. 227.

¹⁶¹ Ibid, p. 209.

¹⁶² Ibid, p. 109.

¹⁶³ Ibid, p. 209.

considered only marginally, or incompletely Catholic.¹⁶⁴ During the 1950s, Dawson suggested that, in spite of an increase in church attendance and membership, this actually reflected a spirit of social conformity, which meant that religion was viewed as part of the American way of life. However, he felt that this process did not involve any real understanding of the nature of Christian culture and therefore, had not impacted on the predominantly secular character of American education and intellectual life.¹⁶⁵ It has previously been noted that this understanding of American life as predominantly secular is also reflected in Gauchet's observation that a society can still be basically secular in spite of a stronger superstructural religious sphere, evident in higher rates of private belief and Sunday/Sabbath practice.¹⁶⁶

The debate continues as to whether the higher rates of religious practice in America have actually formed a Christian culture.¹⁶⁷ The optimism about whether the Church in America is a model for Catholicism's interaction with modernity has also been challenged in recent decades by factors such as the large numbers who have left the priesthood, the sex abuse scandals and even the beliefs and voting patterns which characterize major Catholic politicians on a range of moral issues. Initially, Catholics in America were able to maintain a certain cohesiveness vis-à-vis a Protestant and secularist milieu, because of the continuing strength of the Irish and German ethnic groups. As well, during the twentieth century, there was the development of a large, higher education sector evident in the rapid growth of Catholic colleges and universities. Finally, there

¹⁶⁴ Olsen, "The Meaning of Christian Culture: An Historical View", in *Catholicism and Secularisation in America*, ed. Schindler, p. 99.

¹⁶⁵ Dawson, *CWE*, p. 184.

¹⁶⁶ Gauchet, *The Disenchantment of the World*, p. 164.

¹⁶⁷ Sydney Mead commented that in spite of high levels of religious observance that, "...practically every species of traditional orthodoxy in Christendom is intellectually at war with the basic premises upon which the constitutional and legal structures of the Republic rest." In Sydney E. Mead, *The Old Religion and the Brave New World: Reflections on the Relation between Christendom and the Republic*, cited in J.C.D. Clark, *The Language of Liberty: Political Discourse and Social Dynamics in the Anglo-American World*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 390.

was also an attempt to develop some sort of *rapprochement* with the civic culture (as based upon the American Revolution and the Constitution) and with the American way of life.

However, there are major difficulties with all of these responses and they cannot be considered adequate for the flourishing of a full Catholic life. The older ethnic identities have generally broken down as American Catholics have become more affluent and have been absorbed into the mainstream of national life. In particular, the development of an alternative Catholic higher education sector can in fact be counterproductive, if it just produces secular colleges with denominational labels. The debate about the third response of developing some form of *rapprochement* with the American way of life has highlighted the differences between particular schools of American conservatism, such as neo-conservatism and paleoconservatism.¹⁶⁸ Within paleoconservatism, Gottfried has identified a movement towards a Latin Mass Catholicism which is both anti-modernist and critical of the Protestant foundations of American society.¹⁶⁹ Thomas Fleming, who edits the journal *Chronicles* and is one of the leading paleoconservatives has critiqued neo-conservative Catholics, by stating that,

They are indifferent or hostile to the traditional liturgy, defend the discovery of democratic capitalism as an event of ‘incarnational significance’ (Michael Novak), and routinely defended U.S. foreign policy against explicit statements of John Paul II. Catholic neo-conservatives represent the triumph of ‘Americanism’ in the Church.¹⁷⁰

During the period of the Cold War, the United States of America had been one of the strongest opponents of Communism, which may explain the attempt of those working from a Whig Thomist perspective to find a *rapprochement* with American liberalism and culture. However,

¹⁶⁸ Russello, *The Postmodern Imagination of Russell Kirk*, p. 17. Also Gottfried has argued that American mainline conservatism, with its emphasis on exporting democracy and a market economy, is completely different from the traditionalism associated with European conservatism which has supported aristocracy and social hierarchy. In Paul Edward Gottfried, *Conservatism in America: Making Sense of the American Right*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 1.

¹⁶⁹ Paul Edward Gottfried, *Conservatism in America: Making Sense of the American Right*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 67.

¹⁷⁰ Thomas Fleming, “Why America is not a Christian Country”, in *The Spectator*, London, 27 August, 2005, p. 19.

recent scholarship has emphasized the deep cultural differences between a secular Enlightenment culture, albeit with some Calvinist Christian understandings, and an authentic Catholic ethos.

One important aspect of the American model of modern culture is the far-reaching influence that it has had on the rest of the world. This is not only reflected in business practices and popular culture, but according to Clark, has influenced models of histories used in countries such as Germany. Thus, he suggests that, after 1945, the modernist national academic enterprise of the United States was to be in some way imposed on German society, which would affect its own historical and social-scientific perspective of itself.¹⁷¹ This reflected American sociology's view that any Western society would need to undergo the historical experience of modernization.¹⁷² Paul Gottfried has observed that the most enthusiastic proponents of enforced German re-education were descendants of old WASP families, such as Major General McClure (1896-1973) and the philosopher John Dewey.¹⁷³

Clark observes that the special relationship between American and British historiography is being increasingly challenged. Thus, American society's focus on timeless universal values emanates from an ahistorical society which can be contrasted with Britain's profoundly historicized society.¹⁷⁴ This lack of an historical consciousness may be a result of the fact that in historical terms much of America has only recently been settled. Thus, Clark has observed that areas such as the American mid-West, whilst being populated are historically empty, when

¹⁷¹ Clark, *Our Shadowed Present*, p. 221.

¹⁷² Ibid, p. 246.

¹⁷³ Paul Edward Gottfried, *The Strange Death of Marxism: The European Left in the New Millenium*, (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2005), p. 108. Gottfried has also suggested that in the post-World War II period, the mainline Protestant denominations views on pluralism and social justice paralleled the efforts of radical émigrés to secularize and sensitize Americans. p. 12.

¹⁷⁴ Clark, *Our Shadowed Present*, p. 198.

compared to countries such as Britain.¹⁷⁵ Similarly, Kirk argued that an awareness of the past and the construction of historical memory are assisted by the actual physical landscapes (such as towns and houses) that have been built up in history.¹⁷⁶

The American victory in the Pacific increased the prestige within Australia of its cultural and social practices and further undermined the older, British cultural views which had been strong until 1940. Thus, America was the winner of the Second World War, not only militarily, but also in cultural and social terms, as shown by the influence of its business practices, historiography of modernity, and its cultural understandings through television and movies. Gottfried has argued that as well as the Germans, who have rejected their historical traditions, Anglophone societies have also been drawn into the American political-cultural orbit.¹⁷⁷

In conclusion, an American rejection of the importance of a European past presents a problematic for the Church. This problematic can be addressed by:

- I. Catholics developing a greater understanding of America's Calvinist and Enlightenment heritage, as well as of the emancipationist nature of American culture, representing in that an alternative ontology to a Catholic understanding of the rôle of tradition and history;
- II. further education of Catholics about their own spiritual and cultural heritage;
- III. Catholic educationalists and catechists becoming more cognizant of the *Communio* school's scholarship on the dissolvent effects of mass culture; and,

¹⁷⁵ Clark, *Our Shadowed Present*, p. 2. Clark also observes that a society which is unconstrained by the past and which does not respond to the discipline of duty, morality, honour or custom will develop a culture where there are many lawyers and much litigation. p. 14.

¹⁷⁶ Russello, *The Postmodern Imagination of Russell Kirk*, p. 76.

¹⁷⁷ Gottfried, *The Strange Death of Marxism*, p. 15.

IV. educationalists considering divisions about culture and history between a neo-conservatism that is allied with Whig Thomism and the critiques of this in the *Communio* school.

Conclusion

In this chapter, it was argued that a revolutionary attitude towards the past has led to the construction of alternative cultures, increasingly hostile to the rights of the Church, within the three major Western countries of France, Britain and the USA. Within France the continuities and respect for Catholic tradition mitigated the effects of the Revolutionary transformation until at least the 1960s. However, the trend towards secularization is illustrative of an historical unwillingness, or inability by both sides of politics, to articulate a philosophy that takes into account the importance of Christianity in the formation and on-going well being of European society and culture. This is partly because the imposition of a completely alternate secular education system from the late nineteenth century, and the many restrictions placed on the Catholic private sector, meant that a secularist ideology provided the dominant educational force.

The French and German difficulties in this area are not just expressions of centuries of trends, but may reflect the decline in the historical consciousness about the original impetus and inspiration behind European unity. In this regard, a Dawsonian framework based on the fact that Europe can only be understood in terms of Christianity, provides a challenge to attempts to ignore, or deny this crucial historical and cultural fact. This framework can parallel the critiques of the French Revolution and the Enlightenment inherent in the work of revisionist historians and in postmodern analyses.

Since the 1960s, the abandonment of many Catholic rituals and customs undermined the whole of the Catholic culture, and this has been followed by a widespread decline in belief and practice. The results of these accommodations to modern culture have not, thus far, provided evidence of positive trends in terms of either belief or practice. Instead, they have initiated breaches with the Church's own heritage and cultural patrimony, failed in pastoral and catechetical terms at a crucial time of cultural implosion, abdicated religion's critical rôle in societal terms, and consequently, led to the increasing marginalization of Christian understandings from a culture founded on, and ultimately dependent upon, these understandings.

Contemporary analyses of secularization patterns within the dominant countries of the West, as well as new trends in scholarship may provide a corrective to previous assumptions about the Enlightenment and the French Revolution and to the trends inherent in modern culture's norms and practices. Thus, this chapter has argued that even though some scholars and writers have suggested that the trend is moving away from secularization, the evidence remains unconvincing, both for the United States and for Western Europe. Within Europe, the strength of the secularization paradigm is made evident by the exclusion of any mention of Christianity in the proposed European Constitution, and by the barring of a practicing Catholic holding traditional Catholic views on marriage and sexuality from admission to the European High Court. Meanwhile, in America, scholars in the *Communio* group are developing an understanding that the absence of a Christian culture leads to a practical atheism.¹⁷⁸ Thus, this paper, drawing on the data available has shown that secularisation, although not as automatic a process as once thought, is growing within Western countries and represents a major intellectual and cultural challenge for the Church.

¹⁷⁸ Schindler, "Introduction", to *Catholicism and Secularization in America*, ed. Schindler, p. 12.

However, in the English-speaking lands of Australia and Britain, the Church has contended not only with the longer-term impact of being Catholic within a Protestant society, but also with the lack of Catholic higher-level education systems, which has meant that there was a limited knowledge of Catholic understandings of the individual, society and culture. Britain's predominantly anti-European and anti-Catholic historical focus has been facing a challenge from political changes and from scholarship by a range of historians. In America, the neo-conservative agenda has been challenged by events such as the Iraq war. Within the Church, the *Communio* scholars, such as Olsen and Shindler have continued to analyse the problem of Catholicism's relationship with American liberalism. The situations in the USA and Britain are particularly relevant to Australia. Australia has been influenced by similar historical assumptions to Britain, in relationship to the rôle of the Reformation and of Europe, and by similar assumptions about culture as America. However, although Australia exhibits characteristics of being 'historically' empty, it has not developed the American sense of a need for an emancipation from the past. This means that Dawson's proposals for a Christian culture course may have more chance of being accepted in Australia than in the United States.

Dawson maintained that the recovery of a Christian culture is essential to educational and religious tasks and indeed is inseparable from the traditional social ideal of Christendom-of the Christian people-*plebs Christiana-populus Dei*.¹⁷⁹ This thesis has argued that any catechetical and educational response to the challenge of secularization will need to draw upon the particular strengths of Christian cultures as elaborated by Dawson. This means that there exist signs of hope in a sacred tradition and a genuine religious education, which Dawson suggests can change the spiritual and cultural landscape of a nation in the same way that a river irrigates a barren

¹⁷⁹ Dawson, *UE*, p. 254.

desert.¹⁸⁰ Without a deep immersion in such a Christian culture, it will be difficult to articulate with any understanding or confidence the ideals and ethics of Christianity.

Recent revisionist scholarship of historians such as Furet, when used in conjunction with a Dawsonian understanding of the Revolutionary period, allows a more nuanced attitude to the political and philosophical rhetoric of modern culture. With the fall of Communism in 1989, the era of an uneasy truce with the alternative ontology of modernity, which is predicated on a separation of religion from culture, may be at an end. This suggests that there will be an urgent need for a theological critique of major aspects of modernity's political philosophy, of the Whig view of history and of the destructive effects of mass culture.

The present situation in the West and in Australia in particular, represents 'a window of opportunity' for the Church, especially in the area of education. Furthermore, this opportunity will only continue for a short time if there is a continued move towards a national curriculum with an emphasis on purely secular civic and national ideals, which deny the rôle of Christianity in Western society. Furthermore, it is likely this curriculum will be imposed on both private and state schools. This 'window of opportunity' exists for a number of reasons, including:

- I. that the philosophical and cultural assumptions of modernity are facing challenges from the rise of postmodern thought;
- II. that many of the historical understandings of the modern period have been challenged by revisionist scholarship;
- III. that the Anglo-American model of democratic liberalism, which has dominated the second half of the twentieth century is facing the rise of a militant Islam, both in the Middle East and within the West itself;

¹⁸⁰ Dawson, *UE*, pp. 254-55.

IV. and finally, that the liberal Protestantism which provided a theological justification for modern culture appears to be imploding. Furthermore, a parallel liberal understanding of modern culture evident in much Catholic thought since the Second Vatican Council, is increasingly being challenged as not only a rejection of the tradition of the Church, but as also being a pastoral and catechetical failure, in either predominantly Catholic or Protestant areas in the West.¹⁸¹

Whilst Dawson was particularly conscious of the instability of the contemporary period, he counseled against the temptation to despair and instead, called for Christians to be aware that their faith had prepared them for such situations and furthermore, that it was an opportunity for the Church's mission.¹⁸² Therefore, the recent scholarship emanating from the *Communio* group, the revisionist historical scholarship of the last few decades and Dawson's earlier cultural and historical insights, all provide a powerful argument for a reappraisal within the Church of the key events and background to modernity. In order to effectively understand the challenges of increasing secularization, the Dawsonian model of what constitutes a Christian culture provides an important and little utilized resource and framework for dealing with the difficulty of secularisation. This is particularly so for Australia, which does not have the tradition of a Christian culture, evidence of which remains in countries such as France, Italy and Germany.¹⁸³ Whereas Chapter One examined some of the critical internal debates within the Church about defining and responding to modern culture, Chapter Two has argued that the combination of

¹⁸¹ Paralleling this trend is the movement away from the educational paradigm which characterized the decades after the 1960s. Chapter Six of this work will examine this trend. Whether the generation whose world view was formed during the 1960s, and who continue to dominate areas such as the educational bureaucracies, are inured to accepting these facts will in part reflect the differing positions on these questions provided by individual members of the hierarchy.

¹⁸² Christopher Dawson, "The Outlook for Christian Culture", in *CEC*, p. 17.

¹⁸³ This evidence is shown by the importance, not only of the material culture reflected in the enduring legacy of art and architecture, but in cultural patterns around family life, and the prominence of the great feasts of the Church in the liturgical calendar.

certain Western societal and intellectual trends has impacted particularly severely on Catholics within the English-speaking world, because: there is no memory of a Catholic culture, revisionist scholarship has not been widely understood, or disseminated among educationalists; and the still developing critiques of American culture and society are still largely unknown.

The next part of this paper will respond to the difficulties associated with defining modern culture, the problems in the responses to this culture, and the particular dilemmas of Catholics in the English-speaking world by a focus on the three areas of culture, history and the importance of the European tradition.

PART II

HISTORICAL MEMORY AND FORMS OF CATHOLIC CULTURE

CHAPTER III

Religion as the Soul of Culture

Introduction

The first two chapters of this work examined how the rupture with the past inherent in modern culture has impacted particularly severely on Catholics within such English-speaking countries as Australia, separated both historically and geographically from a traditional Catholic culture. The interaction between religion, history and culture is likely to be one of the most important areas of concern for the Church in the coming decades. This chapter will argue that the sociological and cultural insights of groups such as *Communio* during the last forty years can be enriched by the work of the English historian, Christopher Dawson. One of the most important themes in his work is that ‘religion is the soul of culture’, and that the culture which has abandoned its religion will perish in spite of how successful it appears outwardly.¹ This view not only provides an historical addition to the *Communio school’s* focus on culture, but also provides a framework for Catholic educators to develop new curricula and strategies for schools and universities operating within a post-Christian society. Indeed, these initiatives can be judged to be particularly necessary within the English-speaking Western countries of Australia and the USA, which do not have a memory of the forms and substance of a Catholic culture.²

History and Culture

One important result of the *Communio* scholarship has been to refocus attention on the importance of Dawson’s view of history as a means of assisting the development of Catholic culture and of providing responses to the challenge of the alternative modern culture. Dawson’s writing career spanned the early and middle decades of the twentieth century. Both Nichols and McIntire have observed that the revival of interest in history from a Christian perspective at this

¹ Christopher Dawson, *Enquiries into Religion and Culture*. (London: Sheed and Ward, 1933), p. vi. (hereafter *ERC*).

² Dawson wrote that the separation of religion and culture into two separate worlds was an error typical of bourgeois liberalism and prevalent in English-speaking countries. Christopher Dawson. “The Outlook for Christian Culture”, in *Christianity and European Culture*, p. 7. In Great Britain, Nichols has suggested that “...it would seem that the Catholic Church, is demographically speaking, the fastest declining of the historic Christian communities” in *Christendom Awake*, p. xi.

time parallels a similar focus during St Augustine's era.³ However, Rowland considers that many of those associated with the neo-Thomist movement are yet to develop an Augustinian awareness of the importance of memory and narrative history and their association with theology. This was earlier commented upon by Shinn (in the 1960s), who observed a certain non-historical emphasis in Thomism.⁴ Thus, the focus by Dawson and the *Communio* scholars on history and the importance of memory faces two major challenges. The first is the need to address the non-historical emphasis in neo-Thomism, but more critically, there is also the need to address the lack of an awareness of history and tradition inherent in modern culture.

Dawson's work, drawing from the thought of St Augustine, presented a challenge to modern culture's inability to address eschatological issues in history. Similarly, contemporary writers such as Nichols have asserted that history must be truly apocalyptic in a sense of awareness of its final end, and the real key is to be found in the Incarnation.⁵ In particular, he argues that an awareness of the importance of the Incarnation counteracts the pessimism inherent in viewing history as naturally predetermined, as well as from the casual attitude which proclaims that history has come to an end, and also from the Hegelian optimism associated with the progressive and immanent interpretations of history.⁶

The Dawsonian perspective in conjunction with that of the *Communio* scholars, provides a guide to dealing with geo-cultural issues that are impacting not only directly on the Church, but also more broadly on Western society. One of the most important of these is the relationship between the West and the non-Western world, particularly with the Islamic countries. The debate

³ McIntire, ed. *God, History and Historians*, p. 11. J.M.Connolly, 'Human History and the Word of God: The Christian Meaning of History in Contemporary Thought', (New York and London: 1965), cited in Nichols, "Christopher Dawson's Catholic Setting", in *Eternity in Time*, eds. Caldecott and Morrill, p. 33.

⁴ Shinn, *Christianity and the Problem of History*, p. 70.

⁵ Nichols, *Christendom Awake*, pp. 220-221.

⁶ *Ibid*, p. 221.

about this relationship has occurred constantly throughout the twentieth century as Europe has found its worldwide influence weakened.

Since the 1980s, in spite of the increasing evidence of secularization in Western European society, the rise of a new militant Islam, both in the Middle East and in the West, has meant a renewed focus on the interaction of culture and religion. This theme is evident in Samuel Huntington's work, which addresses the fact that the real divisions after the fall of Communism were cultural and religious, rather than those between the differing political ideologies which had dominated most of the twentieth century.⁷ Huntington refers to the Dawsonian understanding that religion forms culture, and he goes on to analyse seven major cultural areas in the world which he argues are based on religious perspectives.⁸ He asserts that the three factors in an increasing religious trend are the Papal rôle in the fall of communism; the rise of militant Islam; and the increasing strength of American evangelical Protestantism. The first of these factors relates directly to Catholicism, and did increase the prestige and influence of the Papacy and the church throughout the 1980s. However, after 1989 Pope John Paul II began expressing concern about the influence of a consumerist and secularist mentality, not only within Western Europe but also in the relatively strong Catholic culture of Poland.

A number of historical and philosophical viewpoints have formed our contemporary world. Dawson contended that modern ideologies such as Marxism, fascism and liberal capitalism have influenced and inspired the actions of whole populations and nations.⁹ The thinkers of the Church have been aware of the philosophies underlying these ideologies and have sought, from the nineteenth century onwards, to affirm the alternative philosophy provided by Thomism.

⁷ Huntington, *Clash of Civilizations*, p. 21.

⁸ Ibid, p. 47.

⁹ Dawson, *RWC*, p. 13.

According to Gerald A. McCool, by the interwar period, three distinct strands in Thomism had emerged.¹⁰ McCool identifies a traditional Thomism, represented by Jacques Maritain, alongside the historical Thomism of Etienne Gilson and the transcendental Thomism of Joseph Maréchal.¹¹

During the middle years of the twentieth century, Thomist thinkers could also draw from the historical insights of Dawson. Indeed, during the 1940s, the importance of history had been recognized by Archbishop Fulton Sheen when he stated that history was a record of what matters, and that it had begun to replace science as the means for the mind to envisage reality.¹² However, this Dawsonian historical alternative to an exclusive focus on philosophy has not been fully utilized, either in the past or today. Dawson did not reject the importance of philosophy, but argued that it needed to be seen in relationship to theology. Thus, Dawson maintained that philosophy was the offspring of religion and constantly returned to its parent as would a child.¹³ Furthermore, Dawson observed that everywhere revelation was always the primary source of all historical religious truth and intuition and reason were secondary.¹⁴ Similarly, Nichols has observed that the present Pope sees philosophy and theology as vital to each other and that philosophical thought is built on *a priori* concepts.¹⁵ Pope Benedict expressed this view in his *Urbi et Orbi* message in Christmas, 2005, when he said that without the light of Christ, the light of reason is not sufficient to enlighten humanity and the world.¹⁶ Dawson maintained that people

¹⁰ McCool, *Nineteenth Century Scholasticism*, p. 257.

¹¹ Ibid, p. 257.

¹² Fulton J. Sheen, Archbishop, *Philosophy of Religion*, (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1948), p. 250, cited in Roger L. Shinn, *Christianity and the Problem of History*, (St Louis: Abbott Books, 1964), p. 165.

¹³ Dawson, *RC*, p. 50.

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 43.

¹⁵ Nichols, *The Thought of Benedict XVI*, p. 282.

¹⁶ Pope Benedict, "Urbi et Orbi Message", 25th December, 2005, cited in Philip Trower, *The Catholic Church and the Counter-Faith*, p. 7.

have a need for a historical faith, with a real historical person, and that a purely philosophical approach was not enough to engage with the broader culture.¹⁷

Dawson's works not only provided an alternative within the Catholic world to an exclusive focus on philosophy, but also to the predominant secular and nationalistic histories of his time. Since the expansion of knowledge about late antiquity, Dawson's understanding of the development of European culture in the so-called Dark Ages seems less controversial. However, in the early 1930s, his belief that this period saw the real formation of Europe, through Christianity's ability to mould together such apparently disparate factors as the 'barbarian tribes', Greek thought and Roman political organization, was countered by two dominant schools of thought. One of these was the nationalistic history school, which idealized the Germanic tribes struggle against Roman despotism. The other equally one-sided view, simply divided Europe between a positive Roman heritage and a negative barbarian heritage. In the contemporary period, there is still a contrast between those who characterize the fifth and sixth centuries as the time of the 'barbarian invasions' and those, including the present Pope, who label the same period as representing 'the mass migrations of peoples'.¹⁸

Dawsonian scholarship

Dawson's major theme, that 'religion forms culture', contrasted with the historical trends of his own time and grew out of his own background and the influence on his thought of figures such as Augustine. This background included living during a period of increasing secularisation

¹⁷ Dawson, *RWC*, p. 13.

¹⁸ Ratzinger, *Values in a Time of Upheaval*, p. 132. Norman Davies states that the common term for this occurrence is the *Völkerwanderung* or the 'Wanderings of Peoples', in Norman Davies, *Europe: A History*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 217.

and being a member of an Anglican Church confronted by the immense social and intellectual changes of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Dawson was born in the late Victorian Britain of 1889, into a landowning family with clerical (Anglican) and military backgrounds. His first six years were spent at his mother's home of Hay-on-Wye, on the Welsh-English border. His father then chose to retire from the army rather than accept a posting to Singapore, which was considered dangerous to the health of young children. Colonel Dawson also at that time inherited Hartington Hall, in Yorkshire, which had been in his family for about 200 years. It seems Dawson's father, by moving here, had deliberately attempted to recover a sense of the family's past. Here, religion was an integral part of the household life, with Terce and Compline at nine in the morning and ten at night, and with religious teaching for half an hour daily from his mother.¹⁹ Christina Scott, in her biography of her father notes that Christopher's mother was unusually learned for the time and that he acquired his literary and historical tastes from her.²⁰

For the first 10 years of life, Dawson was taught at home and this was to be, perhaps, one of the happiest times of his life. Edward King, in dividing Dawson's life into four significant periods, identifies the first period, from 1889-1912, as the period when his sense of place and history and of his vocation as a historian of culture was formed.²¹ Later on, when writing about this period, Dawson observed that the end of the century and of Queen Victoria's long reign not only signalled the end of the happy and carefree years he had experienced before school, but the end of a whole series of ages, so that it seemed as if a river of immemorial time had suddenly

¹⁹ Scott, *HHW*, p. 28.

²⁰ *Ibid*, p. 15.

²¹ Edward King, "Christopher Dawson." Part II *Catholic Insight*, (April 2001), <http://www.thefreelibrary.com/Christopher+Dawson%3a+Part+II9culture+historian>), (accessed November, 2006).

dried up and had become lost in the seismic cleft that had opened between the present and the past.²²

As part of the English upper class tradition of sending children to boarding school at the age of ten, Dawson was sent away to preparatory school prior to entrance into Winchester Public School. The school that Dawson's parents chose for their son was Bilton Grange. Scott observes that her father was never able to adapt to this new world and that he felt as though he had come among a horde of savages with no common interests or ideas or beliefs or traditions.²³ After about 3 or 4 years, during which time his health suffered and he was left with permanent bronchitis, Dawson was sent to Winchester in the Easter term of 1903.²⁴ Arnold Toynbee (1889-1975), another future historian who would be interested in the interaction of religion and culture was also attending the school at this same time. However, they did not know each other at this stage as they were in different boarding houses.²⁵

The time he spent at the ancient city of Winchester allowed him to become aware of the importance of religion in history and culture. He was later to observe that he learnt more about the importance of religion for the national culture at the tombs of the Saxon kings and the great medieval bishops in Winchester Cathedral than from books.²⁶ However, during this time, he also began to collect and read books widely and he was to be further encouraged in this endeavour by his great-uncle, the Reverend William Dawson, who was of the old High Church tradition and, perhaps because of his time spent in the East End of London, a Christian Socialist.

²² Christopher Dawson, "Memories of a Victorian Childhood," in Scott, *HHW*, p. 239.

²³ Scott, *HHW*, p. 31.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

²⁵ *Ibid.* p. 33.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

After little more than a year, Dawson left Winchester in 1905, as his parents feared that he was developing consumption. He was sent to live and be tutored at a country parsonage in Bletsoe, Bedfordshire, by a Reverend Moss, who had about six other pupils at the same time. However, before moving to Bletsoe, Dawson and his family toured the continent. Later, Dawson was to describe the impact that he felt on observing the faith of all classes in such places as the Cathedral in Strasbourg.²⁷

At Bletsoe, Dawson met the future art historian, Edward. I. Watkin, who became his closest friend in life and who would influence his decision to convert to Catholicism in 1914.²⁸ Their first meeting led to a heated exchange about religion as Christopher claimed at the time to be an agnostic. Dawson was later to say that this attitude had been particularly induced by the fact that the lack of a clear source of authority in Anglo-Catholicism meant that there was uncertainty and vagueness about the fundamental dogmas of Christianity.²⁹ At the same time Dawson observed that Christianity was no longer a major factor in mainstream intellectual thought and that an emerging pagan trend was increasing throughout the nation.³⁰ This change in the tenor of these times and the decreasing influence of religion in society as the country moved from the Victorian to the Edwardian era has been documented by R.C. K. Ensor with his observation that, “Creed sat lightly on the great majority in the middle and upper classes; the Bible lost its hold on them, and the volume of outward religious observance shrank steadily.”³¹

²⁷ Ibid, p. 46.

²⁸ Ibid, p. 36.

²⁹ Ibid, p. 37.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ensor, *England 1870-1914*, p. 527.

Joseph Pearce has argued that this era was characterized by the influence of scepticism and religious doubt.³² These doubts about the traditional Christian view had occurred partly because of the impact of Biblical higher criticism and Darwinian evolutionism.³³ Malcolm Muggeridge, who had been brought up in a household dominated by Fabian ideas, also identified the movement away from religious belief during this period.³⁴ This movement was most clearly illustrated in the decline in regular Church attendance in the decades before 1914.³⁵

Dawson left Bletsoe in 1906, and entered Oxford in the Michaelmas term of 1908, a time which Christina Scott describes as its golden age.³⁶ Dawson's shyness and his lack of money kept him from socializing with many people, which meant that he would not look back upon this time as being one of any great happiness. However, he was forever grateful for the opportunity to learn from scholars such as his tutor, Ernest Barker, who encouraged him to develop his philosophy of history.³⁷ Barker, whilst predominantly a scholar of Greek political theory was also a good medievalist, who initiated Dawson's interest in the medieval period.³⁸

Whilst realising that his own era was not a direct mirror image of late antiquity he did, however, see parallels between the two periods. Indeed, the writings of that major figure of late antiquity, St Augustine of Hippo, were to be pivotal in Dawson's subsequent conversion to Catholicism in 1914. In *The City of God*, St Augustine had developed the theme of a clash

³² Pearce, *Literary Converts*, p. 1.

³³ Johnson, *A History of the Modern World*, p. 5. Paul Johnson maintains that the Darwinian notion of the survival of the fittest and its influence on the Marxist concept of class warfare and Hitler's racial philosophies reveals the impact of scientific innovators on mankind.

³⁴ Malcolm Muggeridge, *Conversion: A Spiritual Journey*, (London: Collins, 1988), p. 25

³⁵ McLeod, *Secularization in Western Europe*, pp. 200-01.

³⁶ Scott, *HHW*, pp. 41.

³⁷ *Ibid*, p. 44.

³⁸ *Ibid*.

between two cities, one given to love of God and the other to love of man, or self-love.³⁹ Dawson contended that this work was an important development in the Western Church's concept of a dualism in society between, 'the natural man', who lived only for himself and his material desires and a temporal peace and, in contrast, 'the spiritual man', who lived for God and sought a spiritual beatitude and a peace which was eternal.⁴⁰

St Augustine, whilst still a loyal Roman, who appreciated the value of Greek philosophy, believed that humanity's true destinies were realized in the City of God.⁴¹ Dawson paralleled this understanding in *Religion and the Modern State*, in 1935, when he argued that civilization was a road for man to travel along but not a city for him to dwell within.⁴² Dawson also was attracted to the writings of St Augustine as they stressed the importance of realizing that there was a Divine purpose working through human history and that life was not meaningless.⁴³ The importance of St Augustine in European political thought has been examined in a recent work by the noted French historian, Jacques Le Goff. He writes that although the West observed a separation between God and Caesar, Augustinianism still argued for the necessity of moral and religious values in the public sphere.⁴⁴ This belief had continued within European society in spite of the influence of Machiavellianism from the end of the Middle Ages.⁴⁵ Thus, in contrast to a sole emphasis on philosophy among many educators, Dawson's cultural focus was able to draw from the continuing strength of an Augustinian tradition.⁴⁶ Therefore, even at this early stage in

³⁹ Saint Augustine, *City of God*, a New Translation by Henry Bettenson, with an Introduction by John O'Meara, (London: Penguin, 1984), p. 593

⁴⁰ Dawson, "St Augustine and The City of God", in *DWH*, p. 325.

⁴¹ Dawson, *JN*, p. 6.

⁴² Dawson, *RMS*, p. xv.

⁴³ Dawson, *JN*, p. 6.

⁴⁴ Jacques Le Goff, *The Birth of Europe*, trans. Janet Lloyd, (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), p. 16.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Glenn Olsen has further suggested that philosophy itself is influenced by historical and cultural factors. Glen Olsen, "Christian Philosophy, Christian History", in *Eternity in Time*, eds. Caldecott and Morrill, p.134.

his career, Dawson was examining how religion shaped the culture and consequently, how the religious culture then further shaped behaviours and attitudes.

The period of Dawson's life before the First World War was to be crucial to the development of his attitudes and later works. Although he had returned to Anglo-Catholicism a trip to Rome at age nineteen further developed his attraction to Roman Catholicism. Scott, in her biography of her father writes of how a visit on Easter Sunday, 1909, to the Church of the *Ara Coeli*, which had been built over the Capitol, inspired him in his future work on culture.⁴⁷ Gibbon, whose work Dawson admired, had also visited the steps of the Capitol and had there and then decided to write *Decline and Fall*. However, in spite of Dawson's admiration for Gibbon's literary style, he disagreed with this Enlightenment historian's attempt to either ignore, or distort, the rôle that Christianity had played in the development of Europe and the achievements, or even the existence, of a Christian culture.⁴⁸ Dawson thought that Gibbon had concentrated on the passing of the Graeco-Roman classical culture and that he was blind to the new world that was emerging.⁴⁹ However, unfortunately, this erroneous view of history continued to impact at both a conscious and unconscious level on modern education and on popular attitudes towards the past.

Dawson's conversion to Catholicism in 1914 was to be influenced by his own strongly religious background, his love for Baroque culture, his friendship with E. Watkin, who had already converted to Catholicism, and finally his engagement to Valery Mills, a Catholic herself. Ironically, another reason was his reaction to reading the German liberal Protestant theologian, Adolf von Harnack (1851-1930).⁵⁰ Scott suggests that Harnack's writings convinced Dawson that

⁴⁷ Scott, *HHW*, p. 50.

⁴⁸ Christopher Dawson, "Edward Gibbon", *Proceedings of the British Academy*, *Read*, no. 20, (11 July, 1934), pp. 167-68.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, p. 179.

⁵⁰ Scott, *HHW*, p. 63.

the Roman Catholic Church had the true faith in an unbroken line from the Apostles.⁵¹ Dawson's conversion occurred during the so-called Third Spring of conversions amongst English intellectuals such as Chesterton.⁵² Indeed, Chesterton's *Ballad of the White Horse* had also influenced Dawson's decision to convert. Dawson was to write to Chesterton saying that, "Years ago, when I was an undergraduate, your ballad of the White Horse first brought the breath of life to this period for me."⁵³

What is remarkable about Dawson's conversion and his subsequent views on the place of religion in culture is that he seemed to move against not only the current of twentieth intellectual thought, but even against his own environment and social milieu. However, an analysis of Dawson's personal history reveals that his family had already shown some reaction to the current of popular thought and opinion. Scott, in her biography, points out that even though the Dawson family belonged to the landed gentry, they did not share the interest in such pursuits as hunting and shooting which typified other upper class country families.⁵⁴ Colonel Dawson, Christopher's father, was an exceptionally learned man and both parents were deeply religious, which were very important factors in developing his thought and interest in the way religion influenced history and the development of culture. Indeed, Colonel Dawson through his appreciation of the writings of the medieval saints and the poetry of Dante had introduced his son to the world of Catholic thought and culture.⁵⁵ This counter cultural stance was also evident in Dawson's own life. Thus, Scott noted that Dawson's negative reaction to his school days at Bilton Grange was to turn him not only against schoolboys, schools and the Midlands, but against an England which at

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Schwartz, *The Third Spring*, p. 7.

⁵³ Christopher Dawson, *The Chesterton Review*, vol. 9, no. 2, p. 136.

⁵⁴ Scott, *HHW*, p. 24.

⁵⁵ Christina Scott, "Biographical Note", in *The Spirit of the Oxford Movement and Newman's Place in History*, by Christopher Dawson, (London: The Saint Austin Press, 2001), p. xi.

the time of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee was at the height of its influence and prestige.⁵⁶ In later years Dawson would say how uninspired he had been by the work of the prominent historians of this era, such as the conservative nationalist, William Stubbs.⁵⁷ In contrast to the history writing of this period which was, according to Edwin Jones, isolationist and nationalistic, Dawson's future work would be characterized by an awareness of broader religious and cultural factors in history.⁵⁸

As observed earlier, the early retirement of Dawson's father, at the age of 46, and his move to their isolated Yorkshire estate had already helped to establish the cultural and psychological world that would influence his son. In writing about his background, in *Memories of a Victorian Childhood*, Dawson stressed the influence of history and what he called *pietas*, which he described as the cult of parents, family and native place, which need acknowledgement as these nourish and form us.⁵⁹ He understood this concept as being related to religion in that it indicates our duty both to society and, in the first place, to God. For Dawson, this view of life enriches and enlightens our understanding of history and stands in contrast to the academic historian's limited view of the past.⁶⁰

Dawson's own native place had continued to show traces of its earlier medieval pattern.⁶¹ Because of such factors as the lack of a distinct squirearchy, the ruins of the monasteries and the influence of the yeoman farmers, Dawson maintained that this area had survived much of the social dislocation associated with the Reformation and the more recent Industrial Revolution.⁶²

⁵⁶ Scott, *HHW*, p. 31.

⁵⁷ Dawson, "Letter to G. K. Chesterton", (1932), cited in Scott, *HHW*, p. 104.

⁵⁸ Jones, *The English Nation*, p. 218.

⁵⁹ Scott, *HHW*, p. 223.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ Dawson, "Memories of a Victorian Childhood", in *HHW*, p. 231.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 235.

This background also influenced his belief that a strong rural society was important to the health of the broader society. Thus, in 1928, he suggested that every culture could be compared to a plant and that, “It must have its roots in the earth and for sunlight it needs to be open to the spiritual. At the present moment we are busy cutting its roots and shutting out all light from above.”⁶³

Major Works

His childhood and family background would markedly influence Dawson’s later career and writings on the importance of culture and history. His first major work, *The Age of the Gods*, was published in 1928, and using the comparatively new anthropological perspectives of the time, he studied the rôle of religion within prehistoric cultures. Dawson’s sociological and anthropological approaches injected a new understanding about culture into Catholic thought which had often been focused on philosophical perspectives. Mary Douglas has put the view that in contrast to the predominant use of comparative religious studies, Dawson was able to skillfully use these new perspectives in defence of Christianity.⁶⁴ In 1929, his second major work, *Progress and Religion*, concentrated on religion within Western culture, and examined the rise of an alternative belief system in the cult of Progress. In this work, he sought to show that, “Every living culture must possess some spiritual dynamic, which provides the energy necessary for the sustained social effort which is civilization.”⁶⁵ Dawson also sought to emphasize that religion, rather than being a secondary phenomenon in culture, actually constituted its most distinctive and central characteristic.⁶⁶

⁶³ Dawson, unpublished ms. cited in Scott, “Foreword”, to *PR*, p. xviii.

⁶⁴ Mary Douglas, “Introduction”, to *PR*, p. xxii.

⁶⁵ Dawson, *PR*, p. vii.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, p. 66.

In the earlier chapters of this work, Dawson discussed the influence of sociologists and anthropologists on the contemporary understandings of culture and society. He refuted the ideas of the nineteenth-century school, associated with Herbert Spencer, who argued that ‘primitive’ man was fundamentally materialistic and concerned with the meeting of his physical needs for food and shelter. Here, Dawson drew on his knowledge of Australian aboriginal culture to describe its elaborate spiritual and ceremonial world, which conveyed complex beliefs about reality.

Subsequently, Dawson identified the importance of the three factors of place, function and blood, or environment, work and race, alongside the importance of a community of thought.⁶⁷ In this view Dawson was influenced by the nineteenth-century French Catholic sociologist, Frederick Le Play (1806-1882), who had carried out a major study of families, underpinned by emphases on work, place and people. After observing the importance of religion in earlier cultures, Dawson examined the rise of the ‘world religions’ of Judaism, Confucianism, Buddhism and Hinduism from about 1000BC. Furthermore, he argued that the development of these world religions was as important for humanity’s intellectual and spiritual development as the material achievements occurring at the same time.⁶⁸ In particular, Dawson analysed the unique attitude of Judaism and later, Christianity, to the concept of time and history. The conversion of the West to Christianity emphasized what he referred to as the Divine drama of the Creation and Fall, the Redemption and Restoration.⁶⁹ In contrast to a view that saw this process as a natural event, Dawson argued that it represented a major and even violent change for European history and culture.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid p. 99.

⁶⁹ Ibid, p. 125.

⁷⁰ Ibid p. 126.

David Bebbington has stated that both the linear historical perspectives of Judaeo-Christian thought and the Enlightenment views of Progress can be contrasted with the earlier cyclical historical views.⁷¹ Dawson refers to the Augustinian reaction to the cyclical view, when he writes that the Incarnation is a centre which gives history significance and order, and in doing so,

The closed circle of time has been broken and a ladder had been let down from heaven to earth by which mankind can escape from the 'sorrowful wheel' which had cast its shadow over Greek and Indian thought.⁷²

Furthermore, when writing on Augustine in 1933, Dawson observed the seeming contradiction that a man who appeared so indifferent to secular progress and to the changing patterns of politics was so important to Western ideals of freedom and social justice.⁷³ He suggested that Augustine's detachment could be contrasted with those political reformers who rather than bringing about 'a paradise on earth' would produce the nightmares of the totalitarian states.⁷⁴

The latter part of this book discusses the influence of Christianity in the making of medieval Europe through the combined influence of the papacy and monasticism. Finally, Dawson describes the rise of what he terms, the religion of 'Progress', which sought to ignore the influence of Christianity on the formation of Europe. However, this was unrealistic as it failed to acknowledge that the religion which had governed the life of a people for over a thousand years had entered into its very being and moulded all its thought and feeling.⁷⁵ In particular, this meant that the proponents of eighteenth-century deism (which Dawson saw as a ghost or shadow of

⁷¹ David Bebbington, *Patterns in History: A Christian Perspective on Historical Thought*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1990), pp. 18-19.

⁷² Dawson, *RMS*, p. 80.

⁷³ Dawson, "St Augustine and the City of God", in *DWH*, p. 339.

⁷⁴ Dawson, *Enquiries into Religion and Culture*, p. 254.

⁷⁵ Dawson, *PR*, p. 149.

Christianity) had denied the powerful rôle that Christianity had in forming their own view of the world.⁷⁶

According to Dawson, the resulting divorce between religion and social life in the modern period has brought about dissatisfaction with the whole structure of society and engendered a revolutionary attitude towards contemporary civilization.⁷⁷ The historian, Robert Conquest, in his book, *Reflections on a Ravaged Century*, has described how this revolutionary attitude expressed itself in a variety of ‘utopian fantasies’, such as anarchism and syndicalism, before presenting itself in the overwhelmingly dominant form of Marxism.⁷⁸ Dawson observed that the revolutionary process in Russia had begun within groups such as the Nihilists, who sought not political or social reform, but escape, or liberation in their own personal lives.⁷⁹ In particular, Dawson argued that this sense of alienation was the direct result of the loss of the religious foundations of a civilization.⁸⁰ Furthermore, an acknowledgement that the great religions form the foundations on which the great civilizations rest leads to the understanding that, “A society which has lost its religion becomes sooner or later a society which has lost its culture.”⁸¹ Dawson concluded *Progress and Religion* with an urgent plea for a return to the historic Christian tradition on which Europe depended for its moral purpose and its social unification.⁸²

One issue that has been addressed under the Papacy of Benedict is the relationship of Europe to the Church. Here Dawson’s views about the dynamic and missionary character of Western culture continue to provide important insights and these will be discussed more fully in

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid, p. 178.

⁷⁸ Robert Conquest, *Reflections on a Ravaged Century*, (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 2000), p. 34.

⁷⁹ Dawson, *PR*, p. 178.

⁸⁰ Ibid, p. 180.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid, pp. 189-191.

Chapter Five. Dawson's belief in the unity of Europe was expressed in his 1932 work, *The Making of Europe*, where he focused on the Dark Ages, which occurred between the fall of the Roman Empire and the beginning of the Middle Ages, at approximately AD 1000. In this work he sought to show that Europe had been formed by Christianity and that this had occurred during a time of economic and social chaos. Dawson was thus part of a larger group of medieval historians challenging the Voltairean belief in an age of ignorance and uselessness in the thousand years between the fall of the Roman Empire and the beginning of the Renaissance. However, his unique perspective was in his emphasis on the early Middle Ages, the Dark Ages, and his concern not to idealize this period of history for apologetic reasons. In this work Dawson, whilst emphasizing the place of the individual, indicated the creative power of religious and spiritual factors in the development of culture.⁸³ These spiritual factors and indeed, the common spiritual background of Europe contrasted with the nationalistic divisions which caused the First World War.

In particular, Dawson identified four major factors that had contributed to the making of European unity.⁸⁴ The first three were the Roman legacy, which had influenced Europe's political and legal systems, the Catholic Church, which represented the spiritual factor and the classical tradition of literature and science, on which was based the intellectual tradition. Alongside these elements was the rôle of the 'barbarian' tribes, which Dawson termed the 'gentes'. In this regard, Fernando Cervantes has argued that Dawson was one of the first historians to write about the importance of the barbarian tribes for the future development of Europe.⁸⁵ This reflected the fact that in regard to the 'barbarian' invasions, Dawson took a middle position between the nationalistic schools of the nineteenth century and the classical scholars who had focused solely

⁸³ Dawson, *ME*, p. 33.

⁸⁴ Fernando Cervantes, "Christopher Dawson and Europe", in *Eternity in Time*, eds. Caldecott and Morrill, p. 57.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, p. 58.

on the Graeco-Roman heritage and civilization. At this time Dawson had sought to emphasize that Christianity was not native to Western Europe and that the Catholic Church could act as a mediator between East and West.⁸⁶ These deeply thought out ideas can be compared with other Catholic English historians such as Belloc and French ones such as Henri Massis.⁸⁷

Dawson wrote *The Spirit of the Oxford Movement* in 1933, as part of the centenary of that movement. In this work, Dawson argued that Newman, who was one of the most prominent figures in this movement, had an imaginative power and intellectual subtlety which contrasted with the utilitarianism of his age.⁸⁸ Indeed, Dawson observed that as the Oxford Movement was in conscious conflict with the utilitarianism and secularism of nineteenth-century Liberalism, it has been easy to simply identify it with the cause of reaction and obscurantism.⁸⁹ However, this is a simplification of the purpose and character of the Movement which stood for spiritual freedom, in contrast to the Erastianism of parts of the Anglican Church, and which was also critical of the injustices of the Industrial Revolution.⁹⁰ Dawson further suggested that this opposition to Erastianism was shared by Calvinism.⁹¹ However, whilst both Catholicism and Calvinism shared fundamental principles about the supernatural order, the supernatural society and the supernatural life, Calvinism, with its spirit of rigidity, had altered the meanings of these terms.⁹² It had

⁸⁶ Christopher Dawson, *Letter to Dom Griffiths*, cited in Scott, *HHW*, p. 177.

⁸⁷ France, particularly after the First World War, experienced a Catholic intellectual revival which paralleled the English situation. Major figures here included the Thomist philosophers, Jacques Maritain and Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange (1877-1964), and historians such as Massis and Henri Bremond (1865-1933). It can be argued that in spite of anti-clerical inroads, France continued to exhibit vibrant features of a Catholic culture and that the revival occurred in a society where most were still at least nominally Catholic. In spite of the high profile of English converts, Catholic thought could not have the same influence in a culture with both residual anti-Catholicism and a newly aggressive secularism. Adrian Hastings has described these intellectual trends in England in the 1920s as showing that, "Modernity had simply no place for religion in general or Christianity in particular." In Adrian Hastings, *A History of England, 1920-1985*, (London: Collins, 1985), p. 224.

⁸⁸ Christopher Dawson, *The Spirit of the Oxford Movement and Newman's Place in History*, (London: The Saint Austin Press, 2001), p. ix.

⁸⁹ Ibid, p. xi.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid, p. 28.

⁹² Ibid, p. 29.

divested the Augustinian theology of grace of its mystical and sacramental elements, which led to the harsh ethical ideal of Puritanism and the bareness of its liturgy.⁹³ Unfortunately, one of Calvinism's most long-term effects was the impoverishment of the culture and the development of the Philistinism of the British middle class, about which Matthew Arnold had spoken.⁹⁴ Dawson argued that one of the most fundamental aspects of the Oxford Movement was its anti-modernism and the fact that it stood, *pro causa Dei*, against the apostasy of the modern world.⁹⁵ Writing in 1945, Dawson argued that Newman well understood that the Liberalism of the nineteenth century represented a dominant aggressive secularism, which was to eventually undermine the rôle of Christianity within Western society.⁹⁶ In recent years, the observation that particular types of liberalism reflect an anti-Catholicism which is derivative of an Enlightenment utopian project has been studied in connection with the German *Kulturkampf*.⁹⁷ Michael Gross has argued that liberal support for the *Kulturkampf* was not some accident, or the result of some form of absent mindedness, but instead a result of a deep rooted anti-Catholic intolerance within German liberalism.⁹⁸

The 1930s also witnessed Dawson's involvement with the *Order* magazine and its subsequent booklets. Those involved here included Father Martin D'Arcy, David Jones and Herman Grisewood of the BBC. According to Scott this group provided a contrast to a certain type of militant Catholicism and to a medieval concept of Catholicism as some sort of 'jolly tavern'.⁹⁹ This initiative was in part a reflection of the European Catholic intellectual revival that had occurred particularly in France and Germany. The booklets included works such as *Religion*

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid, p. 30.

⁹⁵ Ibid, pp. 134-136.

⁹⁶ Dawson, "Newman's Place in History", Appendix to *The Spirit of the Oxford Movement*, p. 150.

⁹⁷ Michael B. Gross, *The War against Catholicism: Liberalism and the anti-Catholic imagination in Nineteenth Century Germany*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004), p. 21.

⁹⁸ Ibid, pp. 21-22.

⁹⁹ Scott, *HHW*, p. 96.

and Culture by Maritain, *Crisis in the West* by the German writer Peter Wust and *The Russian Revolution* by Nicholas Berdyaev. Another important influence on this group was the artist and poet David Jones, who focused on the importance of the past as a vital tradition that needed to continue into the present.¹⁰⁰ This theme paralleled not only Dawson's historical focus, but the cultural perspective of this entire group. Reflecting Dawson's view that the cultural and political crises of the time were spiritual ones is his own work, *The Modern Dilemma*, which was Number 8 in the *Essays in Order*. When writing an introduction to Carl Schmitt's, "The Necessity of Politics", in *Essays in Order* Number 5, Dawson observed that England's understanding of religion as a private matter was inconsistent with Catholic thought.¹⁰¹ He further argued that any attempt to separate our society from its spiritual moorings, or to ignore the moral foundations of social life and, instead, to construct an alternative society on the basis of economics and technology would amount to the suicide of Western culture.¹⁰²

Also, during the 1930s, which witnessed the increasing threat to the older Christian or liberal values of Europe by totalitarian states such as Nazi Germany and Communist Russia, Dawson wrote a number of works including *Religion and the Modern State* (1935) and *Beyond Politics* (1939). In *Religion and the Modern State*, Dawson focused on the danger of secularizing an original Christian tradition.¹⁰³ Thus, Nationalism had drawn from the Christian conception that the nation had a spiritual unity, but when this concept was secularized, it became a principle of hatred and destruction.¹⁰⁴ Socialism, which was a secularization of the Christian and Judaic concern for social justice, had become the basis of a social atheism, which left no room for

¹⁰⁰ Nichols, "Christopher Dawson's Catholic Setting", in *Eternity in Time*, eds. Caldecott and Morrill, p. 31.

¹⁰¹ Christopher Dawson, "Introduction", to *The Necessity of Politics: An Essay on the Representative Idea in the Church and Modern Europe*, by Carl Schmitt, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1931), p. 10.

¹⁰² Ibid, pp. 27-28.

¹⁰³ Dawson, *RMS*, p. xxi

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, p. xxi

spiritual freedom and human rights.¹⁰⁵ Both liberalism and democracy, which owed their humanitarian idealism and faith in progress to Christianity, had constructed a secular civilization, which ignored the final destiny of the human person.¹⁰⁶ In *Beyond Politics*, Dawson observed that the greatest service that the Church could render to Western civilization was to keep Catholicism's inheritance intact and not to become an instrument of secular power.¹⁰⁷ Furthermore, Dawson maintained that democracy in the West, rather than being one concept, referred to two different traditions.¹⁰⁸ In the first place there was the pure democratic tradition associated with Rousseau and the French Revolutionary tradition, which had attempted to enforce a uniform ideology on an entire population and which had persecuted any alternate forms of political thought.¹⁰⁹ In contrast, English democracy was based on a liberal and aristocratic tradition, which was not the right of 'the masses' to power, but rather, the right of the individual and the group to the highest possible degree of self development.¹¹⁰ Indeed, Dawson argued that if English democracy was to survive, then it must preserve vital elements of the aristocratic tradition, such as personal honour and individual responsibility.¹¹¹ A falsification of history to suit the middle class liberal ideology of the nineteenth century had obscured the fact that the English political tradition had been aristocratic rather than democratic and, therefore, that this aristocratic tradition had meant that English society was resistant to totalitarianism.¹¹²

During the Second World War, Dawson was to be placed in charge of *The Sword of the Spirit* organization. *The Sword of the Spirit* had been established by England's Cardinal Hinsley to promote ecumenical dialogue in the spiritual and intellectual battle against the threat of

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Dawson, *BP*, p. 21.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, p. 41.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, p. 71.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, p. 47.

¹¹¹ Ibid, p. 49.

¹¹² Ibid, p. 48. and p. 69.

totalitarianism.¹¹³ Joan Keating has observed that because of the religious nature of the right wing governments of Salazar in Portugal and Dolfuss in Austria, Catholics in England at this time felt susceptible to the accusation of being supporters of Nazism.¹¹⁴ This was also evident because of Vichy France's support for the Church. Keating also notes the influence of an article in the *New Statesman and Nation* of 1940 entitled, 'The Catholic Latin Myth', which argued that British Catholics might share the view of their fellow Catholics in Europe who, as they were focused on the threat of Bolshevism, tended to be weak in their commitment to defeat Hitler.¹¹⁵ However, Dawson sought to inform Catholics about the real nature of the War when he wrote that, whilst Hitler might pose as the defender of European civilization against Bolshevik atheism, the Nazis' real aim was to conquer Europe and that the attack on Russia was just a precursor to moves against the British Empire and the United States.¹¹⁶ However, at the same time Dawson was determined not to ignore the errors of Communism which he saw as the other great representative of the spiritual evils of totalitarianism.¹¹⁷ The problem of post-war intellectuals who continued to minimize or even approve of the crimes of Communism has been described by Stéphane Courtois in the landmark work, *The Black Book of Communism*, as the result of an 'ideologically

¹¹³ Dawson, *The Sword of the Spirit*, Reproduced from *The Dublin Review*, (London: Matthewman and Edwards, nd.), p. 8. Dawson stated that, "The real meaning of what we call totalitarianism and the totalitarian state is the total control of all human activities and human energies, spiritual as well as physical, by the state, and their direction to whatever ends are dictated by its interests, or rather the interests of the ruling party or clique."

¹¹⁴ Joan Keating, "Discrediting the 'Catholic State': British Catholics and the Fall of France", in *Catholicism in Britain and France Since 1789*, eds. Frank Tallett and Nicholas Atkin, (London: The Hambledon Press, 1996.), p. 28. As regards this matter, Paul Gottfried has argued that there was a difference between the vicious and aggressive German Nazism and the generic authoritarian and corporatist fascism that characterized the neo-pagan variant in Italy or the clericalist regimes of Austria and Portugal. In Paul Edward Gottfried, *Conservatism in America, Making Sense of the American Right*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 80-81. Indeed, the Austrian Chancellor Engelbert Dolfuss (1892-1934), after resisting the Nazi infiltration of the government, would subsequently be assassinated by them.

¹¹⁵ W. Horsfall Carter, "The Catholic Latin Myth" in *NS&N*, 5 October, 1940, cited in Joan Keating, *British Catholics and the Fall of France*, p. 31.

¹¹⁶ Dawson, *The Sword of the Spirit*, p. 10.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 11.

motivated self-deception' which can be judged as a type of complicity with publicly known atrocities.¹¹⁸

After the war, in 1947 and 1948, Dawson gave the two Gifford Lectures at the University of Edinburgh which were subsequently published under the titles of *Religion and Culture*, and *Religion and the Rise of Western Culture*. In *Religion and the Rise of Western Culture*, Dawson observed that the enormous amount of historical knowledge available in the West meant that there had been divisions into political, economic and social histories, which contrasted with ecclesiastical histories and furthermore, that these specializations provided no unified analysis of cultural development.¹¹⁹ As well, Dawson continued with many of the ideas developed in *The Making of Europe* when he contrasted the unique historical record of Christianity with other world religions.¹²⁰ Dawson did not hold any academic post, other than a brief period at Exeter in the 1920s, until later in his life, which Russell Kirk suggests reflected the residual anti-Catholicism of English life in the first half of the twentieth century.¹²¹ Kirk also observed that Dawson was the last of an earlier group of scholars such as Francesco Guicciardini who were able to remain independent of the academic world.¹²²

Dawson examined specific features of Catholic cultures in his book, *The Dividing of Christendom*, written in the 1960s. This work focused on one example of a Catholic culture, that

¹¹⁸ Stéphane Courtois, "Introduction: The Crimes of Communism." In Stéphane Courtois et al., *The Black Book of Communism*, ed. Mark Kramer, trans. by Jonathon Murphy and Mark Kramer, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), p. 11. Courtois argued that the 'cover-up' of the crimes of Communism was caused by an on-going fascination with the idea of revolution, (for example Che-Guevara has become fashionable again), the rôle of the Soviet Union in the victory over Nazism and more controversially that the characterization of the Holocaust as a unique event precluded discussion of comparable atrocities in the Communist world. pp. 21-23. According to Pascal Fontaine, Che Guevara was cold and intolerant and had allowed a child in his guerrilla unit who had stolen a small amount of food to be shot without the benefit of a trial. Pascal Fontaine, "Communism in Latin America", in *The Black Book of Communism*, pp. 651-52.

¹¹⁹ Dawson, *RWC*, p. 13.

¹²⁰ *Ibid*, p. 12.

¹²¹ Russell Kirk, "Introduction to the Transaction Edition", to Scott, *HHW*, p. 5.

¹²² *Ibid*, p. 5.

of the Baroque, a period which had influenced Dawson's own conversion. Dawson contrasted the Baroque culture of seventeenth-century Spain, Italy, Austria and Flanders, with the bourgeois culture in the Protestant countries such as England and Holland, as well as in Gallican France. In the early eighteenth century, Catholic Spain was divorced from its old connections with Hapsburg Austria and Baroque Europe, after Louis XIV had succeeded in placing his Bourbon grandson on the Spanish throne.¹²³ In time, the destruction of the Catholic culture of the Baroque, which had been too dependent on the Hapsburg monarchy, meant that anti-clerical secularism strengthened in the 'old' Catholic countries.¹²⁴

As mentioned in Chapter One, the other unique aspect of Dawson's work was his view that there is a need to provide new educational responses to the challenge of the modern world. Dawson argued that if this does not occur, there was a danger that Catholic institutions would simply become secular schools with a denominational label.¹²⁵ After the Second World War, Dawson focused increasingly on the rôle of education and this led to the publication of *The Crisis of Western Education*, in 1961. Part of this book developed Dawson's belief that the Reformation and its Protestant culture, as well as the secular world of the Enlightenment, had led to a split between religion and culture which had damaged both society and education. Furthermore, for Catholics in particular, such a secularized society provided continuous contradictions and conflicts with their Christian faith.¹²⁶

In 1958 Dawson was invited to become the first Stillman Guest Lecturer of Roman Catholic Studies at Harvard University. During this time Dawson was also developing a Christian

¹²³ Dawson, *DC*, p. 273.

¹²⁴ *Ibid*, p. 272.

¹²⁵ Dawson, *CWE*, p. 153.

¹²⁶ *Ibid*, p. 187.

culture program which was begun at St Mary's College, Notre Dame University. Glen Olsen, a contemporary scholar associated with the *Communio* group contends that culture is important for Christianity as,

...the Church has always felt an obligation to save full human beings, not merely disembodied souls. She has tried to save men, unions of body and soul, and in this has tried to offer all intellectual and material civilization back to God.¹²⁷

In his cultural program Dawson wished to give students an historical overview of what he termed, the Six Stages of Christian Culture. These were to include: 1) the early years of the Church, known as the Apostolic Age; 2) the age of the Fathers, in the later Roman Empire; 3) the Church's mission to the barbarian tribes during the 'Dark Ages'; 4) medieval Christianity; 5) the dividing of Christianity after the Reformation; and, 6) the Church in secularized Christendom.

This course reinforced Dawson's contention that Western education had neglected the essential features of the making of European culture. In particular, whilst the classical heritage was a major factor in the development of Western culture the main impetus to its growth was Christianity. Dawson's last major work, published after his death, was *The Gods of Revolution* which dealt with the impact of the Enlightenment and its influence on the French Revolution.

Major Themes of Dawson's work

Dawson's understanding of culture was predicated on a number of key factors, including:

- I. the importance of history, particularly his metahistorical focus and his use of anthropological and sociological insights;
- II. his understanding of the development of the West and the unity of Europe through a common faith;

¹²⁷ Glenn Olsen, "Christian Faith in a neo-pagan society", in *Christian Faith in a neo-pagan society*, Proceedings from the Third Convention of the Fellowship of Catholic Scholars, ed. Paul Williams, (Scranton: 1981), p. 30.

- III. an emphasis on the incipient stages of culture such as the Dark Ages, about which he had written in *The Making of Europe*; and,
- IV. an analysis of particular Catholic cultures such as the Medieval or the Baroque.

Dawson's metahistorical approach drew upon Lord Acton's concept that religion is the key to history.¹²⁸ Thus, Dawson contended that religion, rather than being formed by culture is, instead, the dynamic forming culture. Therefore, he believed that to understand the spiritual element in history was a vital key to understanding both culture in general and modern culture in particular. In answer to critics who would later contend that Dawson let religious bias enter into his work, Glen Olsen has observed that all historians have their own background beliefs and that the supposedly neutral world of the Enlightenment fails to account for this.¹²⁹ Similarly, one of the main criticisms of modernity by postmodern theorists is about a concept of neutrality that fails to address the influence of antecedent beliefs and cultural background.

So, in spite of the fact that the influence of religion seemed to wane in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Dawson and scholars such as Toynbee sought to assert the rôle of religious belief in the formation of societies. As well, Dawson warned of the spiritual and psychological consequences when society exchanged its transcendental religion with a series of man-made religions. One of these man-made religions was nationalism, which both Dawson and Toynbee considered a kind of false god, which had led to the cataclysm of a European civil war. Dawson and theologians such as Danielou of the *nouvelle théologie* school believed that people were naturally religious. The religious impulse had not simply evaporated but rather, people had

¹²⁸ Dawson, *RWC*, p. 15.

¹²⁹ Olsen, "Christian Philosophy, Christian History", in *Eternity in Time*, eds. Caldecott and Morrill, p. 140.

transferred their allegiances elsewhere. This latter view about the dangers in a society abandoning its religious beliefs helped form Dawson's views on the post-Enlightenment modern world.

Dawson's cultural insights seem to stem in part from his attitude to the importance of history. In contrast to some Catholic perspectives that tended to minimize the rôle of history, Dawson argued for an understanding of history as a creative process, where man was not the slave of time but its master and creator and, therefore, the past did not simply vanish but, instead, became absorbed into the life of humanity.¹³⁰ Dawson's broad or metahistorical perspective, in examining the spiritual dynamic in a society differed from the predominant English tradition of empiricism. In the 1950s Dawson responded to a criticism of metahistory by Alan Bullock by asserting that,

...the mastery of the techniques of historical criticism and research although important will not produce great history any more than a mastery of metrical technique will produce great poetry. For this something more is necessary intuitive understanding, creative imagination and finally a universal vision transcending the relative limitation of the particular field of historical study.¹³¹

The increased emphasis on cultural questions by postmodern thinkers has led to a greater appreciation of Dawson's contribution in this area. Dawson believed that culture was, "... a common social way of life with a tradition behind it, which has embodied itself in institutions and which involves moral standards and principles."¹³² Furthermore, Dawson was aware that one of the criticisms of Christian culture, or indeed of any religious culture, is the discrepancy between beliefs and subsequent behaviours within societies. In response to this criticism, Russello summarizes the Dawsonian perspective as meaning that, "A Christian culture is not a perfect culture, but only one that accepts Christian values as true and frames its institutions to

¹³⁰ Dawson, *ERC*, p. 252.

¹³¹ Christopher Dawson, "The Problem of Metahistory", *History Today*, vol. I, (June 1951), p. 12.

¹³² Dawson, "The Outlook for Christian Culture", in *CEC*, p. 3.

give expression to those values.”¹³³ Dawson’s theological understanding meant that he perceived that culture was a moral order.¹³⁴ In the West, Christianity was the source of this moral order in the same sense that Confucianism was in China, or Islam in the Middle East.¹³⁵ This meant that Western conceptions of the Divine law and moral standards were based on principles of moral unity.¹³⁶ This type of thought complements the theological and historical understanding developed in the *ressourcement* group in the mid-twentieth century and by the later *Communio* scholars. In particular, the *Communio* scholar Aidan Nichols states that,

A culture is, therefore, a system of inherited conceptions (intellectual), a set of common standards of behaviour (moral), a pattern of meanings embodied in symbols (material), and a series of conventions governing human interaction (institutional), by which human beings communicate and perpetuate, but also modify and develop, their knowledge about and attitudes to life.¹³⁷

Dawson’s understanding of culture also reflected his differences from both Whig and secular theories and from English conservative nationalism. Instead, he sought to analyse the unity of European culture. Dawson was able to examine the fundamental ideas behind the concept of Europe, such as the influence of Greek thought and of Roman law and organisation, the impact of the barbarian tribes, and most importantly of Christianity. This understanding of the importance of religion contrasted, not only with the liberal progressive view of history still common in the English-speaking world, but also with the equally strong views of the Marxist historical school that had such an impact during the twentieth century. Dawson’s originality lay in a renewed awareness that an understanding of a culture and its history required an examination of its early formative stages and a consideration of its spiritual basis. This view was particularly

¹³³ Russello, “Introduction”, to *CEC*, p. xxv.

¹³⁴ Dawson, “What is a Christian Civilization”, in *CEC*, p. 21.

¹³⁵ *Ibid*, p. 22.

¹³⁶ *Ibid*, p. 23.

¹³⁷ Nichols, *Christendom Awake*, p. 10.

challenging coming at the end of an era when an Enlightenment view of progress, achieved through a sole reliance on reason, had held sway.

However, World War One had provided a particular challenge for this Whig view of history.¹³⁸ The decades before 1914 had witnessed the height of Europe's direct influence and power over the rest of the world. However, besides leading to the destruction of several empires and monarchies and to disruption to the social and economic fabric of all the combatant nations, one of the effects of the First World War was to begin the decline in this direct European influence and prestige. More importantly, the Great War destroyed the psychological world of nineteenth-century liberalism. The challenge occasioned by the carnage and consequent chaos to the seeming stability of the Europe of 1914 was so great that there was a move to re-evaluate the views of culture and history which had previously held sway. This crisis spurred Dawson to re-examine the real foundations of society.

In the first part of this work the debate within the Church on evangelization and the concern for respect for different cultures was mentioned. Here, Dawson's work on cultural development can provide an important addition to current understandings. Thus, in contrast to an emphasis on a perception of cultures as closed systems, Dawson analysed the way cultures developed and changed through interaction and synthesis. One example of this interaction was the fact that black African converts to Islam learnt Arabic in order to read the Koran. Dawson observed that the language difference in this situation was greater than that of the West European languages from Latin.¹³⁹ His views about this issue were also evident in 1953, when he argued for the importance of a common language to reverse the curse of Babel and to create a bond of unity between

¹³⁸ Herbert Butterfield, *The Whig Interpretation of History*, (London: G. Bell and Sons Ltd., 1968), passim.

¹³⁹ Scott, *HHW*, p. 206.

people.¹⁴⁰ The use of Latin, which belonged to no one and yet was common to everyone, meant that the divisions of race and language would not prevent people worshipping together.¹⁴¹

In particular, of all the significant converts of the Catholic revival in the twentieth century, Dawson is one of the least well known. During the decades after the 1960s he seemed to have fallen out of favour amongst wider Catholic circles. This is a reflection of an intense and on-going debate within the Catholic intellectual world over the relative place of history and philosophy, as well as the perception that Dawson's views in the post-Vatican II era were dated. However, Hittinger has observed that Dawson, because of his expertise as a cultural anthropologist, provides an important addition to the insights of the other theological, philosophical and literary insights of the Catholic revival.¹⁴² Furthermore, Hittinger suggests that Dawson's expertise provided a more complete response to the challenge of the social sciences, which were to move into Catholicism like so many bacteria for which there was no immune system.¹⁴³

If, as Tracey Rowland asserts, the lacuna in much Catholic thought since the Second Vatican Council is an account of the development of culture, then the work of Christopher Dawson can provide the necessary corrective to this problem.¹⁴⁴ Furthermore, the cultural crisis of the last forty years has meant that the Dawsonian insights have become more and more pertinent. During his lifetime, Dawson received a variety of reactions to his work. In 1941, V.A. Demant, writing in the journal, *The Nineteenth Century*, asserted that no writer in England managed to be so aware of contemporary issues and at the same time have the deep historical and

¹⁴⁰ Christopher Dawson, "Letter to Col Ross – Duggon", (18 June, 1953), cited in Scott, *HHW*, p. 206.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Hittinger, "Christopher Dawson: A View from the Social Sciences", in *The Catholic Writer*, ed. McInerny, pp. 31-32.

¹⁴³ Ibid, p. 33.

¹⁴⁴ Rowland, *CTT*, p. 163.

cultural insights of Christopher Dawson.¹⁴⁵ Furthermore, Demant argued that Dawson managed to identify two positive features of English society.¹⁴⁶ First, the English coronation rite showed that England still had a faded sense of being a Christian nation and secondly, there was the continued existence of English liberty, which was based not on democracy, but on an inherited aristocratic tradition.¹⁴⁷ Dermot Quinn has also chronicled the praise that Dawson's work received during the 1950s and 1960s. A columnist for the English periodical, *The Spectator*, wrote that, *Religion and the Rise of Western Culture*, was, "...one of the most noteworthy books produced in this generation about the medieval world", whilst a review of *The Dynamics of World History* in *Commonweal*, praised Dawson as, "certainly the first scholar in the English-speaking world, perhaps in the whole world".¹⁴⁸

However, there were also a number of criticisms of his work which reflected either an anti-Catholic, or alternately, an anti-religious viewpoint. Thus, in the early 1930s, the English Protestant clergyman, Dr Coulton, had written a particularly critical article on *The Making of Europe*, especially for its idea that the Dark Ages had been an Age of Faith.¹⁴⁹ As well, by the late 1950s, according to Quinn, critics such as Hayden White were criticizing Dawson's views for his argument that there was a spiritual dimension in history, which White considered was unscientific.¹⁵⁰

Dawson's themes and topics were contentious enough during his lifetime, but the influence of revisionist and postmodern historical perspectives since the 1970s have caused his

¹⁴⁵ V. A. Demant, "The Importance of Christopher Dawson", *The Nineteenth Century*, vol. 129, no. 767, (Jan, 1941), p. 66.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 67.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid. p. 67 and p. 71.

¹⁴⁸ Quinn, "Introduction", to *DWH*, p. viii.

¹⁴⁹ Scott, *HHW*, p. 104.

¹⁵⁰ Quinn, "Introduction", to *DWH*, p. x.

metahistorical views to be further challenged. As John Morrill has pointed out, the revisionist reaction to the influence of Marxism in history has led to a greater focus on the horizontal dimension of the past, in contrast to the vertical approach on how the past had formed the present.¹⁵¹ However, recent international trends such as the resurgence of Islam and the debate over the constitution and foundation of Europe have provided a challenge to both modern and postmodern perspectives on history and culture. Dawson's metahistorical understanding of the impact of religion on culture may provide a timely framework, not only for other historians, but for Catholic educators devising humanities curricula.

An analysis of Dawson's work enables us to argue that Dawson is a unique historian, not only in terms of his own culture and times by providing an alternative to a Whig and nationalist view of history, but also in his own different approaches to other Catholic thinkers. As previously noted, these include other Catholic historians such as Hilaire Belloc and Henri Massis, as well as Catholic philosophers such as Jacques Maritain. On one level his measured scholarly manner provided a contrasting approach to the often polemical style of writers such as Belloc. Scott has observed that Dawson was aware that making Catholic history simply a vehicle for religious apologetics and an accompanying trend to idealize medieval culture faced the long term risk of being self-defeating.¹⁵² Hittinger further observes that Dawson's broad understanding of Catholicism's impact, not just on the medieval period, but on all ages, makes him unique in the Catholic historiography of the time.¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ Morrill, "Introduction", to *Eternity in Time*, eds, Caldecott and Morrill, p. 4.

¹⁵² Dawson, *ME*, p. 5.

¹⁵³ Hittinger, "The Metahistorical Vision of Christopher Dawson", in *The Dynamic Character of Christian Culture*, ed. Peter Cataldo, p. 17.

In recent years there is evidence of a renewed interest in the work of Dawson. Indeed, the late Russell Kirk had argued that the Dawsonian view was increasingly dominating the realm of ideas and would soon be reflected in popular histories.¹⁵⁴ Francesca Murphy makes the observation that Dawson's work contrasted with an English focus on specific facts, and that it was part of a broader European focus which looked for the underlying meaning of history.¹⁵⁵ In her view, if Catholic history could be described as a lifting up of natural human beings and human culture by and toward a Christian spirit, then Dawson, with his quality of symbolic imagining, provides us with a good example of a Catholic historian.¹⁵⁶

In the 1960s, Shinn described Dawson as representing a Catholicism which had a sense of the mysterious and tragic forces evident in history.¹⁵⁷ For Shinn, the Catholic like Dawson can offer a specific cultural and religious tradition that has not succumbed to the illusions of recent centuries.¹⁵⁸ The mature quality of this tradition stands in contrast to Communist materialism and the American combination of liberal democracy and standardized mass civilization.¹⁵⁹ Shinn maintains that besides Dawson's contribution to our understanding of the so-called Dark Ages, his significance lies in his view, which he shared with Toynbee, that religion formed culture and that spiritual power was the creative force of civilization.¹⁶⁰

Although some have argued that his metahistorical vision seems dated, in view of the particularism and relativism of the postmodern trends, Dawson now seems thoroughly relevant with his critique of Whig and nationalistic views of history. This view judged history from the

¹⁵⁴ Russell Kirk, "Introduction" to *HHW*, p. 6.

¹⁵⁵ Francesca Murphy, "Can there be a Catholic history today", in *Eternity in Time*, eds. Caldecott and Morrill, p. 129.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 125.

¹⁵⁷ Shinn, *Christianity and the Problem of History*, p. 176.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 176-177.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 174.

standards of the present and imposed a particular view of progress on the development of the nation state. Dawson, in *The Making of Europe*, had already warned such scholars of the danger of pharasaic self-righteousness in judging the past.¹⁶¹ His views on Europe's spiritual foundation are also particularly applicable given the current debate about its constitution and future direction.¹⁶² Finally, given the situation since September 2001, Dawson's belief that we need to understand a society's religion in order to understand its culture, including our own, reflects a necessarily realist assessment of many of the world's current political conflicts.

In summary, Dawson set himself against the trend of much historical writing of the time and reflected a new critique of the belief in progress by questioning whether modern advances in material civilization were truly progressive in the broad sense.¹⁶³ Furthermore, it can be argued that Dawson would have disagreed with the Whig view of history, not because of some shared postmodern concern over truth and the relative values of cultures, but because of his belief that modern histories ignored essential features about culture and history.

Francesca Murphy points out that both Hilaire Belloc and even the contemporary liturgical historian Eamon Duffy are writing just another kind of history, which could sit alongside the feminist or ethnic histories.¹⁶⁴ She suggests that Belloc's verbal assault on the Reformation and Duffy's *The Stripping of the Altars*, are not really Catholic history, but a type of Marxist Catholic Studies reflecting the needs of an interest group.¹⁶⁵ Furthermore, Murphy makes the observation that Dawson's writing contrasted with an English tradition of analytical history writing, by

¹⁶¹ Dawson, *ME*, p. 4.

¹⁶² Gerald Russello, "Europe, Christianity, and the Thought of Christopher Dawson", (PART 1) *Zenit*, (15/09/03), <http://www.zenit.org/article-8170>. Russello has also observed that Dawson's work has a contribution in the debate over a European constitution.

¹⁶³ Dawson, *PR*, p. 18.

¹⁶⁴ Murphy, "Can there be a Catholic history today", in *Eternity in Time*, eds. Caldecott and Morrill, p. 124.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid*, p. 123.

focusing on a less empirical and more European method, which viewed culture as a whole.¹⁶⁶ Also, she considers that Dawson understood culture as a ‘moral order’, which was based on his acknowledgement that the forms of the liturgy, art and the institutions of a culture are the symbols by which its morals are channelled and represented.¹⁶⁷ This acknowledgement of the morals or religious vision of a culture has led Hittinger to argue that Dawson was working within an older tradition of ‘prophetic sociology’, which had characterized writers such as Alexis de Tocqueville.¹⁶⁸

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that the developing scholarship of the *Communio* school can be enriched by the work of the English historian, Christopher Dawson. The Dawsonian understanding of areas such as anthropology and sociology was unique, not only in contrast to philosophers such as Maritain, but also in regard to other Catholic historians. Dawson’s conclusions also offer a foundation for Catholic educators to develop new curricula and resources, particularly within English-speaking Western countries such as Australia and the USA, which do not have the history and tradition of a Catholic culture. It is to be hoped that the development of such curricula would assist in a revitalization of a Catholic culture and thus help to solve the modern problem of the divided Christian personality.¹⁶⁹

Finally, this chapter argued that the Dawsonian concept that religion forms culture and in particular, that Christianity has formed Western culture, is particularly pertinent at the present time of cultural and societal crisis. Dawson has analysed this crisis as meaning that, “The society

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 129.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, p. 125.

¹⁶⁸ Hittinger, “The Metahistorical Vision of Christopher Dawson”, in *The Catholic Writer*, ed, McInerney, p. 34.

¹⁶⁹ Scott, *HHW*, pp. 205-206.

or culture which has lost its spiritual roots is a dying culture, however prosperous it may appear externally”.¹⁷⁰ As a result there is a need for further development of scholarship about two areas namely:

- I. development of a critique of modern cultural forms as representing an alternative ontology which is problematic for the flourishing of the Christian person; and,
- II. further definition of the forms and substance of Catholic culture, in areas such as the liturgy, arts, architecture and literature.

¹⁷⁰ Dawson, “Preface”, to *ERC*, p. vi.

CHAPTER IV

Religion as the Key to History

Introduction

During the last forty years there has been an expansion of historical scholarship covering the time of late antiquity and the subsequent development of Christian Europe, and the rôle of religion in the formation of major world cultures.¹ These new historiographical developments have allowed a renewed appreciation of earlier theological and cultural scholarship carried out by *nouvelle théologie* writers such as Daniélou and de Lubac as well as by Dawson. The neglect of these major figures may be due to the fact that after the 1960s, many Catholic intellectuals interpreted the Second Vatican Council in terms of a *rapprochement* with the culture of modernity. In spite of the fact that Dawson and de Lubac's perspectives were precursors of later sociological and cultural thought, their critique of modern culture meant that they could be disregarded for exhibiting a mentality that was no longer seen as relevant to the needs of the Church.

However, in the last decade, the work of such *Communio* scholars as Schindler, Rowland and Caldecott has been part of a renewed emphasis on the importance of history and tradition. This trend has prepared the way for a renewed appreciation of earlier Catholic thought on these topics. In particular, Dawson's conception of history, by fostering new educational and catechetical strategies and curricula, can be an essential component of the *Communio* school's cultural response to the present problem of the Church's relationship with modern secular culture.

This chapter will consider how a range of historical interpretations such as those of the Whig or nationalistic schools provided an important apologetic for modern culture. At the present

¹ Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom*, p. 1. In this regard, Brown, when updating his work first published in 1995, makes an observation about the, "...veritable 'dam burst' in the study of late antiquity and of the early Middle Ages which has taken place in the last five years." p. 1.

time, the identification of major flaws in history courses may result in a reassertion of liberal Enlightenment historiographies within a compulsory curriculum. However, this chapter will argue that the ascendancy of this history, whether in school curricula or in university humanities courses, was itself a factor in the marginalization of Catholicism and a subsequent ignorance and lack of confidence among individual Catholics about the rôle and importance of their religion to Western culture. Indeed, Catholic politicians and educators need to be aware that any reassertion of liberal Enlightenment historiographies would be counter-productive for any project which sought to transmit Catholic culture.

Dawson considered that history was a creative process and that the past did not die but became incorporated into humanity.² In contrast, Clark has observed that the lack of a sense of history will have consequences for religion, so that a de-historicized mental universe will necessarily be an atheistic one.³ This complements David Jones' earlier desire to establish not a sense of living in the past, but of the past living in us.⁴ To bring this about Dawson proposed a Christian Culture course which would counter the problem of students developing divided personalities, where a Christian faith and a pagan culture continually contradict one another.⁵

In this chapter, key areas to be addressed include:

- I. The problem of narrow nationalistic and reductionist secular perspectives of history in countries such as England, Germany and France. More recently this problem has been exacerbated by postmodernism, which Clark argues is a de-historicization, or a

² Dawson, *ERC*, p. 252.

³ Clark, *Our Shadowed Present*, p. 13.

⁴ Nichols, "Christopher Dawson's Catholic Setting", in *Eternity in Time*, eds. Caldecott and Morrill, p. 31.

⁵ Scott, *HHW*, pp. 205-206.

foreshortening and discarding of the historical dimension, which can be characterized as presentism;⁶

- II. The Dawsonian analysis of major historians and historiography, including: Enlightenment historians, Marxist schools, the cyclical ideas of Spengler, the modern views of progress of H.G. Wells, and the revisionist school of historians;
- III. The Dawsonian alternative to the challenge of modern history. Here there is a need to consider the importance of history, memory and tradition alongside the rôle of a narrative approach. In addition, it is essential for history teaching in Catholic schools to acknowledge the centrality of the Incarnation and also to challenge the threefold division of history as ancient, medieval and modern. This chapter will conclude that if history courses in Australian schools are to be made compulsory, they should include a renewed focus on narrative, in particular the eschatological narrative of Christianity which has formed the West, and thus not represent a return to a purely nationalistic or Anglo-centric Whig version of history.

To better understand how Dawson's work in history provides part of a solution to this problem, it is important to be aware of the other major modern historical schools and historians and to contrast them with the Dawsonian perspective. The Dawsonian historical framework, based on the belief that religion is the key to history, provides a radical alternative to the range of historical perspectives that have been taught in religious and state educational systems. These have tended to either ignore, or distort, the religious element in history. In particular, for Catholics in the English-speaking world, the writings and thought of Christopher Dawson

⁶ Clark, *Our Shadowed Present*, p. 2.

provide an alternative historiography to the dominant range of historical viewpoints, such as the Whig or Marxist views that have dominated the contemporary period.

I. The Challenge of Modern Historical Writing

Russello has commented that the loss of historical memory, or the distortion of memory, has been characteristic of modern Britain and Europe.⁷ Similarly, Clark has observed a trend in American life away from an engagement with historical knowledge and towards a personal and subjective spiritual quest.⁸ He observes that this is expressly so in the United States where the section on popular psychology, rather than history, is at the heart of the modern bookshop.⁹ This loss of historical memory has had a profound impact on the Catholic systems of education throughout the English-speaking world. Whilst this trend has been of concern for secular systems of education, for the Catholic school it has been a powerful factor in the inability of graduates from the Catholic school system to critically analyse the contemporary secular cultural milieu, or to understand the vital rôle played by religion in history, and in particular Catholicism in Western culture. This provides one explanation for the massive declines in religious practice among those Catholics born after 1945, the first generation to attend universities in significant numbers. The importance of education in ending Catholic marginalization in English-speaking societies had been emphasised by many in the Church in the twentieth century. However, the question can be asked as to whether Catholic students entering secular universities were left without a framework with which to understand the crucial religious and cultural issues of their time, which in turn reflected confusion about such key theological and cultural concepts as the autonomy of the secular. Thus, to understand how Dawson's unique writing addressed this difficulty, his views need to be contrasted with the generally accepted secular histories of his time.

⁷ Russello, "Introduction", to *CEC*, p. x.

⁸ Clark, *Our Shadowed Present*, p. 192.

⁹ Ibid.

Dawson was born at the end of the nineteenth century, which had been characterized by an unprecedented interest in history. Leopold von Ranke in Germany (1795-1886), Hippolyte Taine in France (1823-1893), and Thomas Babbington Macauley in Britain (1800-1859), were all historians whose ideas had major impacts on the general populations in their respective countries. Paralleling and reinforcing the nationalistic trends of the time, these historians wrote what has been termed ‘apologias’ for the nation state.¹⁰ Indeed, their enthusiasm for espousing the uniqueness of their particular nation-state meant that the common features of the European heritage were ignored or obscured.¹¹ Thus, history became a way to unify the nation, and as Dawson was to observe, it became an alternative religion and a catalyst for the increasing secularisation of Europe.¹²

In England what became known as the ‘Whig view of history’ was the strongest trend in the historiographical field all through the nineteenth and well into the twentieth century. One of the most well known proponents of this view was the British historian Macauley, whose books, especially the five-volume *History of England* (1847-1861), enjoyed wide readership.¹³ He argued that Britain’s tradition of liberty and parliamentary democracy meant that it was unique in regard to other European nations. Macauley traced this unique English view of progress back to such events as the Magna Carta in 1215, the Glorious Revolution of 1688, and the Reform Bill of 1832. This uninterrupted progress was also brought about by such factors as settlement by the Anglo-Saxon tribes and the fact that Britain became a Protestant nation after the Reformation. However, this perspective ignored those who were not successful after the 1688 Revolution, particularly the Irish and the Scots. For the Catholic Irish in particular, the events of 1688 and

¹⁰ Stefan Berger, Mark Donovan and Kevin Passmore in “Apologias for the nation-state in Western Europe since 1800”, in *Writing National Histories*, eds. Berger, Donovan and Passmore, p. 3.

¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 10.

¹² Dawson, “The Christian View of History”, in *CEC*, p. 226.

¹³ Berger, Donovan and Passmore, *Writing National Histories*, p. 30.

1693, after the Battle of the Boyne, would lead to dispossession and exile for many. During this time many of them were to migrate to such countries as France and Argentina. For the Scots, the main defeat occurred in 1745, at the Battle of Culloden. The Jacobite cause, and the army of Bonnie Prince Charlie was to be destroyed and the old strongholds of the Stuarts in the Highlands depopulated in the clearances.

Macauley's history was focused on an England at the height of its international prestige and influence. The victory of the liberal middle classes meant that Britain, even although only temporarily, was now the pre-eminent industrial and financial super-power. The economic philosophy of *laissez-faire* liberal capitalism seemed to be the best guarantee for the future prosperity of Britain. The influence of a similar philosophy, which emphasizes deregulation from state control and the benefits of a completely free market, continues to be important in the contemporary English-speaking world. Scholars such as Clark have argued that Whig history's enduring impact on Western society is evident in the turn to postmodernism, which he suggests is just a Whig history with renewed moral indignation.¹⁴ In the twentieth century, Macauley's nephew, George Macaulay Trevelyn (1876-1962), continued to write in the Whig tradition in such works as *English Social History: A Survey of Six Centuries*, (1944), and *History of the English-speaking Peoples*, (1956-1958). According to Norman Davies, the main themes of Whig history, such as the sterling national character of the English, the beneficial effects of the Reformation, and the pursuit of liberty, dominated school history teaching from the early twentieth century up until the 1960s.¹⁵

¹⁴ Clark, *Our Shadowed Present*, p. 21. Clark also argues, "Do the postmodernists in fact escape from history? They fail to escape because presentism has serious flaws of substance. Extreme relativism, after all, cannot apply to itself." p. 17.

¹⁵ Davies, *The Isles: A History*, pp. 1023-24.

In Germany, Ranke and historians such as Ernst Troeltsch (1865-1923), would become apologists for the Prussian victory and its unification of Germany in 1871.¹⁶ A new sense of Germany's place and mission had already been established by the writings of Hegel and Herder. A focus on the importance of the state in forming and maintaining German identity contrasted with the emphasis on liberty and parliamentary democracy in British historiography. Such key dates and events as the victory of Arminius over the Roman general Valis, in AD 9, the Teutonic Knights' defeat of the Lithuanians during the Middle Ages, and the establishment of Lutheranism in many German states during the sixteenth century were perceived to mark the foundation of German national identity. A new school of historical thought, known as historicism, would come to be associated with these writers. This school focused on the importance of a particular culture, rather than a universalist view of human change and progress. Isaiah Berlin has termed this historicist trend a 'Counter-enlightenment'.¹⁷

During the nineteenth century in France, one of the main historical trends drew from the work of Comte. Progress and science became the new frame of reference for interpreting and predicting history. The defeat of France in the Franco-Prussian war of 1870 meant an increased interest in history and its rôle in the formation of the nation. The positivist historians associated with the *Université* believed that a secular lay republic was needed for France to survive in a Europe of great powers.¹⁸ For many of these secular historians, a France that was perceived as a defender of Catholic interests would be likely to provoke further conflicts with the new Protestant-dominated German Empire and with a newly united and anti-Papal Italy. Furthermore, the Prussian defeat of the French at Sedan, in the war of 1870, was characterized as a victory of

¹⁶ George Iggers, in "Nationalism and Historiography: 1789-1996, the German example in historical perspective", in *Writing National Histories*, eds. Berger, Donovan and Passmore. p. 19.

¹⁷ Isaiah Berlin, *Against the Current: Essays in the History of Ideas*. ed. Henry Hardy, (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1979), p. 1.

¹⁸ Keylor, *Jacques Bainville*, p. 35. This author states that the primary, secondary and higher education systems were linked within the institutional structure of the French *Université*.

the German schoolmaster.¹⁹ Ironically, in spite of the fact that the German primary schools were predominantly either Lutheran or Catholic, the French Republicans decided that a completely secular primary education system would be a guarantee of national efficiency and success.²⁰

However, the official histories associated with the French *Université* would be challenged by the rise of the more militantly nationalistic *Action Française* movement in the early twentieth century. In particular, Bainville, the main historian of this movement wrote works, such as *The History of France* and *Napoleon*, which sold tens of thousands of copies during the 1920s and 1930s. Bainville's atheism did not preclude him from supporting the type of Gallican Catholicism which had characterized the Bourbon absolute state. Indeed, one of the most intelligent and committed ministers of the Bourbon King, Louis XIII, was Cardinal Richelieu, who did so much to forge a sense of French national identity.²¹ Bainville considered that the second half of the seventeenth century, during the reign of Louis XIV, represented the height of French influence and power and provided a model for France in the future.²² In Bainville's opinion the monarchy encouraged a long-term view of French interests to prevail which meant that other powers such as the German states or Hapsburg Austria would remain weak and permanently divided. In contrast, Bainville perceived the Republican system of government, characterized by weakness and political divisions, to foster a short-term view of French interests.²³ Bainville's works can be understood as continuing in the tradition of the *politiques* who had successfully dominated French views on politics, society and foreign policy during the seventeenth century. One of the best-known victories of the *politiques* occurred on the *Day of the Dupes* in 1630. At this time

¹⁹ John Lukacs, *Remembered Past: On History, Historians and Historical Knowledge*, eds. Mark G. Malvasi and Jeffrey O. Nelson, (Wilmington, Delaware: ISI Books, 2005), p. 187.

²⁰ It was only in the 1850s that Montalbert and others had won the right to establish independent Catholic secondary schools through the Falloux Laws.

²¹ Anthony Levi, *Cardinal Richelieu and the Making of France*, (New York: Carroll and Graf Publishers, 2001), p. 9.

²² Keylor, *Jacques Bainville*, p. 199.

²³ *Ibid*, p. 63.

Richelieu, with his espousal of French national interests, maintained the support of Louis XIII against the *devots*, and their cause of a Catholic Europe.

During the 1920s France attempted to set in place a series of treaties in eastern and central Europe which would guarantee her long-term security against the threat of renewed German power. The old Austro-Hungarian Empire of the Hapsburgs had been dismembered in the post-World War I settlement and France made alliances with the newly emerging nations of Central and Eastern Europe, such as Czechoslovakia and Poland. Ultimately, this new balance of power was unable to ensure peace and before he died in 1936, Bainville was aware that his warnings about Germany had been largely unsuccessful. The influence of *Action Française* had also been severely weakened by the publication in 1926 of the Vatican's condemnation of the movement. There has been continued speculation about the motives for this condemnation, including its strictly nationalistic concept of France and Europe alongside its espousal of the primacy of the political over the spiritual, expressed in its slogan, *politiques abord*.²⁴ The condemnation caused a crisis of conscience in large sections of Catholic France, as the alliance of throne and altar had been for many a crucial way of understanding the history and culture of France.²⁵ Even though the interdict on *Action Française* was lifted in July, 1939, it would never recover the influence it had held in the 1920s.²⁶ According to the historian, Eugen Weber, the condemnation of *Action Française* allowed Catholic organizations to move towards the social Catholicism which was to be the basis for the *MRP*, the influential centrist party in the post-World War II era.²⁷

²⁴ Eugen Weber, *Action Française: Royalism and Reaction in Twentieth Century France*, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1962), pp. 252-253.

²⁵ Ibid, pp. 236-237.

²⁶ Ibid, pp. 248-249. Weber states that those involved in an attempt to remove the ban had included the Superior of the Carmelite Convent at Lisieux and the Catholic historian, George Goyau.

²⁷ Weber, *Action Française*, p. 255.

The other major writer associated with the *Action Française* movement was Henri Massis, whose most influential book was *The Defence of the West*. In this work, Massis argued that Germany had always wavered between Asian mysticism and the Latin spirit.²⁸ However, the shock of her defeat in 1918 had caused her to turn back to the East with a type of messianic expectation.²⁹ Similarly, the Russian Revolution had witnessed Russia turning away from the attempted Westernization program of Peter the Great and back towards her Asiatic origins.³⁰ Chesterton, in writing the Preface to this book, had claimed that the price that the West had paid for conquering the body of the East was to let the East conquer its soul.³¹ However, in reviewing this work, Dawson commented that the revolt of the East against the West was not so much an antagonism to Christianity, as a mistrust of the commercial and industrial power and the hegemony associated with Western liberal capitalization.³²

As mentioned earlier, the condemnation of *Action Française* was to have a major impact on the Thomist philosopher, Jacques Maritain. Before 1914, under the influence of his confessor, Fr. Clerissac, Maritain had been encouraged to read the works of Maurras. The period before 1914 was a time of the deepest division and struggle within France about the rôle that religion would be allowed to play in public life. Thus, the more extreme of the anti-clerical republicans, such as Combes, wished to permanently weaken and even destroy the influence of Catholicism in France and to construct a totally secular and lay France. Therefore, education in the state system would be about cultivating the civic and patriotic virtues necessary in this lay state. Although the Church was allowed to operate schools, it found this extremely difficult as most of the religious teaching orders were banned in the early years of the century. Early in the twentieth century this

²⁸ Massis, *The Defence of the West*, p. 14.

²⁹ Ibid, p. 17.

³⁰ Ibid, p. 55.

³¹ G. K. Chesterton, "Preface", to *Defence of the West*, by Massis, p. viii.

³² Dawson, "The Revolt of the East and the Catholic Tradition", *The Dublin Review*, pp. 1-14.

crisis for the Catholic system meant the closure of some ten thousand schools, although under nominal lay control they were allowed to re-open later on. For many Catholics, the fact that *Action Française* respected the Church's place and history in France meant that it should be at least seen as an ally.

However, World War I and the threat to national survival meant many of the pre-war divisions dissipated, and consequently, after 1918, there was some reconciliation between secular and Catholic France. In 1919, the *Horizon bleu* parliament with its first practicing majority of Catholics since the 1870s, allowed the religious orders to quietly return and it also re-established diplomatic relations with the Vatican. Also, the canonization in Rome of St Joan of Arc, in 1919, meant that another bridge was established between a Catholic France, and a lay France which was often deeply nationalistic.

Thus, by the 1920s, the condemnation of the *Action Française* movement meant that Maritain and other traditional Catholics no longer had a framework with which to interpret and explain the world round them. In particular, there was an historical and cultural vacuum between right-wing nationalism and a secularistic lay version of history. The monopoly of the nationalists, the successors of the sixteenth-century *politiques*, over non-Republican accounts of history, meant that after the 1926 condemnation, an historical framework that took account of the influence of Catholicism in the culture and society of both France and Europe was not clearly available. Although Maritain knew of Dawson, the Englishman's historical framework did not seem to greatly influence Maritain's thought on philosophical and political matters.

II. The Dawsonian analysis of other historiographies

Dawson was acutely aware of other historical schools such as Marxism and of the work of historians such as Gibbon, Spengler and Wells. One of the most significant of the eighteenth-century historians was Edward Gibbon (1737-1794). His major work, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, written between 1776 and 1788, has continued to be published up until the present time. In a recent work, *The Fall of the Roman Empire*, Peter Heather examines Gibbon's influential argument about Rome's decline in order to argue a different perspective.³³ Heather discusses the counter-argument to Gibbon's view that Christianity and other internal factors were major reasons for the Roman Empire's demise, by observing that the eastern and more Christian part of the Empire survived and prospered during the sixth century.³⁴

In *Edward Gibbon and the Fall of Rome*, which stemmed from a lecture he gave to the British Academy in 1934, Dawson had provided the same sort of critique.³⁵ This analysis of Gibbon's work provides a useful summary of Dawson's views on the strengths and weaknesses in Enlightenment thought. Dawson observed that Gibbon, who achieved a fusion between history and literature, was a great representative of a cosmopolitan or international culture, which was associated with the 'Grand Siecle' of Louis XIV.³⁶ In particular, Dawson argues that Gibbon was the heir to the classical humanist tradition which had dominated thought for three hundred years, and which meant that as the classical world was the standard of thought and conduct, educated people often lived a double life.³⁷ Indeed, Dawson argued that the classical world became more real to them than their own world, as they had been taught to know the history and literature of Rome better than that of England or modern Europe, and to model their thought on writers such

³³ Peter Heather, *The Fall of the Roman Empire*, (London: Macmillan, 2005), p. 443.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Dawson, "Edward Gibbon and the Fall of Rome", in *DWH*. Also in "Edward Gibbon", *Read*, pp. 159-180.

³⁶ Ibid, p. 343.

³⁷ Ibid, p. 351.

as Cicero and Seneca.³⁸ However, Dawson argued that Gibbon ultimately failed to understand or deal effectively with the rôle of Christianity in late antiquity, because he had eliminated it from his philosophy and thus it became essentially inexplicable.³⁹ Therefore, Gibbon would view medieval Europe as characterized by Gothic barbarism, which compared poorly with the greatness of Rome.⁴⁰ However, Dawson wrote that in spite of Gibbon's spiritual hostility to Christianity he was indebted to its historiography since:

The central tradition of European historiography is that of the Catholic Church. It is here and not in humanism that we find the true highway that leads from the ancient to the modern world.⁴¹

Thus, Dawson identified the continuity from Eusebius and Jerome and Augustine, to Bede and Scotus and Otto of Freising and also the patristic culture which formed the intellectual background to the monastic historians of the medieval period. This reflected Dawson's own belief that to be deep in history is to cease to be Protestant.⁴²

However, for Dawson, Gibbon's greatness lies in his ability to understand the past and identify with the subject so that, "He felt as a Roman; he thought as a Roman; he wrote as a Roman".⁴³ Furthermore, for Dawson, Gibbon is worth reading for the insight that he gives to the eighteenth century and the fact that we could not understand an age unless we knew how that age regarded the past, and how every age had made its own past in order to make its future.⁴⁴ Dawson acknowledged Gibbon's literary power and style and his understanding of the classical

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid, p. 349.

⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 353.

⁴¹ Ibid, p. 352.

⁴² Alexander Murray, "Introduction", to *ME*, p. xix. This statement was originally made by Cardinal Newman. John Henry Cardinal Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), p. 8.

⁴³ Dawson, "Edward Gibbon and the Fall of Rome", in *DWH*, p. 350.

⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 366.

period, but critiqued the major factor that characterised post-Enlightenment thought. This was an inability to comprehend or understand the spiritual factor in society. To Dawson,

..., the apostles of the eighteenth century Enlightenment were above all, intent on deducing the laws of social life and progress from a small number of rational principles. They hacked through the luxuriant and deep-rooted growth of traditional belief with the ruthlessness of pioneers in a tropical jungle.⁴⁵

Dawson and Marxist Thought

Dawson was particularly aware of the main currents of political and social thought in his own time. Whereas the classical humanism associated with Gibbon influenced the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, Marxism was one of the major political philosophies influencing the twentieth century. In the major countries of Western Europe such as France, Marxist thought also exerted a powerful attraction and impact because of the writings of philosophers like Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980). This would become particularly obvious during the cultural and political crisis of 1968. The relationship between Catholicism and Marxism was to have greater significance after many East European countries passed into the Soviet sphere of influence following the Yalta Conference at the end of World War II. Ultimately, the strength of Catholicism within Poland and the election of Pope John Paul II would be significant factors in the fall of European Communism in 1989.⁴⁶

Theorists such as Talmon believed that the beginnings of Marxism can be traced back to certain developments in Enlightenment and immediate post-Enlightenment thought.⁴⁷ In this regard, Dawson perceived that Marxism was the most thorough system of historic materialism

⁴⁵ Dawson, *PR*, p. 81.

⁴⁶ Burleigh, *Sacred Causes*, pp. 418-419.

⁴⁷ Talmon, *The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy*, p. 252.

ever and that it managed to draw on apocalyptic tradition within Protestant historical thought.⁴⁸ He observed that it combined both the Revolutionary tradition and German idealism, and that this idealism was the result of an illicit connection between the philosophy of the Enlightenment and the religion of Protestant Pietism.⁴⁹ Furthermore, Dawson argues that as Marx came to maturity when the Revolutionary tradition was at the height of its prestige, he was able to both revolt against bourgeois civilisation, yet also to satisfy the deeper needs of his own repressed spiritual instincts.⁵⁰

Dawson believed that a Christian philosophy of history was similar to Marxism in its revolutionary view of the historical process, in its apocalyptic understandings and in an opposition to the liberal tradition, but that where Marxism was materialistic, Christianity was essentially spiritual.⁵¹ Thus, because the Christian view was spiritual it was not involved in class conflict, but because of its understanding of the mystery of the Cross it had a different conception of the meaning of victory and defeat. For Dawson, only Christianity provided the transcendent end of history. In contrast, the Marxist focus on a social millenarianism was in reality an attempt to build a darkened world without faith.⁵² Writing in 1935, when Communism in Russia was still considered by many in the West as the way of the future, Dawson instead offered a far more pessimistic view when he prophesied that the ultimate verdict on Communism would be that the house that it was building for the new humanity was not a palace, but a prison, since it had no windows.⁵³

⁴⁸ Dawson, "Karl Marx and the Dialectic of History", in *DWH*, p. 373.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, p. 371.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, p. 372.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, p. 379.

⁵² *Ibid*, p. 380.

⁵³ *Ibid*.

Dawson considered the idea of progress to be the working religion of the modern world.⁵⁴ His analysis of the historians associated with this thought provides a clear guide to his views about the culture of the modern world. One of the most successful and popular of what Dawson termed the 'liberal idealists', was H.G. Wells (1866-1946).⁵⁵ Dawson classified Wells as the last of the 'encyclopaedists', a belated child of the Enlightenment with his optimistic and naïve faith in progress and humanity and science, even in the hostile climate of post-war Europe.⁵⁶ However, Dawson argued that this cult of progress was really a type of alternative religion, and that Wells was actually a frustrated evangelist whose historical vision and power of synthesis were due to his religious faith in a new world and a new humanity.⁵⁷ This religious fervour reflected Wells' perception that, without some sort of organ of world government and common purpose for the human race, modern science was in danger of destroying civilisation.⁵⁸ Dawson observed that although Wells had an uncharacteristically positive explanation of the world religions, particularly of Christendom and the Papacy because of their conscious efforts to provide the human race with a spiritual government, he refused to accept the Christian form of history.⁵⁹ This Dawsonian perspective on Wells and modern history runs parallel to the themes enunciated in the academy of scholars associated with the Radical Orthodoxy group, to the effect that modern thought is indeed an heretical reconstruction of the original Christian understanding of society.⁶⁰

⁵⁴ Dawson, *PR*, p. 15.

⁵⁵ Dawson, "H.G. Wells and the Outline of History", in *DWH*, p. 387.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, p. 382.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p. 383.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, p. 385.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*.

⁶⁰ Rowland, *CTT*, p. 13.

Dawson on Spengler and the cyclical view of history

The period before and after World War I was characterized by many new cultural and intellectual directions. In France, the trend before 1914 had been away from the scientific positivism which had been so influential through the second half of the nineteenth century. One of the most prominent figures was Henri Bergson (1859-1941), who moved away from a strict scientific rationalism to examine other factors in human behaviour, such as the rôle of intuition.⁶¹ After World War I, in Britain, Dawson and historians such as Arnold Toynbee, represented the trend away from a strictly nationalistic perspective in history towards an interest in a wider concept of culture and civilization.

However, perhaps the writer who most captured the intellectual spirit of the immediate post-World War I period was the German writer, Oswald Spengler (1886-1936), whose major work, *The Decline of the West*, was published in 1918. A contemporary historian, David Bebbington, has suggested that Frederich Nietzsche (1844-1900) probably had the most influence on Spengler, who had come from a background of historicism in history.⁶² Dawson observed that Spengler's work was a restatement of cyclical theory, espoused in the past by historians such as Vico and Campanella.⁶³ Furthermore, Dawson observed that whereas the modern European perceives time, and consequently history, as the foundation of the concept of reality, cyclical theory had not dealt with these issues.⁶⁴ In particular, Dawson argued that Spengler sought to address gaps in the approach of both philosophy and modern history. With regard to philosophy, therefore, Dawson wrote that the metaphysicians of modern Europe understood the world as a system, as if they were physicists, and that they did not have the understanding offered by a

⁶¹ Amato, *Mounier and Maritain*, p. 43.

⁶² David Bebbington, *Patterns in History: A Christian Perspective on Historical Thought*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1990), p. 38.

⁶³ Dawson, "Oswald Spengler and the Life of Civilisations", in *DWH*, p. 389.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p. 388.

biological analysis of society as an organism. In contrast, the main problem of the historians was to have accumulated masses of detail without being aware of the informing Spirit of history and culture.⁶⁵ However, Dawson observed that Spengler claimed there was a spirit in the great world cultures and that history did take an organic form. These world cultures included those of Egypt, Babylonia, India, China, the Maya Culture of South America, the culture of classical antiquity, the Arabian culture and the culture of Western Europe, all of which passed through cycles associated with the seasons of spring, summer, autumn and winter.

However, Dawson argued that whilst Spengler's work sought to address the gap in both philosophy and modern history, it failed to give an adequate account of the development of culture and society. For Dawson, Spengler's theory represented an extreme example of a new relativist attitude to history, which was part of the general reaction against the old absolutist view of civilisation and the unquestioning faith in the transcendent value of Western civilisation, which had marked the nineteenth century.⁶⁶ Thus, Dawson observed that Spengler's denial of the rôle of Reason and his focus on a law of Destiny in human history could be contrasted with the concept of Progress and its understanding of causality in human affairs.⁶⁷

Besides a concern about Spengler's underlying philosophy and its accompanying relativism, Dawson identified the other weakness in this cyclical theory as a lack of understanding of the rôle and importance of interactions between cultures. Furthermore Spengler's philosophy not only failed to understand the way in which cultures borrow such external manifestations as technological inventions from each other, but more importantly, how

⁶⁵ Ibid, p. 390.

⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 395.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

ideas move across cultural and racial boundaries, through the influence of philosophers and religious leaders such as Aristotle and Mohammad.⁶⁸

When considering Spengler's last stage of the life cycle, Winter, which was supposedly the decadent time of Civilisation, Dawson argued that the last stage of the Roman-Hellenistic period was the one most open to external influences.⁶⁹ In particular, Dawson observed that this interaction of cultures had an important influence into the future.⁷⁰ Thus, whilst the West would be moulded by a religion of the Levant, the East would carry on for centuries the tradition of Hellenic philosophy and science.⁷¹ Dawson analysed Spengler's understanding of culture as an unconscious life cycle, and contrasted it to Collingwood's idealistic elimination of the physical and a focus on purely spiritual ideas.⁷² However, Dawson believed there were deficiencies in both Spengler and Collingwood's work. Therefore, a comprehensive analysis of culture needed to consider both material factors and the rational or spiritual elements, which were not limited by racial and geographical conditions.⁷³

The next section of this chapter will argue that the problems in modern historiography such as: a denial of the spiritual factor in culture and history; a secularization of the linear view in progress; an exclusive historicist focus on one culture; a cyclical view; and the lack of a unified theory of culture can be addressed by the Dawsonian perspective.

⁶⁸ Ibid, p. 398.

⁶⁹ Ibid, p. 400.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid, p. 402.

⁷³ Ibid, p. 403.

III. The Dawsonian alternative to the problematic of modern history

The work of Dawson differed from earlier Catholic historians and commentators such as Hilaire Belloc and Henri Massis and from the exclusive philosophical approach of some neo-Thomists. As mentioned earlier, his work can be described as paralleling that of the *ressourcement* school in its foundation on Patristic thought, especially that of St Augustine, and its focus on the relationship between theology and culture. As Aidan Nichols has observed, the *ressourcement* group sought an engagement with modernity, but not necessarily a *rapprochement*.⁷⁴ The works of Christopher Dawson from his earliest writing in the 1920s, to those published posthumously in the 1970s, reveal a similar goal.

Dawson's understanding that religion is the key to history has not only been missing from contemporary thought, but also from the historiography of France, during the period that saw the development of the thought of such key Catholic philosophers as Maritain. For Dawson, Christianity is itself an historical religion in contrast to all the other religions, even Islam.⁷⁵ Furthermore, whilst Christian philosophy as expressed in Thomism had drawn from a Hellenic and Aristotelian tradition, the Christian interpretation of history was derived from a different source, one that was Jewish rather than Greek, and found its fullest expression in the primary documents of the Christian faith, the writings of the Hebrew prophets and in particular, the New Testament.⁷⁶

Dawson wrote during a time of renewed Christian interest in the problem of history, which had partially been engendered by a search for a deeper understanding of the crisis of European

⁷⁴ Aidan Nichols, *Catholic Thought Since the Enlightenment: A Survey*, (Leominster, England: Gracewing, 1998), p. 189.

⁷⁵ Dawson, "The Christian View of History", in *DWH*, p. 246.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

culture after the wars and the political and social dislocations of the twentieth century. McIntire identifies some of the major historians exhibiting this renewed interest as including Butterfield, Dawson, Toynbee, Georges Florovsky (1893-1979), and Kenneth Latourette (1884-1968), whose work complemented that of theologians and writers such as Helmut Richard Niebuhr (1894-1962), Karl Barth (1886-1968), Jacques Maritain and T.S. Eliot (1888-1965).⁷⁷ For McIntire, this renewed interest can be understood in two ways. First, as a response to the ‘problem of history’ in Old and New Testament studies and Theology, and secondly, in response to the crisis of the twentieth century, when World War I began a two-generation-long series of crises of immense scale, which ultimately shook intellectuals and the elites of the West out of their complacency towards the condition of civilisation.⁷⁸ Dawson commented on the change in the intellectual temper of his times in *Progress and Religion*, when he observed that the War had shown the fragility of civilisation and how the religion of ‘progress’, which was the working faith of our civilisation for a number of centuries, was unable to understand or interpret the cataclysms of the twentieth century.⁷⁹

In seeking to understand the Christian view of history, Dawson always saw that its roots went beyond the New Testament and the Hebrew prophets to the very foundation of the Jewish religion.⁸⁰ He argued that the Old Testament covenant, in which Israel became the People of Yahweh, is also important for Christianity, as it was the first act in that marriage of God with humanity, which was to be consummated in the Incarnation and to bear fruit in the creation of a new humanity.⁸¹ In particular, the Jewish understanding of history as expressed in the Book of

⁷⁷ McIntire, ed., *God History and Historians*, p. 4.

⁷⁸ Ibid, p. 7.

⁷⁹ Dawson, *PR*, p. 3.

⁸⁰ Dawson, “History and the Christian Revelation”, in *DWH*, p. 265.

⁸¹ Ibid, p. 265.

Daniel influenced both the prophetic and apocalyptic element in the Christian tradition.⁸² Later on, during the fifth century, Augustine would form the classic Christian view and give it an organic unity, so that eternity would now enter into the temporal, giving it an external significance.⁸³ Dawson also observed that the element of the mysterious in Christianity means that progress of the new world is an invisible one, and thus apparent success might mean spiritual failure.⁸⁴ Furthermore, Dawson argued that as a secularist culture confined and darkened the human spirit, it was the task of the Church to be the light of the world.⁸⁵

Dawson's understanding of history also meant that he was aware of the deep differences between religions over concepts of reality. Reviewing Toynbee's *Study of History*, in 1955, Dawson observed that the world religions represented two major alternative and contradictory views.⁸⁶ One, which was identified with the Hinduism and Mahayana Buddhism of the East, denied the significance of history and created a dream world of cosmological and mythological fantasy, whilst, in contrast, the three higher religions of the West's existence were bound up with the historic reality of their founders.⁸⁷ Thus, an attempt by thinkers such as Toynbee to bring about a syncreticism that was based on a theological equivalence among the higher religions was unworkable, as it represented an unrealistic relativism.⁸⁸ This theme of relativism is one that Cardinal Ratzinger spoke about in the period before he became Pope.⁸⁹ In particular, Dawson maintained that the theological equivalence of the higher religions could find no more justification in the study of history than the philosophical equivalence of civilisations had done.⁹⁰

⁸² Ibid, p. 266.

⁸³ Ibid, p. 268.

⁸⁴ Ibid, p. 272.

⁸⁵ Ibid, p. 273.

⁸⁶ Christopher Dawson, "Arnold Toynbee and the Study of History", in *DWH*, p. 413.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid, p. 412.

⁸⁹ Ratzinger, *Christianity and The Crisis of Cultures*, p. 45.

⁹⁰ Dawson, "Arnold Toynbee and the Study of History", in *DWH*, p. 414.

In the contemporary period, the notion of the theological equivalence of religions has been especially promoted by postmodern theory. This explains Clarke's identification of postmodernism as an essentially secular doctrine whose goal is the destruction of the 'grand narratives', and which will, of necessity, define itself against that grandest of narratives which explains man's creation, fall and redemption.⁹¹ The Dawsonian view continues to provide a challenge to the modern and postmodern critique of the Christian West and remains a basis for a reviewed appreciation of the importance of Christianity for the West.

The Centrality of the Incarnation

However, Dawson shared with other Christian historians and writers an understanding of the Incarnation as central to history. In particular, the Christian view of history was not merely a belief in the direction of history by Divine Providence, but a belief in the direct intervention by God in the life of humanity at certain times.⁹² Indeed, our system of dating takes this reference point as central. For Dawson, Christian history was apocalyptic and therefore provided an alternative to secular philosophies of history in its awareness of history as *sub species aeternitatis*, or, in other words, as an interpretation of time in terms of eternity and of human events in the light of divine revelation.⁹³ However, for Dawson there was a paradox in the way in which these great events sometimes go unnoticed by historians and philosophers. Dawson considered that 'history' could be divided into three broad phases: first, the history of the Old Dispensation, when the human race was being prepared for the Incarnation; secondly, the Incarnation and its working out in the life of the Church; and thirdly, the final establishment of the Kingdom of God at the end of time.⁹⁴ His view, that the great civilisations were means rather

⁹¹ Clarke, *Our Shadowed Present*, p. 4.

⁹² Dawson, "The Christian View of History", in *DWH*, p. 247.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 248.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

than ends in themselves, drew from the work of St Augustine at the beginning of the fifth century.⁹⁵

The rôle of Augustine

A renewed interest in the Patristic Age had been evident in the theological domain since at least the early nineteenth century and was to bear fruit in the *Sources Chretiennes*, during the 1950s.⁹⁶ As has already been observed, St Augustine, through his major work, *The City of God*, had an important influence on Dawson and other Christian historians, and even upon secular historians. Dawson observed that, during the nineteenth century, this work was considered sufficient to justify the right of St Augustine to be treated as the founder of the philosophy of history and that in particular, *The City of God* was the only one among the writings of the Fathers which the secular historian never ignored.⁹⁷

Dawson maintained that Augustine was in some sense reacting against that philosophy associated with the Greek world which had seen history in cyclical terms. Also, Augustine had come from an African tradition. The uncompromising nature of this tradition was reflected in Tertullian's opposition to a compromise between Greek philosophy and Christian theology reflected in the saying "What has Athens to do with Jerusalem".⁹⁸ Thus, Tertullian asserted that Christians are alien to this world, as their true home is in the heavenly city of Jerusalem.⁹⁹ This intransigence was further reflected in the attitude of the Donatists, who refused to accept lapsed Christians back into the Church after the major persecutions under the emperors Decius and Diocletian.

⁹⁵ Ibid, p. 250.

⁹⁶ J. Daniélou, "Patristic Literature", in *Historical Theology*, by J. Daniélou, A. H. Couratin and John Kent, ed. and trans. by R.P.C. Hanson, (Middlesex, England: Penguin, 1969), p. 27.

⁹⁷ Dawson, "St Augustine and the City of God", in *DWH*, p. 311.

⁹⁸ Michael Collins and Matthew Price, *The Story of Christianity*, (London: A Dorling Kindersley Book, 1999), p. 47.

⁹⁹ Dawson, "St Augustine and the City of Gods", in *DWH*, p. 316.

Although Augustine argued strongly against the Donatist heresy, he did draw from an eschatological and social dualism which characterised the African tradition and which contrasted with arguments based solely on philosophy and metaphysics.¹⁰⁰ Dawson observed that Augustine's concept of the two cities drew upon the work of the Donatist writer Tyconius. However, Augustine gave this concept a new philosophical significance with his understanding of the rôle of the will and love in human destiny. The Augustinian understanding that tendencies of will would produce two kinds of men and two types of society meant that there were two cities, the earthly one which was built by the love of self to the contempt of God, and the heavenly city, which was built by the love of God to the contempt of self.¹⁰¹ The work of St Augustine was a significant influence on the *ressourcement* scholars such as Daniélou, who observed that a moderate form of Augustinianism with a balance between grace and freedom had been the doctrine of the Latin Church.¹⁰²

However, Dawson pointed out that although Augustine was not in the pure philosophical tradition of Greek thought and did not exhibit the loyalty of such figures as Origen to the Roman world, he did give a value to civic society. Thus, Dawson noted that Augustine admitted that the Earthly City also had its position in the universal order, and that even the social virtues of the world, which were often nothing but 'splendid vices', did add to the life of society.¹⁰³ Dawson also observed that Augustine, with his reaction against the concept of perpetual cycles in history, and by his realisation that Christian revelation rested on temporal events, was actually the first man in the world to discover the full significance and meaning of time.¹⁰⁴ For Dawson, this new concept of time would in turn mean a new theory of history, which would allow for progress and

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, p. 323.

¹⁰¹ Saint Augustine, "De Civitate Dei", XIV xxviii, cited in Dawson, "St Augustine and the City of God", in *DWH*, p. 325.

¹⁰² Daniélou, *Historical Theology*, p. 127.

¹⁰³ Dawson, "St Augustine and the City of God", in *DWH*, p. 330.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, p. 332.

for human involvement. However, in contrast to the secular idea of progress, the Augustinian understanding focused on human nature's liberation as meaning 'restoration', to a state of spiritual freedom.¹⁰⁵

Furthermore, Dawson believed that Augustine viewed the state as an organization having temporary or partial ends, with the same relationship to the Church as a guild or Friendly Society might have to the state itself.¹⁰⁶ Dawson argued that this Augustinian concept did not need to deprive the state of a degree of its social authority.¹⁰⁷ However, it did mean that the state would not develop into an omnipotent sacred entity with a passive population, such as he considered typified the Byzantine Empire and Czarist Russia.¹⁰⁸ In contrast, Dawson believed that Augustine succeeded in developing a conception of history where the individual becomes the centre of a dynamic process and the divine purpose is realised.¹⁰⁹

Divisions in history

Dawson realized that unfortunately, the idealisation of classical antiquity which occurred at the time of the Renaissance was a factor in a new three-fold division of history and he believed that this was one of the main factors in the secularisation of European culture.¹¹⁰ Oscar Halecki traced the origin of this three-fold division to a 'second rate' German scholar, Cellarius, and argued that it was unrealistic, not only because it did not take account of non-European history, but also because it did not even explain European history well.¹¹¹ Dawson, in his book, *The Crisis of Western Education*, would provide an alternative to this three-fold division of history,

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, p. 334.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, p. 339.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, p. 338.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Dawson, "The Christian View of History", in *CEC*, pp. 254-255.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, p. 257.

¹¹¹ Oscar Halecki, *The Limits and Divisions of European History*, (London & New York: Sheed and Ward, 1950), p. 19.

by classifying Christian history into six stages.¹¹² This Dawsonian understanding of the Church's relationship to history was succinctly expressed in 1938, when he wrote,

She has been the guest and the exile, the mistress and the martyr, of nations and civilisations and has survived them all. And in every age and among every people it is her mission to carry on the work of divine restoration and regeneration, which is the true end of history.¹¹³

Concept of Tradition

Russell Hittinger has classified Dawson as a 'cultural anthropologist', because of his ability to understand the meaning of culture, an understanding which provided different perspectives from other Catholic intellectuals, in spheres such as the philosophical, the literary and the aesthetic.¹¹⁴ Hittinger argues that the Enlightenment heritage not only leads to the flawed concept of a tradition-less body of knowledge, but it also ignores the fact that culture is a second nature wherein virtually all of our thinking is formed.¹¹⁵ Dawson managed to bring insights from sociology and anthropology into his understanding of history, seeing it as being concerned not only with facts, but with traditions. This concept of the rôle of tradition was examined by Alasdair MacIntyre in *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, written in 1988, and has also been further developed in Rowland's works.¹¹⁶ In Dawson's view, a historical fact needed to be brought into relation with a social tradition. Thus, whilst a visitor from another planet who witnessed the Battle of Hastings would possess far greater knowledge of the facts than any modern historian, his knowledge would not be historical, as it lacked any tradition to which it could be related. Furthermore, any child who could say, 'William the Conqueror, 1066', had

¹¹² Dawson, "The Six Ages of the Church", in *CEC*, p. 34.

¹¹³ Dawson, "The Kingdom of God and History", in *DWH*, p. 299.

¹¹⁴ Hittinger, "Christopher Dawson: A View from the Social Sciences", in *The Catholic Writer*, pp. 31-33.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

¹¹⁶ Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, (London: Duckworth, 1988).

already made this small piece of information an historical fact by relating it to a national tradition and placing it within the time-series of Christian culture.¹¹⁷

According to Hittinger, a lack of understanding of the rôle of tradition is the great drawback of what he terms the ‘great books’ approach to education that characterized the Columbia University course of the 1930s.¹¹⁸ Furthermore, Hittinger observes that writers such as Bloom correctly analysed popular culture as occluding or clouding the minds of students.¹¹⁹ However, he argues that the American conservative alternative is the worst of modernity, based on the,

... notion that a student can have immediate access to a world of ideas without having to pass through the cultural media which traduce those ideas; accordingly the student is relieved of the burden of having to reckon with, to avow, and ultimately to live in one culture rather than another.¹²⁰

A similar observation about the gap in American conservative thought has been made by Alasdair MacIntyre when he argues that, as liberalism is the dominant theory in modern America, there exists conservative liberalism, liberal liberalism and radical liberalism.¹²¹ Thus, even the conservative liberalism of American neo-conservatism can be understood as being based on an understanding of culture and history which is at variance with a Catholic view.

The concept of tradition is one to which Dawson referred frequently in his writings. Writing about the Catholic faith in the Church as being a faith in a real historical society, Dawson observed that this historic society was not merely the custodian of the sacred Scriptures and a

¹¹⁷ Dawson, “The Kingdom of God and History”, in *DWH*, p. 286.

¹¹⁸ Hittinger, “Christopher Dawson: A View from the Social Sciences”, *The Catholic Writer*, p. 37

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

¹²¹ MacIntyre, “*Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*” p. 392, cited in Kenneth L. Schmitz, “Sources of Community: Reflections on America”, in *Catholicism and Secularization in America*, ed. David L. Schindler, (Notre Dame, Indiana: Communio Books, 1990), p. 154.

teacher of Christian morality, but the bearer of a living tradition which united the present and the past, the living and the dead. Furthermore, the importance of tradition for Catholics lies in its ability to influence their lives, consciously or unconsciously, in many different ways.¹²² Finally, Dawson emphasized the universality of the Church when he wrote that this one great spiritual community transcended all the limited communities of race and nation and state.¹²³

Dawson also argued that this Catholic viewpoint is a challenge to the secular faiths of the modern world, such as progressive liberalism and communism, which were both based on an understanding that civilization was immanent and autonomous.¹²⁴ According to Dawson, therefore, the Catholic tradition was condemned by both the communist and the liberal, not only because it was seen as attached to a reactionary older order, but primarily because it orientated human life and history towards a supernatural end, and set the divine values of faith and charity and the sanctity of human life above such human values as political liberty and scientific progress.¹²⁵ Furthermore, Dawson argued that the optimistic Anglo-Saxon focus on a union of all men of good will against such social evils as vice and squalor failed to take into account that Christ came to bring, not peace, but the sword, and that, therefore, the conflict between the Augustinian 'two cities' would continue until the end of time.¹²⁶

Dawson and Sociology

Dawson was able to bring the knowledge associated with the disciplines of sociology and anthropology to his understanding of the history of culture. In this, he acknowledged his own debt to the work of Frederic Le Play, a nineteenth-century French sociologist, who, in his book

¹²²Dawson, "The Kingdom of God and History", in *DWH*, p. 298.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p. 297.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 298.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 299.

Les Ouvriers Europeens, written in 1855, studied thirty-six working families from every part of Europe. Dawson wrote admiringly of this sociologist's work as affording an insight into fundamental social realities which had not been acknowledged by either the historian or the student of politics.¹²⁷ In particular, Dawson observed that Le Play managed to analyse the economic interpretation of society without the determinism of Marxism, and also to analyse the influence of geographical factors in a more scientific manner than Buckle or Ratzel and, finally, that he provided an understanding of biological factors without the generalisations of Herbert Spencer.¹²⁸ However, whilst acknowledging the importance of these three factors of economics, geography and race, Dawson observed the need to explain the place of thought in the development of a culture.¹²⁹ Indeed, he argued that there could be no understanding or explanation of material factors within a society without acknowledging how religious, intellectual and artistic influences determined the form of its inner cultural life.¹³⁰ Whilst Dawson observed the danger of a simplistic focus on economic explanations of society, which characterized Marxist thought, there was the opposite problem of the idealistic simplification of the Hegelians, and of liberal idealism with its belief in an absolute law of Progress.¹³¹ Dawson saw that history and sociology are disciplines that could work together in providing a clearer explanation of society. If this did not occur, then history would become literary and unscientific and sociology merely abstract theorising.¹³²

Metahistory

To avoid the problem of history becoming like a form of stamp collecting, and being characterized as simply meaning a collection of facts for its own sake, Dawson saw the need to

¹²⁷ Dawson, "Sociology as a Science", in *DWH*, p. 23.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

¹³² *Ibid.*, p. 21.

question the underlying significance of history.¹³³ His understanding of the ‘big picture’ in history was most notably expressed in an article he wrote in *History Today*, in 1951, replying to Alan Bullock’s critique of the concept of metahistory.¹³⁴ Besides observing that there needs to be a metahistorical perspective to avoid the superficial generalisations of Michelet or the bombastic sermonising of Carlyle, Dawson identified the need for intuitive understanding, creative imagination and, most importantly, a universal vision transcending the relative limitations of the particular field of historical study.¹³⁵ This perspective is particularly out of favour in an intellectual climate which argues that metahistory is merely a reflection of the hegemony of certain powerful groups within society. John Morrill has suggested the move away from metahistorical analyses is also a result of a 1970s revisionism which was less concerned with the vertical dimension in history or how the past came to inform the present, than with the horizontal dimension of the past or why the past was as it was. Fernando Cervantes suggests that metahistory is more out of favour than metaphysics, because of the contemporary opposition to the idea of the past as an organic whole.¹³⁶ According to Cervantes, an indifference to the past means that the idea of tradition that inspired the work of Dawson and which drew from his notion of *pietas* has been replaced by the practical and secular histories of a Henry Kissinger, or a Winston Churchill.¹³⁷ In contrast to this thought, Dermot Quinn argues that the Dawsonian metahistorical vision is more effective than a simple empiricism which does not prove anything outside itself.¹³⁸

¹³³ Ibid, p. 19.

¹³⁴ Dawson, “The Problem of Metahistory”, in *DWH*, (First published in *History Today*, vol. I, June, 1951).

¹³⁵ Ibid, p. 310.

¹³⁶ Cervantes, “Christopher Dawson and Europe”, in *Eternity in Time*, eds. Caldecott and Morrill, p. 52.

¹³⁷ Ibid, p. 53.

¹³⁸ Dermot Quinn, “Christopher Dawson and the Catholic idea of history”, in *Eternity in Time*, eds. Caldecott and Morrill, p. 71.

Thus, Dawson, in responding to Alan Bullock's critique of metahistory in 1951 argued that metahistory had played an important rôle in modern historical development, beginning with its relationship with the philosophers Montesquieu, Hume, Robertson and Gibbon and continuing with the influence of philosophical idealism in nineteenth-century Germany.¹³⁹ In fact, Dawson wrote that the critique of metahistory expressed by Alan Bullock was itself part of a philosophical reaction to the particular metahistorical framework which characterized the work of Hegel or Collingwood.¹⁴⁰ Furthermore, according to Dawson, Bullock's reaction to the idealist philosophies of Hegel or Collingwood did not mean that he argued for the independence of history from philosophy, but rather that he sought a new relationship between history and non-idealist forms of philosophy, such as the pragmatism of Dewey, or the logical positivism of Ayer.¹⁴¹

In recent decades metahistorical perspectives have been challenged by postmodern historical trends. However, in defence of the concept of metahistory, Dawson argued that one of the greatest historians of the nineteenth century, Alexis de Tocqueville, wrote from a metahistorical perspective and that his own profession of belief in the religious meaning of history meant that he was a more profound and greater historian than his contemporaries, such as Thiers and Mignet, who wrote narrative histories.¹⁴² However, Dawson argued that if metahistory was to be effective, then it must be good metahistory. In particular, he described the creative work of Tocqueville and Ranke as embracing a universal metahistorical vision, which seemed to reflect an almost religious contemplation rather than simply a scientific generalisation.¹⁴³

¹³⁹ Dawson, "The Problem of Metahistory", in *DWH*, p. 305.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 306.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 309.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 310.

Conclusion

Christopher Dawson emphasized the rôle that an awareness of history needs to play in Christian thought. This chapter has examined the predominance of schools of historical thought which have neglected the religious element in history, and analysed the alternative framework that is provided by the work of Christopher Dawson. Thus, Dawson's views on history can be contrasted with other major schools, including those based on concepts of Progress, Marxism, historicism and the postmodern understanding of the philosophical equivalence of cultures. Indeed, Dawson's theory provides an effective alternative to either secular historical views or to the denial of history in contemporary educational systems. If a focus on history, memory and tradition is necessary for the transmission of culture and an alternative to the forced forgetting of the modern world, then Dawson's work can be judged as an essential component of the postmodern Augustinian Thomist project. The importance of memory has been identified by Clark, who argues that as the loss of an individual's memory represents a serious mental disorder, the loss of the memory of an entire society has a major impact on society's functioning, as it loses all those things of which it is made up.¹⁴⁴ Furthermore, Clark suggests that forgetting our history does not make us free, but leads to a type of insanity, where actions all become meaningless.¹⁴⁵ Thus, this chapter has argued that there exists an urgent need to address the problem of the 'amnesia of modern culture'. With regard to Catholicism's interaction with modern culture, the Dawsonian framework provides an alternative to either the limited secularist vision of progress, which has provided an important apologetic for modern culture, or to the postmodern denial of the reality of truth.

¹⁴⁴ Clark, *Our Shadowed Present*, p. 13.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 15.

The exclusive focus on philosophy evident in many pre-1960s Catholic curricula may have left many of the ‘baby-boomer’ generation without the requisite knowledge and framework to respond to, or understand, many of the sociological and cultural dilemmas in the post-war period. In contrast, a deeper understanding and immersion in the tradition of Catholic culture would enable a more detached and realistic understanding of the inherent flaws in modern culture.

In Australia, the last decade has witnessed a renewed debate about the importance of the teaching of history within schools.¹⁴⁶ In contrast to Britain or Europe, where the past and history is evident in the material culture, such as in the houses, castles and churches, both Australia and parts of America are characterized by what Clark has termed ‘an historical emptiness’.¹⁴⁷ It is hoped that an awareness of the deficiencies of history in schools, and the need to have a separate history course will not lead to a dominance of either purely nationalistic understandings, or English liberal nineteenth-century views of the past. The strength of these schools of historiography was itself a factor in the marginalization of Catholicism and of the subsequent ill-informed diffidence and unthinking denial among individual Catholics about the rôle and importance of their religion to Western culture. The knowledge of the rôle of Christianity in forming Western culture also assists Catholic educators and curriculum writers in realizing the limitations of history courses in schools. A ‘presentist’ mindset has meant that educators have come to believe the choice is simply between the modern history that was dominant prior to the 1960s, and the more recent postmodern perspectives. However, this chapter asserted that there were limitations in both modern history’s narrative, based on an Enlightenment vision of progress, and the relativism inherent in postmodernism. Both Dawson and scholars working

¹⁴⁶Geoffrey Partington, “What History Should We Teach”, in *Quadrant*, January-February 2005, pp. 68-76.

¹⁴⁷Clark, *Our Shadowed Present*, p. 2. “All of this suggests the persistence of the past not in the form of ‘survivals’, implying anachronistic and fragmentary remains of or relics, but as a vast and immanent present. If this sense of immanence is often taken for granted by those who experience it, and seldom discussed, it becomes dramatically noticeable if contrasted with areas of the world like the American mid-West, sufficiently populated yet historically empty.”

within the *Communio* school have articulated the need to return to the sources of Western culture. Unless Catholic educators understand the flaws existing in both modern and postmodern schools of history, they will fail in one of their basic tasks of transmitting the Catholic faith to the next generation. For the Catholic school, one of the most efficacious ways for this to occur is by developing an understanding that the Christian narrative of the Creation, Fall and Redemption, and the rôle of Christ's Church through the ages is revealed in history and time.

Thus, in summary, a response to the problem of 'presentism' inherent within modern culture would include:

- I. First, an awareness that purely nationalistic perspectives provide limited and reductionist views of the past,
- II. Secondly, the need to challenge the threefold division of history into the ancient, medieval and modern periods, by making use of postmodern critiques of modern historiography and the Dawsonian idea of six stages of Christian culture,
- III. Thirdly, the need for Christians to acknowledge the centrality of the Incarnation alongside the eschatological narrative of Christianity, rather than to return to a purely nationalistic, or Anglo-centric Whig version of history, and
- IV. Fourthly, the continued development of understandings of the causes and impacts of such events as the Reformation and the French Revolution, through the use of recent revisionist scholarship.

CHAPTER V

Understanding the European Tradition

Introduction

One of the most contentious debates in the Church since the end of the Second World War has concerned its relationship with Europe. Europe was where the faith had most fully formed the culture, but the dramatic increase in the numbers of Christians outside Europe, the loss of influence and prestige of Europe after its two destructive wars, and the rejection of Christianity by many Europeans, left the Church with a major dilemma.

One school of thought suggested that the Church needed to remove the cultural accoutrements that were thought to be associated with Europe, and thus to allow herself the freedom to evangelise more freely, both among modern Europeans and in the Third World.¹ This willingness to consider what were understood as ‘the signs of the times’ reflected a certain understanding of the relationship between religion and culture and a view that modern political, cultural and societal trends would continue until well into the future.² Another reason for a certain anti-European focus was the confusion about two major strands within Europe; the older Christian European tradition and the commercialized and industrialized culture that had formed since the nineteenth century, which was frequently indifferent or hostile to religion.³ These undeveloped understandings about modern and European culture provided the ideological background to many of the cultural changes in areas such as the liturgy and architecture, since the Second Vatican Council.

¹ R. Lucci, “The Proper Development of Culture”, in *Commentary on the Documents of the Second Vatican Council*, ed. Herbert Vorgrimler, (London: Burnes and Oates, 1967), cited in Tracey Rowland, *Culture and the Thomist Tradition: After Vatican II*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), p. 27. (Rowland notes the following thoughts of Cardinal Lercaro at the Second Vatican Council “Above all the Church must acknowledge itself to be culturally ‘poor’: it must therefore wish to be more and more poor. I am not speaking here of material poverty but of a particular consequence of evangelical poverty precisely in the domain of ecclesiastical culture.”)

² Rowland, *CTT*, p. 16. However, Rowland asserts that modernity itself was under attack after 1968, as the Western intellectual avant-garde abandoned the modern project en masse and the internal contradictions within the Liberal Enlightenment tradition became more apparent.

³ Ratzinger, *Values in a Time of Upheaval*, p. 139. Pope Benedict has asked, “Is the civilization of technology and commerce that has spread victoriously throughout the world our ‘European culture’? Or is it not something born in the post-European age, the end of the old European culture?”

As an alternative to this view, the *Communio* school has drawn upon the thought of Augustine to emphasize the rôle and importance of history and the transmission of cultural traditions.⁴ Similarly, using the Dawsonian framework, it will be argued in this chapter, that if the Church is to address the problematic of secularization, then this process is aided by an acknowledgement and understanding of the rôle of Christianity in the formation of European culture. In particular, there is a need to address three themes:

- I. the problem of modern Europe as a secularized Christendom;
- II. understanding Europe as the original Christendom, and Australia's debt to this European Christendom; and,
- III. the religious and cultural differences between the Catholic and Protestant European traditions. (The identification and range of solutions to this problematic is particularly important for Catholic educators and pastoralists working within English-speaking countries, such as Australia, where there is a predominantly Protestant heritage).

Part I: Europe as secularized Christendom

The modern attempt by Western society to construct an alternate secularised society is most evident within Europe, where the Church faces one of the most secularised cultures ever to exist. In part, this reflects the victory won by secularist education systems in the late nineteenth century, which led to a marginalisation and privatisation of religion in the culture. Also, by denying or ignoring the central rôle of Christianity in Western culture, this development allowed alternative belief systems such as nationalism, Marxism and more recently, what John Paul II identified as a consumerist mentality, to dominate the West. This secularised education system

⁴ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Retrieving the Tradition Spirit and Fire: An Interview with Hans Urs Von Balthasar*, Interview with Michael Albus, *Communio*, vol. 32, (Fall 2005), pp 587-588. In this interview von Balthasar had asserted that the reason why people seek an alternative spirituality is that they have no love and knowledge of the profound tradition of the Church, evident in the works of such great theologians as Gregory of Nyssa, Francis of Assisi, Hildegard, Bonaventure, Eckhart, John of the Cross and Foucauld. pp. 587-588.

has not only influenced its own students, but through the state-sponsored influence in curriculum and examinations provided a philosophical and intellectual framework for the entire education system. This has meant that religious understandings of culture, if they exist at all, are simply added on to the rest of the curriculum, often in a truncated and disjointed form, so that no unified Catholic understanding of culture and religion is available for Catholic school students. If the Church is to counteract this problem, it needs to clearly articulate an educational response that understands the European heritage.

In particular, for Catholicism in Australia, it can be observed that the Dawsonian understanding of the spiritual and cultural heritage of Europe is a necessary corrective to three broad problems, including an anti-British nationalism, a limited understanding of Australia's history as being solely British and Protestant and thirdly, a presentist mindset. The anti-British type of Australian nationalism that seeks to ignore the past has tended to emphasize the interests of our geographical location within the Asian region. Samuel Huntington has observed that this particularly characterized Australia under the Keating leadership.⁵ Also, an alternative and limited understanding of our history as exclusively based on Anglo-Saxon Protestantism has ignored Western culture's core Catholic and European heritage. This second problem, which reflects an English-speaking and predominantly Protestant understanding of our culture, is based partially on the fact that Australia, as a mono-linguistic nation, has limited access to a range of other Western thought in areas such as religion, economics and history. This is apparent in the influence of liberal free-market economic theory, the predominance of a 1960s model of English progressive education and in a range of more general popular culture trends in movies and music. To counter this problem, Catholic educators need to be aware of not only the way Christianity

⁵ Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*, p. 151. Huntington observes that "The case for redefining Australia as an Asian country was grounded on the assumption that economics overrides culture in shaping the destiny of nations."

formed Western culture, but also of the religious and cultural differences within the West. This understanding needs to be further deepened by an awareness that the English-speaking nations, particularly the USA, have been pivotal in the critical areas of economics and modern popular culture.⁶ The third difficulty of a presentist mindset is particularly prevalent at the present time and ignores the importance of tradition, memory and the past.⁷ The problem of presentism is indicative of a relativism in postmodern thought and an accompanying decline in historical consciousness.⁸ Clarke has critiqued this trend of presentism by suggesting that, “It may indeed be that the leading characteristic of barbarism is not violence or insecurity but historical amnesia, the imprisonment of mankind’s ancient self within a two-dimensional present, the invention of a world without legacy and without foresight.”⁹

Historiography on Europe after World War I

Dawson’s conversion to Catholicism in 1914 occurred as the seemingly stable European world of the nineteenth century was about to be engaged in the fratricidal conflict of World War I. The consequent destruction and loss of life alongside major social, political and economic changes engendered a crisis of confidence in Europe.¹⁰ As Margaret MacMillan argues, the shock to self-confidence after four years of war meant that Western Europeans could no longer talk of their civilizing mission to the world.¹¹ In contrast to the historical writing which had marked much of the nineteenth century, many scholars now sought to move away from purely nationalistic understandings and to analyze Europe as a cultural whole.

⁶ Again this may reflect that Catholicism, with its tradition and willingness to allow religion to affect culture, will be more resistant to the inroads of modernity than Protestant culture with its tendency to privatise religion.

⁷ Clark, *Our Shadowed Present*, p. 12.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ David Fromkin, *Europe’s Last Summer*, (London: Vintage, 2005), p. 5. This author comments that “More than 20 million soldiers and civilians perished in the Great War, and an additional 21 million were wounded. Millions more fell victim to the diseases that the war unleashed: upwards of 20 million people died in the influenza pandemic of 1918-1919 alone.”

¹¹ Margaret MacMillan, *Peacemakers: Six Months that Changed the World*, (London: John Murray, 2002), p. 2.

As mentioned earlier the first of the major works mirroring this theme, *The Decline of the West*, by the German Spengler, analysed Europe's apparent demise as a civilization using the cyclical thought characteristic of the ancient world. This was in contrast to the predominant historiography, which, in its Christian or secular form, had understood the past as moving towards some goal. Indeed, it was in reaction to these cyclical theories that Augustine had written:

So let us keep to our straight way, which is Christ, (John 14, 6) let us take him as our guide and saviour, and turn our minds from the absurd futility of this circular route of the impious, (cf ch. 14.) and keep instead to the way of the faith.¹²

Another unitary view of Europe, which was not cyclical and which sought to present a renewed focus on the importance of Christianity, was Henri Massis', *The Defence of the West*.¹³ This French historian argued for the importance of Catholicism to the idea of Europe and identified the threat to Western Catholic values emanating from Germany and Russia.¹⁴ Similarly, another French writer, Paul Valéry, explained how Europe had been formed by the influence of Greece, then Rome, then Christianity.¹⁵

¹² Saint Augustine, *City of God*, a new translation by Henry Bettenson, with an introduction by John O'Meara, (London: Penguin, 1984), p. 500.

¹³ Massis, *The Defence of the West*, p. 199.

¹⁴ Ibid, pp. 14 and 51.

¹⁵ Paul Valéry, *L'Esprit européen*, cited in Massis, *The Defence of the West*, p. 168. "Every race and every soil that have been successively Romanized, Christianized and subjected, so far as the intelligence is concerned, to the discipline of the Greeks is absolutely European."

Dawson and why Europe is important

Dawson was to give some of his most succinct views on the importance of Europe, in an article written for the *Criterio* of Buenos Aires, in 1954. It is particularly pertinent that this article was written for the journal of a country which even today struggles to understand its identity vis-a-vis Europe. Whilst Australia reflects a predominantly British Protestant version of culture, Argentina and much of South America often emulated the anti-clericalist tendencies of nations such as France and Italy. Thus, Argentina modelled itself on France and Italy during the heyday of positivism and nationalism, which were based on an ambivalence, and frequently an antagonism to a Christian past and tradition. Whereas these anti-clerical trends could not eliminate the fifteen hundred or more years of Christian culture in Europe, there was no such long tradition within South America, where the Church had often been marginalized since the times of independence in the early nineteenth century. Similarly, the contemporary religious sociologist, Rodney Stark, has argued that in spite of its legal monopoly, the Church in South America was politically weak and lacked popular support.¹⁶ Dawson, in alluding to this fact in the 1950s, had examined Catholicism's stronger presence in the traditionally Protestant USA, rather than in the anti-clerical South America.¹⁷

In this regard, a Dawsonian emphasis on the differences between the bases of European culture and the culture of modernity is useful. Huntington has developed this theme by arguing that Western culture, and the central characteristics which distinguish it from other cultures,

¹⁶ Rodney Stark, *The Victory of Reason: How Christianity Led to Freedom, Capitalism and Success*, (New York: Random House, 2005), p. 197.

¹⁷ Christopher Dawson, "Catholics in the Modern World", *Geographical Magazine*, 1950, vol. 22, pp. 471-475. Writing about the anti-clerical tendencies in nineteenth-century South America, Dawson writes, "The result has been that Latin America has become one of the backward areas of the Catholic world. Although the nominal Catholic population outnumbers the Catholics of the United States by four to one, there are actually more priests and nuns and members of the teaching orders in the Protestant north than in the Catholic South." p. 473.

predated the beginning of modernity.¹⁸ Dawson wrote that to study or to compose a universal history was an immensely difficult task, given the amount of material required for such an undertaking.¹⁹ In contrast, he argued that European culture offered the best starting point for an approach to world history, because it had influenced and transformed other world cultures far more than the oriental civilizations.²⁰ Thus, for Dawson, Europe was important not only for its economic and commercial power, but also because it had, in a sense, actually made the entire modern world. Even after World War II seemed to have permanently diminished European political and economic influence, Dawson observed that Europe's permanent inheritance resembled that of the ancient Greeks, because its spiritual and intellectual impact had changed the way men thought.²¹

However, the conflicts of the twentieth century and the reassertion of non-Western identity and demands for independence within subject nations, led to a growing lack of confidence about the culture of Europe among Europeans themselves.²² One result of this trend has been an increase in the problem of relativism. Allen has observed that Pope Benedict XVI believes that a renewed confidence in the Christian values which have formed the West is the answer to this problem.²³ Dawson would have been unwilling to provide an endorsement of Western values which focused solely on its economic and technological superiority, or even its democratic values, but failed to acknowledge the place of Christianity as the most important part of Western culture. Thus, even democratic values and the concerns with human rights need to be understood as growing out of the soil of a Christian culture. For Dawson, it was impossible to understand

¹⁸ Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*, p. 69.

¹⁹ Christopher Dawson, "Europe in Eclipse", December, 1954. *Criterio*, Buenos Aires, Argentina, in *DWH*, p. 419.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 426.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 421.

²³ Allen, *Benedict XVI*, p. 188.

Europe without acknowledging it to be a community of peoples who shared in a common spiritual tradition that had begun three thousand years ago in the Eastern Mediterranean world.²⁴

Dawson wrote that any international understanding must be based on a mutual comprehension of the major cultures of the world. In contrast to Huntington's 'clash of civilizations', he argued for a realistic understanding of civilizations. Dawson argued that non-Europeans resented the arrogant claim that Western civilization was the only kind of civilization that mattered. Indeed, Dawson suggested that non-Europeans would be far more sympathetic to the West if they understood it as a spiritual whole, rather than as an incomprehensible material power that sought to dominate the world.²⁵

Thus, Dawson perceived a need to understand the underlying bases of all cultures, so that there could be real international co-operation. In the context of the contemporary problem of the U.S. presence in Iraq, the Dawsonian approach suggests that the transportation of democratic values to a non-democratic culture is a highly difficult project requiring an agreement with an Enlightenment interpretation of universal values. As America was founded during the heyday of this Enlightenment worldview, her Constitution, culture and institutions and ultimately, her actions in foreign policy, have tended to reflect this worldview. Dawson had addressed this problem in *Progress and Religion*, when he observed that the conception of culture in the eighteenth century was that it was something absolute and unique, which stood out as in the symmetrical perfection of a classical temple, in contrast to Gothic confusion and oriental barbarism.²⁶ The mutual incomprehension of American neo-conservatism on the one hand and the 'old Europe' conservatism on the other, is a reflection of the differing importance accorded to

²⁴ Dawson, *UE*, p. 26.

²⁵ Dawson, *ME*, p. 10.

²⁶ Dawson, *PR*, p. 19.

concepts of the universal values. Rowland has written that ‘universal values’ can be understood as referring to the idea of natural law, but that it may be problematic if it reflects the view that there are some values or goods which are common to all traditions, or that different traditions in spite of their religious bases, will reach the same, or similar conclusions about the concept of human flourishing.²⁷ Dawson had earlier made a similar observation that differences of spiritual outlook and tradition were far greater barriers between people than those concerned with race or language.²⁸ Dawson’s concept of the integral rôle of religion in shaping both European and non-European cultures is revealed in the following passage:

Behind every civilization there is a vision – a vision which may be the unconscious fruit of ages or common thought and action, or which may have sprung from the sudden culmination of a great prophet or thinker. The experience of Mohammed in the cove of Mount Hira, when he saw human life as transitory as the beat of a gnat’s wing in comparison with the splendour and power of the Divine Unity, has shaped the existence of a great part of the human race ever since.²⁹

Dawson believed that Christianity was the vision that had inspired European civilization. Indeed, he maintained that even when the philosophers of the eighteenth century attempted to substitute their new nationalist doctrines in place of Christianity, they were simply drawing from the original Christian ideas without realizing, or recognizing, how much these ideas had formed their own thinking.³⁰ Any attempt to ignore the historic rôle of Christianity in European culture meant that people turned to the alternative or secularised historical faiths which have dominated the period since the Enlightenment.³¹ Dawson identified these alternative secular faiths as democracy, socialism and nationalism, which, although they had no basis in transcendent religious values or sanctions, still aroused a genuinely religious emotion.³² This meant that

²⁷ Rowland, *CTT*, p. 15.

²⁸ Dawson, *PR*, p. 67.

²⁹ Dawson, *PR*, p. 68.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 149.

³¹ Dawson, “Prevision in Religion”, in *DWH*, pp. 103-104.

³² *Ibid.*

secularism was actually religious emotion separated from religious belief.³³ However, an alternative vision that attempted to draw from the strengths of Christianity at the same time as it disavowed it, was ultimately bound to fail, and Europe was faced with a choice between an abandonment of the Christian tradition and the subsequent faith in progress and humanity, or a conscious return to its religious foundations.³⁴

Contemporary Relevance

Dawson's thought continues to have contemporary relevance and still provides an important spiritual and cultural dimension to the present debate within Europe over issues such as the admission of Turkey to the European Union and the rôle of Christianity in public life.³⁵ Indeed, a Dawsonian understanding of spiritual and cultural factors in the formation of Europe is reflected in Pope Benedict's questioning of whether Turkey, which does not have Christian roots, can join the European Union.³⁶ In this regard, Huntington has suggested that in spite of the official rhetoric about Turkey's human rights record and economic development, the unstated reason for non-admission to the EU is the intense opposition of Greece and the fact that Turkey is a predominantly Islamic country.³⁷

Culture and Society in the Western World

Post-World War II Europe

During the middle years of the twentieth century, it became apparent that the rival ideologies to Christianity, of Marxism and Nazism, had caused the devastating conflicts which had nearly destroyed Europe. However, the debates and confusion about the identity of Europe

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Dawson, *PR*, p. 188.

³⁵ In 2005 the rôle of religion was the subject of debate with regard to the Justice Minister of the EU, whose Catholic views on the subject of homosexuality meant that he was forced to resign.

³⁶ Ratzinger, *The Crisis of Cultures*, p. 36.

³⁷ Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*, p. 146.

continued after 1945. During the immediate post-war period one of the first major challenges was the artificial division of Europe by the Iron Curtain. After the fall of Communism in 1989, there was also confusion about the rôle that Europe should play internationally. The failure of the European Constitution to win popular support in France and the Netherlands has forced a re-appraisal of the real purpose and nature of the European idea. It is apparent, as Dawson saw, that the human person needs a faith to believe in and that economics on its own will not suffice for European unity. Dawson had argued that if Europe was to survive, it needed another choice besides the intellectual squalor of liberal Protestantism and the moral emptiness associated with Latin secularism.³⁸ Popular writers such as the English historian, Paul Johnson, have analyzed the resurgence of Europe after 1945 as reflecting the maturing of the Christian activism which had particularly influenced post-war leaders, including the German Chancellor, Konrad Adenauer, and the Italian Prime Minister, Alcide De Gasperi.³⁹ Dawson also advocated the use of the British Commonwealth of Nations as a model for Europe, which he argued was entirely consistent with the Burkean traditional conception of European unity as a commonwealth of Christian nations, which each shared a common way of life, a community of culture, and a common public law.⁴⁰

The Future Directions of Europe

The discussion of Europe's rôle in the world, particularly one marked by the power and influence of America, has exhibited a heightened urgency since the beginning of the Iraq war. The initial differences between what Donald Rumsfeld, the former American Secretary of Defence, called the 'old Europe' of Germany and France and the 'new Europe' of countries such as Spain and Poland, have lessened since Spain and Poland's decisions to remove their troops from the combat. An analysis of the war as one between Christian West and Muslim East has also

³⁸ Dawson, "The Revolt of the East", *The Dublin Review*, p. 12.

³⁹ Johnson, *A History of the Modern World*, p. 577.

⁴⁰ Dawson, *JN*, p. 150.

been open to debate, given the vigorous opposition of the Papacy under John Paul II to the conflict, and also whether it can be regarded as a just war within the classical Augustinian framework. The sense of continuity within the Catholic philosophical tradition has been articulated with the notion of the just war discussed in terms of St Augustine's writings on the subject.

Two of the major issues in the debate on Europe concern the influence of the Franco-German partnership and the rôle of the nation state. These issues have been discussed in a number of recent works both from continental Europe and from the English-speaking nations of the USA and Britain. Britain, in particular, has faced a crisis of identity since applying for entry to the EEC in the early 1960s. In *The Missing Heart of Europe*, Thomas Kremer, a Hungarian who has settled in Britain, maintains that there are two distinct types of societies within Europe.⁴¹ He identifies the 'eccentric' states as being Britain, the Netherlands and Scandinavia, which value the individual as much as the state and which are characterized as spontaneous, unplanned and pragmatic.⁴² In contrast, he sees 'concentric states' as characterised by opposite tendencies to the eccentric states, including centralisation of the power of the state, which is placed above the individual, and a capacity to plan and carry out large-scale changes quickly.⁴³ These states, which he lists as France, Germany and Spain, exhibit 'top down' cultures.⁴⁴ Perhaps his most cogent analysis of the problem of European unity is based on an understanding of the Franco-German alliance at the heart of a united Europe. Kremer believes that these two powerful states need to be made aware that the bureaucratic and centralising tendencies that they wish to impose,

⁴¹ Thomas Kremer, *The Missing Heart of Europe: Does Britain hold the key to the future of the Continent?* (Devon, U.K.: The June Press, 2004), pp. 12-13.

⁴² Ibid, pp. 17-36.

⁴³ Ibid, p. 30.

⁴⁴ Dawson, *UE*, p. 50.

are not suitable for a Europe of diverse states and traditions. Kremer's book is an attempt to reconcile the concept of the nation state with the broader needs of a united Europe.

The dominance of Germany and France in the European Union has been challenged, not only by the presence of Britain but also by the fact that, from the beginning of 2007 and the admission of Rumania and Bulgaria, it now consists of twenty-seven different states. There have been a number of attempts to write histories of Europe that do not focus exclusively on the Western countries of France, Germany and Britain. One such historian was Oscar Halecki. In writing the Preface to this work, Christopher Dawson observed that Eastern Europe was similar to Western Europe in that it did not follow racial frontiers, but was a multi-national society that shared a common cultural and religious tradition.⁴⁵

Another writer, Mark Leonard, in *Why Europe will run the 21st Century*, argues that the balance of power model, which provided the basis for European diplomacy and politics for five hundred years, built on the thought of the Italian, Lorenzo de Medici.⁴⁶ In contrast, Leonard observes that the new Europe, constructed since the 1950s and so enthusiastically initiated by figures such as the Frenchman Jean Monet, is the deliberate opposite of this old balance of power political model.⁴⁷ In the future Leonard envisages a Europe of networks, which will modify the model of the nation state, which he suggests spread like a virus throughout European countries.⁴⁸ Dawson had earlier argued that the cause of the increasing strength of the nation state since the fifteenth century was due to the division of Europe into Catholic and Protestant areas after the Reformation.⁴⁹ The decline of the nation state as the main source of identity for Europeans may

⁴⁵ Christopher Dawson, "Preface", to *The Limits and Divisions of European History*, by Halecki, p. ix.

⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 26.

⁴⁷ Mark Leonard, *Why Europe will run the 21st Century*, (London and New York: Fourth Estate, 2005), p. 26.

⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 140.

⁴⁹ Dawson, *DC*, p. 175.

bring about a resurgence of interest in the broader spiritual factors which have gone into the making of European unity. Any decline in the power of the modern state would also allow more freedom for the Church, as the immense power and resources of these states both hindered and replaced the Church's rôle in important areas such as education.

Dawson provided a contrast to either a nationalist state-orientated model or a bureaucratic supra-national state model, by an emphasis on the important rôle in European history of the small independent states and confederations such as the Italian City states and the Swiss Confederation.⁵⁰ Thus, he maintained that, with the exception of Paris, the most characteristically European cities were not the capital cities of the nation states, but the independent or semi-independent centres such as Rome and Florence, Geneva, and Basle, Augsburg and Nuremberg, Ghent and Bruges and in the East, Novgorod, which was the last representative of a free Russia.⁵¹ Contemporary writers such as Kremer have no wish to move back to the time of the completely insular nation states with their consequent rivalries and balance of power politics, but they do perceive real problems in attempting to impose a centralised bureaucratic model in their place. The recent confusion about the future political direction of Europe would benefit from the Dawsonian religious and cultural insight that the real historical sources of European unity are provided by Christianity.

Part II: Understanding Europe as Christendom

In sociological terms, Europe provides the best example of a society formed by Christianity. Nichol's argument that there is a need to understand the cumulative story of grace supervening in, through, and beyond the fabric of the temporal, is most clearly illustrated in the

⁵⁰ Dawson, *UE*, p. 50.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 50-51.

development of European culture.⁵² Rémond has also observed that Europe was the first continent to be fully Christianized and, furthermore, that in some cases, conversions coincided with the beginning of nationhood.⁵³

Halecki argued that together with the Graeco-Roman heritage, Christianity had so deeply penetrated European civilization that it had actually formed the European mind.⁵⁴ The use of the term 'Christendom' to describe Europe has often been understood as meaning the political Christian Empire which was formed from the time of the Roman emperors Constantine and Theodosius. This political focus tends to ignore the cultural project involved in establishing a Christian consciousness in society and how this took many centuries to achieve.⁵⁵ An emphasis on the concept of a Christian 'Empire' fails to acknowledge that the West did not develop the Caesaro-Papism evident within the Byzantine Empire, but instead was characterized by a conflict, or a state of tension between the spiritual and civil orders. Richard Fletcher maintains this concept of a distinct church and state in dynamic relation to each other was to be a critically important constituent of Western culture.⁵⁶

Definitions of Europe

Before discussing the development of key features of European culture it is necessary to consider the origins and definition of Europe. The word Europe stems from Greek mythology where Zeus was said to have captured Europa, the daughter of the King of Tyre, who then had a child, the future King Minos of Crete.⁵⁷ This Greek origin emphasizes some of the themes that

⁵² Nichols, "Foreword." to Rowland, *CTT*, p. xiv.

⁵³ Rémond, *Religion and Society in Modern Europe*, pp. 17-18.

⁵⁴ Halecki, *The Limits and Division of European History*, p. 15.

⁵⁵ Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom*, p. 220.

⁵⁶ Richard Fletcher, *The Conversion of Europe: From Paganism to Christianity, AD 371-1386*, (London: Fontana Press, 1998), p. 28.

⁵⁷ Frédéric Delouche, ed. *Illustrated History of Europe: A Unique Portrait of Europe's Common History*, (London:

would develop within the classical world about the differing characteristics of the European and Asiatic worlds. Norman Davies, drawing from the work of Hippocrates, sees this as a contrast between courageous, bellicose and aggressive Europeans and cultivated and peace-loving Asians who lacked initiative.⁵⁸

Davies also identifies attempts to define the geographical limits of Europe, such as the establishment of a Russian boundary post between Yekaterinberg and Tymen in the late eighteenth century. The symbolism of this border was to be illustrated in the fact that gangs of Tsarist exiles, on the way to Siberia, created a custom of kneeling by the post and scooping up a last handful of European soil.⁵⁹ Dawson had already observed the difficulty of defining Europe geographically as it was not really a continent at all, but merely a peninsular extension of the great Eurasian land-mass.⁶⁰

Thus, the most effective way to understand Europe was through an awareness of its long process of historical evolution and spiritual development.⁶¹ This parallels Davies concept of Europe as a cultural community.⁶² T.S. Eliot had similarly observed the importance of the religious factor, when he said that he did not believe that the culture of Europe could survive without the Christian faith.⁶³ A perspective focusing on the importance of cultural factors can clarify the confusion about the separation of religion and state as meaning separation of religion and culture. This confusion was one of the factors in the privatization of religion evident within

Cassell Paperbacks, 2001), p. 9.

⁵⁸ Le Goff, *The Birth of Europe*, p. 8.

⁵⁹ Davies, *Europe: A History*, p. 8.

⁶⁰ Dawson, *UE*, p. 49.

⁶¹ Dawson, *ME*, p. 15.

⁶² Davies, *Europe: A History*, p. 9.

⁶³ T. S. Eliot, "Die Einheit der Europeaeischen Kultur", (Berlin,1946), cited in *Europe: A History*, in Davies, p. 9. also published as "The Unity of European Culture", in an appendix to *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture*, (London,1948), pp. 122-4.

nineteenth-century Liberalism.⁶⁴ However, the relationship between religion and culture is not only important for the Church, but also for the future direction of Europe as it faces the growth of an Islamic population that may be unwilling to agree to the secular consensus established for at least one hundred years. The problems involved in this relationship between the Church and culture are well illustrated in Europe and within the English-speaking countries such as the USA, Britain and Australia. Within the USA, the issue has arisen in the debates about whether to allow Nativity scenes in civic squares, or public use of the word Christmas. This partially reflects the ambivalence about the rights of religion outside of a limited private sphere, which has arisen in a country that formulated a constitution founded on Enlightenment principles.

Davies has argued that Europe cannot exist in a vacuum and that, eventually, the nations of the European Union will need to agree to definitions about their identities and their boundaries.⁶⁵ Furthermore, the French writer, Jacques Le Goff, maintains that if Europe is to successfully construct itself, it must be mindful of its history, otherwise it will be a cultural orphan, unaware of its heritage and identity.⁶⁶ In regard to the difficult and inconclusive nature of European cultural unity, Dawson had argued that this unity of Europe was not the foundation and starting point of European history, but its ultimate and unattained goal, which it had sought for more than a thousand years.⁶⁷

Europe: Recent historiography and the Dawsonian framework

In Chapter Four, it was observed that recently there has been a great increase in historical scholarship and research on the period between about AD 400 and the end of the first

⁶⁴ Joseph Koterski, "Religion as the Root of Culture", in *Christianity and Western Civilization*, Wethersfield Institute Proceedings, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993), p. 26.

⁶⁵ Davies, *Europe: A History*, p. 1136.

⁶⁶ Le Goff, *The Birth of Europe*, p. ix.

⁶⁷ Dawson, *ME*, p. 15.

millennium, which had been earlier covered in Dawson's *The Making of Europe*. An indication of the contemporary relevance of Dawson's thought on Europe is revealed in the way in which it parallels the recent work of Le Goff and Peter Brown.⁶⁸ Their work investigates such Dawsonian themes as the importance of the Dark Ages, the rôle of Christianity in the formation of Europe and the rôle of such key figures as Gregory the Great and Charlemagne.⁶⁹ Dawson's work on the common themes in European history, and the need to understand broader issues than nationalism, has also been considered in Alessandro Barbero's work on Charlemagne.⁷⁰ These writers have also highlighted the importance of Christianity and in particular, Catholicism, to the development of the heartlands of European civilisation in northern France, Flanders and southern Germany. Dawson had earlier shown how Christianity had spread within these areas through the monasteries. He had also observed the way in which the Papacy in alliance with the northern reformers, who were associated with the Cluniac and Cistercian monasteries, had formed the world of the Middle Ages.

Alexander Murray, in the Introduction to the 2003 edition of *The Making of Europe*, comments that this book is still recommended reading in the world's major universities.⁷¹ This is because the book's main themes remain particularly relevant, even though some of the facts in it have been superseded by recent scholarship.⁷² Murray points out that Dawson was most outstanding in his understanding of the importance of religion during this period. Indeed, he suggests that Dawson's religious understandings meant that he could be more sympathetic to

⁶⁸ Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom*, passim, and Le Goff, *The Birth of Europe*, passim.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Alessandro Barbero, *Charlemagne: Father of a Continent*, trans. by Allan Cameron, (Berkeley: University of California Press. 2004), p. 3.

⁷¹ Murray, "Introduction", to *ME*, by Dawson, p. ix.

⁷² Ibid, p. x.

earlier religious milieus than secular historians and that, furthermore, he was more aware of a range of cultural influences flowing from many directions.⁷³

In particular, *The Making of Europe* dealt with many of the themes Dawson was to build on later in his writing such as the need to move beyond a purely nationalistic perspective and, consequently, to understand Europe in terms of cultural unity. In contrast to works that had emphasised purely nationalistic or ethnic divisions within Europe, Dawson joined other scholars such as Spengler and Toynbee to examine broader cultural perspectives.⁷⁴ In particular, as Dawson maintained that religion formed culture, he believed that Catholicism was inherently part of the European ‘idea’, which needed to be recognised and considered beside other constituent factors such as the Roman legacy, the classical spirit and the influence of the barbarian tribes.⁷⁵ Dawson suggested that Christianity had moulded these other elements and given them a new life and impetus. The importance of these cultural perspectives was further analysed in his other major works, such as *Understanding Europe* and in *The Dividing of Christendom*.

Dawson’s own background meant that he understood the power of religion in earlier societies in a way that may have been more difficult for secular historians. This was partly because Dawson had been brought up in an intensely religious family, who took the practice and understanding of their faith very seriously, and partly because of his own understanding of history. As previously mentioned in Chapter Three, these background factors included his mother’s Anglican clerical origins, the influence of Anglo-Catholicism on his father and the acceptance of more traditional devotional practices, such as Terce and Compline, in the

⁷³ Ibid, p. xxxv.

⁷⁴ This theme was illustrated in the movie, *Joyeux Noel*, which analysed the Christmas 1914 truce on the Western Front, based on a shared Christian heritage rather than the nationalistic divisions which had been exacerbated since the time of Napoleon.

⁷⁵ Cervantes, “Christopher Dawson and Europe”, in *Eternity in Time*, eds. Caldecott and Morrill, p. 57.

household.⁷⁶ When discussing his own background, Dawson drew attention to the influence of Winchester and its great Cathedral.⁷⁷ Indeed, he stated that he learnt more about history from his visits to the Cathedral than from his school lessons.⁷⁸

In *The Making of Europe*, Dawson wrote that the influence of Catholicism on Europe showed how new spiritual influences could not be predicted in history. Indeed, the mysterious and inexplicable element in European history could be explained not only by the operations of chance, or the initiative of the individual genius, but by the importance and creative power of what he termed ‘spiritual forces’.⁷⁹ However, in contrast to a certain triumphalism evident in the work of Massis, Dawson was also later to point out that the new faith of Christianity was not indigenous to the Western Roman Empire, but had come from the East.⁸⁰ He pointed out that the Eastern influence could be observed in the impact of Greek Patristic thought, and in the development of the monastic idea after its beginnings with Pachomius of Egypt during the fourth century. This latter point is paralleled in the importance that the late Pope John Paul II gave to reconciliation with the Eastern Churches.

There are a number of important points made by Dawson in regard to the debate about the importance of Europe, including:

- I. The significance of the classical heritage;
- II. the influence of the monasteries;
- III. the importance of the Dark Ages; and

⁷⁶ Dawson, “Memories of a Victorian Childhood”, in *HHW*, by Scott, p. 236. Dawson also writes about his father’s move back to Craven in York, that, “... his return to Craven was in part a deliberate reaction against the Protestant Tradition and an attempt to recover lost spiritual roots in a past which he felt to be Catholic”, p. 237.

⁷⁷ Dawson, *UE*, p. 245. Dawson also wrote, “Nor was it merely a question of widening one’s historical sense it also deepened one’s spiritual sense of religion as an objective reality far transcending one’s private experience.”

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

⁸⁰ Dawson, “Is the Church too Western”, in *CEC*, pp. 98-103.

IV. the rôle of outstanding individuals such as Augustine and Charlemagne.

I. The Classical Heritage

One issue that has been part of the debate on the Church's relationship with Europe has concerned the classical heritage. Rowland maintains that in the Apostolic letter, *Fides et Ratio*, Pope John Paul II was endorsing von Balthasar's argument that as elements of Graeco-Latin were a necessary *praeparatio evangelii*, and that the whole cultural order of the Jews, including their rites, their law and their monotheism, was a necessary *prae ambula fidei*, it was, therefore, part of the plan of Providence that the Church be inculturated into Graeco-Latin culture.⁸¹

Dawson claimed that this classical heritage, in creating a common world of intellectual discourse, was important when Europe became fragmented by the Protestant Reformation. Dawson also considered this classical heritage to be one of the essential strands in the making of Europe. These elements in Dawson's understanding of Europe confirm his continued usefulness to current debates around this area.

II. The influence of monasteries

As previously noted, the origin of Western monasticism can be traced to Egypt and the influence of ascetics such as St Pachomius, but Dawson considered that it took the genius of St Benedict to channel the original idea of the monasteries into the social and ordered world of the Benedictine abbey, with its three-fold division of daily life into work, study and prayer.⁸² Nonetheless, Dawson did not neglect the importance of the Irish or Celtic version of monasticism, which impacted first on the British Isles, and later on Germany. He also discussed

⁸¹ Rowland, *CTT*, p. 47.

⁸² Dawson, *ME*, p. 184.

the significance of outstanding monks, such as Columbus and Columbanus, who were influenced by the monastery of Luxiel in France. However, Dawson kept his most eloquent praise for St Boniface, 'the Apostle to the Germans', whom he maintained had a greater influence on the development of Europe than any other Englishman who had ever lived.⁸³ Similarly, Brown's recent work has paralleled this thought, by chronicling the pivotal rôle of the Irish and English monks in the development of a Christian consciousness in Europe on such matters as the soul, and sin and atonement. Dawson observed that it was the monasteries that kept learning alive during the times of destruction that have become known as the Dark Ages.

III. The importance of the Dark Ages

In fact, Dawson asserted that it was during these Dark Ages that Europe was born, and that any attempt to explain European history simply in terms of secular culture and economic progress ignored the vital spiritual factor. This meant that if we went behind the humanism and the superficial triumphs of modern civilization, then we could discover the deeper traditions and fundamental social and spiritual forces that had gone into the making of Europe.⁸⁴ Thus, Dawson wished to go back beyond the aristocratic humanism and achievements of the last four hundred years to the more fundamental realities underlying Europe's existence.⁸⁵

Further evidence of the relevance of Dawson's work can be found in the fact that recent scholars such as Le Goff and Brown have continued to argue for the importance of both the Middle Ages and the Dark Ages in the development of Europe. In particular, Le Goff has observed the influence of Christianity on broader cultural and social domains.⁸⁶ One profound impact was apparent in the formulation of a new dating system by the monk Dionysius in the

⁸³ Ibid, p. 189.

⁸⁴ Dawson, *ME*, p. 255.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Le Goff, *The Birth of Europe*, pp. 24-25.

sixth century, which divided history into two periods based on the birth of Christ.⁸⁷ Another example was how the introduction of church bells, which in allowing the audible measuring of time, would have a significant impact on the daily lives of people living both in the countryside and the towns.⁸⁸ As well, the establishment of dioceses and parishes and the promotion of pilgrimage centres meant that Europe was remodelled in spatial terms.⁸⁹ Thus Christianity affected the culture not only in the sense of setting the intellectual foundations, but also materially, in the sense of the sacramentalisation of time and a new structuring of space.

IV. *Key figures in Europe*

Dawson's understanding of key figures in the development of Western thought has continued to be paralleled in the current works of historians such as Brown.⁹⁰ One such figure was St Augustine, a native of North Africa whose writings had so much influenced the development of European thought and Dawson's own conversion. Augustine's concept of the two cities demonstrated the rôle of an independent spiritual power in society, without undermining the need to understand the person as a social being who was part of that society.⁹¹ Dawson observed the seeming paradox that Augustine, who became so detached from the temporal issues of his time, was actually seminal in the development of Western society.⁹²

Augustine has also had a great impact on the intellectual formation of Pope Benedict XVI. Indeed, Nichols states that Pope Benedict stands with a succession of theologians and philosophers throughout history who have continued to draw inspiration from Augustinian

⁸⁷ Ibid, p. 24.

⁸⁸ Ibid, p. 25.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom*, p. 87.

⁹¹ Dawson, "The Christian View of History", in *DWH*, p. 253.

⁹² Dawson, "Augustine and His Age", in *DWH*, p. 339.

thought.⁹³ When he was still Cardinal Ratzinger, he spoke out and expressed an Augustinian realism about the Church's interaction with modern society.⁹⁴ This can be contrasted with the optimism about 'modern man' and liberal democracies associated with the thought of Jacques Maritain. Pope Benedict has been one of the major figures in the developing understanding of culture that has been fostered by the *Communio* school. It is clear from his academic articles and homilies, that his thought parallels the Dawsonian concept that Europe needs to acknowledge its Christian heritage.⁹⁵

Besides St Augustine, Dawson also identified men such as St Benedict, St Gregory and St Boniface as the makers of Europe.⁹⁶ Le Goff has maintained that other key figures such as Saint Benedict and Charlemagne have been put forward as deserving the title of 'father of Europe', but that Pope Gregory is more deserving of this title.⁹⁷ Pope Gregory lived between about 540 and 614. This period, which witnessed the end of the wars between the Byzantine armies and the Goths in Italy and the invasion of the Lombards, was a time of extreme social and economic distress. However, according to Le Goff, Pope Gregory had a far-reaching impact on the future cultural development of Europe, because of his work on the liturgy and through his concerns for the outlying areas of Christendom such as England.⁹⁸ Le Goff also refers to the importance of four other figures, Boethius, Cassiodorus, Isidore of Seville and Saint Bede in the future cultural

⁹³ Nichols, *The Thought of Benedict*, p. 27.

⁹⁴ Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, *Salt of the Earth: The Church at the End of the Millennium*, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1997), p. 282.

⁹⁵ Ratzinger, *Values in a Time of Upheaval*, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2006), p. 125. The decision not to include a reference to Europe's Christian roots in the new Constitution can be said to reflect what Glenn Olsen terms, *cultural suicide*. In Olsen, "Secularization and Sacralization", in *Christianity and Western Civilization*, p. 98. A reflection on the work of Dawson may also show be a parallel between the world at the time of the early Middle Ages and our own time. Thus, the Church now has a German Pope and Dawson identified the importance of Latin order and Teutonic energy within the Church in forming the world of the Middle Ages. Dawson, *ME*, p. 252.

⁹⁶ Dawson, *ME*, pp. 6-7.

⁹⁷ Le Goff, *The Birth of Europe*, p. 18.

⁹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 19.

development of Europe.⁹⁹ This stress on the importance of Saint Bede was also apparent in Dawson's work. Dawson believed that St Bede's life was a reflection of the vitality and richness of Anglo-Saxon culture in the seventh and eight centuries.¹⁰⁰

The rôle of Charlemagne

To understand the rôle of Charlemagne in Western Europe, it is necessary to be aware of the relationship between France and the Church which began to develop after the fall of the Roman Empire. In this regard, Dawson saw the decision of Clovis to accept Roman Catholicism in around the year AD 496, rather than Arianism, as a critical historical turning point, which by inaugurating an alliance between the Frankish kingdom and the Church, laid the foundation of medieval history.¹⁰¹ The Merovingian dynasty of Clovis would be overthrown by Pepin, the Major of the Palace in the mid-eighth century. Pepin's grandson Charlemagne would be crowned Emperor by the Pope in Rome, on Christmas Day, AD 800. According to Maurice Keen, the fact that this coronation was initiated by the Papacy united the new empire with the religious mission of the Church.¹⁰² Charlemagne took a keen interest in such areas as the liturgy, and also established the Palace school at Aix La Chapelle, which was under the direction of the Anglo-Saxon scholar Alcuin. Alcuin was another major figure associated with the strength of a revitalized Christian culture in Anglo-Saxon England. At the time of *The Making of Europe*, Dawson's focus on the importance of Charlemagne paralleled the work of such scholars as the Belgian, Henri Pirenne.

⁹⁹ Ibid, pp. 16-18.

¹⁰⁰ Dawson, *RWC*, pp. 60-61.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, p. 90.

¹⁰² Maurice Keen, *The Pelican History of Medieval Europe*, (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1968), p. 32.

More recently works by the Italian, French and English historians Alessandro Barbero, Jacques Le Goff and Derek Wilson have continued to address the significant rôle of Charlemagne in the formation of a European identity. This reflects the greatly increased interest and scholarship about the origins of Europe.¹⁰³ In particular, Barbero believes that the imperial coronation of Charlemagne consecrated the birth of a new political space which still seems familiar at the present time.¹⁰⁴ He argues that the influence of Charlemagne's Empire is revealed in a Nordic and continental Europe, where the culture is predominantly Latino-Germanic and which tends to ignore the Greeks and Slavs in the East.¹⁰⁵ Barbero also discusses the place of Charlemagne in the formation of Europe and the debate as to whether he belongs to the Roman-Latin or the Germanic worlds. He argues that Charlemagne was neither from Germany nor France, as these two nations did not yet exist and consequently the issue of the formation of Europe cannot be posed in terms of the modern nation state.¹⁰⁶ Jacques Le Goff has suggested that Charlemagne's legacy can be understood in terms of legal unification.¹⁰⁷ In the twentieth century, the legacy of Charlemagne continued to be important in arguing for the cause of European unity. Thus, in 1950, Charles de Gaulle, when attempting a *rapprochement* with France's traditional enemy Germany, argued that there was no reason why the German and French peoples, in overcoming their grievances, should not end up uniting together and building new economic, social, strategic and cultural foundations on the achievements of Charlemagne.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰³ Barbero, *Charlemagne Father of a Continent*, Le Goff, *The Birth of Europe*, and Derek Wilson, *Charlemagne: Barbarian and Emperor*, (London: Pimlico, 2006).

¹⁰⁴ Barbero, *Charlemagne*, p. 114.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, p. 103.

¹⁰⁷ Le Goff, *The Birth of Europe*, p. 33.

¹⁰⁸ R. Morrissey, *L'Empereur à la barbe fleurie: Charlemagne dans la mythologie et l'histoire de France*, (Paris: 1997), p. 415, cited in Derek Wilson, *Charlemagne: Barbarian and Emperor*, (London: Pimlico, 2006), p. 193.

Part III: Divided Europe reflecting religious and cultural differences between Catholic and Protestant traditions

Dawson's works, both on the later Middle Ages and on Europe following the Reformation, provide important insights into the background of the religious and cultural divisions in Western society. Dawson considered that the period of the late Middle Ages, from about AD 1250 to AD 1500, was a particularly creative one in its own right, and characterized by many supposedly 'medieval' features such as the histories of Joinville and Froissart, the poems of Dante and William Langland, the writings of St. Catherine of Siena and the German mystics of the Rhineland, the *Imitation of Christ* by Thomas à Kempis, and Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*.¹⁰⁹ This period has also been covered by the contemporary English historian, Derek Pearsall, who has described what he terms the 'Gothic achievement', in a range of areas, including art, architecture, sculpture, literature and illuminated manuscripts.¹¹⁰

A knowledge of the period after the Reformation assists in understanding the situation of Catholics living within a Protestant culture.¹¹¹ With regard to the importance of culture and its relationship with religion, Dawson's work on the difference between a Catholic culture and a bourgeois one is particularly important. He explained that this bourgeois culture had its beginnings in the cities of Northern Italy in the Middle Ages, but that it was not until the Reformation and the destruction of the control of the church over social life that a genuine bourgeois culture began.¹¹² Dawson drew upon the work of Werner Sombart to provide an analysis of two distinct types - the bourgeois soul and the anti-bourgeois soul which corresponded to closed and open temperaments.¹¹³ Dawson's analysis of the differences between

¹⁰⁹ Dawson, *DC*, p. 19.

¹¹⁰ Derek Pearsall, *Gothic Europe 1200-1450: Arts, Culture and Society in the Western World*, (Essex, England: Pearson Education, 2001), pp. 172-196.

¹¹¹ Rowland, *CTT*, p. 40.

¹¹² Dawson, "Catholicism and the Bourgeois Mind", in "*DWH*", p. 218.

¹¹³ *Ibid*, p. 216.

Catholic culture and a Calvinist-type of Protestant culture provides a basis for understanding the differences between the culture of much of Europe, and that of the United States and other English-speaking nations such as Australia. In *The Dividing of Christendom*, Dawson argued that the English Reformation was one of the important events in the history of Christendom since the Great Schism in the eleventh century, and one of the great forces that formed the modern world as it produced a new form of culture, and a new type of Christianity, which was subsequently established throughout the world, and especially in North America.¹¹⁴

In contrast to developments in the Protestant world, Dawson argued that until the nineteenth century, the anti-national characteristics of the Hapsburg Empire and its maintenance of the ideal of a common Christian society provided a critical exception to the general tendency of modern society towards an identification of culture with nationalism.¹¹⁵ Thus, different ethnic groups and languages could live under one political authority whilst maintaining their differences in institutions, manners and customs.¹¹⁶ The dynastic and religious connections across national lines were evident in the attempt by the last Emperor of Austria-Hungary, Charles I, to negotiate a peace treaty with France during World War I, enlisting the help of the Vatican and Prince Sixtus, who was of the French branch of the Bourbon-Parma family and an elder brother of Charles' wife, the Empress Zita.¹¹⁷ Gordon Brook-Shepherd has argued that Prince Sixtus wished to revive the eighteenth century co-operation between the two major Catholic powers, in an attempt to distance Austria from its alliance with Germany.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ Ibid, p. 122.

¹¹⁵ Dawson, *DC*, p. 187.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Gordon Brook-Shepherd, *The Last Hapsburg*, (New York: Weybright and Talley, 1968), p. 63.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

Thus, Dawson's thought on Europe is not only useful to understanding contemporary Europe, but also to understanding the formation of the culture evident within the English-speaking world. In regard to another matter of international concern, namely the place of a post-communist Russia, Huntington has contended that the real boundary of Europe is the eastern one separating the Catholic and Protestant worlds from the Orthodox ones.¹¹⁹ He observes that with the end of the Cold War and the breakdown of the boundary between the free West and the Soviet bloc, earlier cultural and religious patterns were reinvigorated. Furthermore, he suggested that a dividing line ran from Finland through Ukraine, separating the Uniate West from the Orthodox East, and which, in the Balkans, coincided with the old boundary between the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires.¹²⁰ This understanding of cultural difference can be further illustrated by a Dawsonian focus on key nations such as Britain, France and Germany.

Dawson and England

It is obviously important for Australia to understand its English heritage reflected in such areas as the system of government, of justice, and even the manner in which our cities have developed. There has been at times an ambivalence, or even hostility to this heritage by many Australian Catholics, because of their predominantly Irish background. Since the 1960s and its admission to the European Union, England has had to deal with a crisis of identity in regard to its relationship to the European continent. How England continues to deal with this issue will impact on Catholics living within the English-speaking countries. This is because English popular culture, particularly since the 1960s, has been enormously influential in countries such as Australia. This is reflected in the rôle of fashion, popular music, the theatre and television.

¹¹⁹ Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*, p. 158.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 158.

England had been part of Western Europe and the Roman Empire before the coming of Christianity. After the fall of Roman Britain in the fifth century and the contraction of Christianity to the western areas, outside the reach of the pagan invaders, this link became more tenuous. The mission of St Augustine and the conversion of the Saxon king in Kent once more opened the English to the influence of Western Catholicism. Yet when the split with the Roman Catholic Church occurred in the sixteenth century, Hilaire Belloc observed that England was the only country of the old Roman Empire that became Protestant.¹²¹ In this regard, Patrick Collinson has argued that if the Reformation had not happened, modern England would probably not have been so insular, nor would it have had such a problem in deciding its relation to continental Europe in the latter part of the twentieth century.¹²² Although England did become Protestant it continued to retain some continuity with its Catholic past, which explains why the historian John Lukacs continues to detect signs of the previous Catholic sensibility within English society.¹²³ Indeed, according to Dawson, the Anglicanism of England constituted a type of intermediate zone which meant that alongside the Gallicanism of France and the Lutheranism of Germany, Europe was not divided into two entirely distinct and separate cultures of Baroque Catholicism and Calvinistic Protestantism.¹²⁴

Another factor particularly pertinent to Australian history concerns the influence of nineteenth-century liberalism. Dawson saw the rise of Victorian liberalism as one of the major contributing factors to the making of the modern world. However, he also saw this liberalism as a

¹²¹ Hilaire Belloc, *Europe and the Faith*, (Rockford, Illinois: Tan books, 1992), p. 173.

¹²² Patrick Collinson, "The English Reformation, 1545-1595", in *Companion to Historiography*, ed. Michael Bentley, (London, New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 336.

¹²³ Lukacs, "Three Days in London: Churchill's Funeral", in *Remembered Past*, p. 490. This author notes about the English, "In this people who ushered in the modern age there is still a mystical, a near-medieval strain, a strain that has been part and parcel of their Protestantism, their Puritanism, their Industrial Revolution, their English socialism. It is there in this living strain of English Catholicism, which in the twentieth-century-curious paradox in the spiritual history of England has become one of the strongest subterranean streams of a peculiar Englishness." p. 490.

¹²⁴ Christopher Dawson, "The European Revolution", *The Catholic World*, vol. 179, (May 1954), p. 7.

temporary phenomenon.¹²⁵ In fact, Dawson had been born into the end of this era and was aware that one of its positive aspects was that it allowed a certain independence from an all-powerful state to flourish. He was to expand on this theme in *Memories of a Victorian Childhood*.¹²⁶

Dawson and France

France has played an enormously important rôle in the development of the modern world, in the arts, fashion, literature, philosophy and politics, and more importantly in spreading secular Enlightenment ideas throughout Europe. The French Revolution exists alongside such events as England's Glorious Revolution and the American Revolution as pivotal in creating the modern world. In particular, the attempted de-Christianization programs during the French Revolutionary period had a major impact on the Church. Any educational response to secularisation needs to be aware of the differing negative and positive perspectives and responses to this event.¹²⁷

Dawson realized the debt of Western civilization to northern France.¹²⁸ In particular, Dawson had a firm view that the development of Western Europe needed to be understood in terms of the area between the Loire and the Rhine, so that Western civilization straddled the two pivotal nations of Germany and France, but was not inclusive to either.¹²⁹ Dawson observed that this area was crucial in the development of significant features of European life such as Gothic architecture, the great medieval schools and the monastic and ecclesiastical reform movements.¹³⁰

¹²⁵ Dawson, *PR*, p. 97. cited in Russell Hittinger, "Christopher Dawson on Technology and the Demise of Liberalism", in *Christianity and Western Civilization*, Wethersfield Institute, p. 80.

¹²⁶ Dawson, *Memories of a Victorian Childhood* in Scott, *HHW*, pp. 221-239.

¹²⁷ Gary Kates, ed. *The French Revolution: Recent Debates and New Controversies*, (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 1. Kates maintains that an historian's stance on the French Revolution is a litmus test about his or her deepest ideological and political convictions.

¹²⁸ Dawson, *ME*, p. 252.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

However, Dawson analysed the rôle that the rise of the nation state, such as in France, was to play in undermining the unity of Europe and in constructing a Europe based on a balance of powers following the Treaty of Westphalia, in 1648. In France, the *politiques* associated with Cardinal Richelieu were victorious over the pro-Hapsburg *dévots* during the time of Louis XIII. This was particularly evident following the Day of the Dupes, in 1630, and the subsequent execution of one of the leaders of the devots, Michel de Merriliac. Gallican Catholicism, which drew much inspiration from a Jansenist anti-Jesuit and anti-Papal trend, would be a key component of the absolutist Bourbon monarchy and provide an alternative to Baroque Catholicism. The Dawsonian vision of a Europe based on the concept of a community of peoples, who shared in a common spiritual tradition would be partially realized after World War II.¹³¹ However, this search for unity would face opposition within France. Thus, according to Cobban, the French Socialists and Radicals denounced the idea of the European Community as a Catholic plot, which could be traced back through the Austrian alliance of the eighteenth century to the *dévots* of the time of Louis XIII, and the Catholic League who had opposed Henri IV.

Dawson and Germany

The reunification of Germany, its vital rôle alongside France in the European Union and the election of a German Pope all mean that understanding this nation is important for the Church in the coming decades. Dawson believed that the future of Germany would be crucial to the future of Europe.¹³² He saw the rise of Nazism as tragic in managing to combine the worst features of the German character, its Prussian militarism, the southern German romanticism and the Austrian Pan Germanism.¹³³ As an addition to this analysis, Pope Benedict XVI observes that his Bavarian

¹³¹ Dawson, *UE*, p. 26.

¹³² *Ibid*, p. 65.

¹³³ *Ibid*, p. 80.

part of Germany was influenced culturally by France and Austria.¹³⁴ In contrast, he argues that Nazism was affected by the decadent cosmopolitan atmosphere of *fin de siècle* Vienna.¹³⁵ This view parallels Dawson's belief about the destructive effects of certain types of a cosmopolitan urbanism that ultimately loses ties with the region in which it is situated.

Dawson believed that the Bismarckian solution of a unified Germany was bound to fail, because it did not take into account the history and tradition of the smaller states and of Austria, particularly in their relationships with both central and Western Europe. In particular, Dawson claimed that a true solution to what he termed 'the German problem' was a necessary prerequisite for the very existence of Europe.¹³⁶ He maintained that it was one of the main aims of the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia, of Napoleon's Confederation on the Rhine, of the Vienna Settlement of 1815 and of the Versailles Treaty in 1919, to solve this German problem.¹³⁷ However, he asserted that all of these solutions were deficient because they ignored the peculiar nature of German history and sought to solve the German problem in terms of the Balance of Power and European security.¹³⁸ After 1918, this type of thinking was illustrated in the work of Jacques Bainville who believed that a strong French state was necessary to preserve the balance of military forces within Europe.¹³⁹ Bainville's views were paralleled by those of the French general, Marshal Foch, Commander-in-Chief of the Allied forces in 1918.¹⁴⁰ Foch wished to take the French border to the Rhine and continued with this request until the final terms of the

¹³⁴ Allen, *Benedict XVI*, p. 147.

¹³⁵ Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *The Ratzinger Report: An Exclusive interview on the State of the Church*, Interview with Vittorio Messori, trans. by Salvator Attansio and Graham Harrison, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1985), p. 167.

¹³⁶ Dawson, *UE*, p. 65.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ Keylor, *Jacques Bainville*, p. xvii.

¹⁴⁰ David Thomson, *Europe Since Napoleon*, (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1976), p. 568.

Versailles Treaty were agreed upon.¹⁴¹ Furthermore, Margaret MacMillan has observed that this attempt to move the border was paralleled by the French hope in 1919 that the Catholic Rhinelanders would seek a separation from a united Germany, which had been dominated by Prussia since the settlement of 1815.¹⁴²

Dawson saw that Germany had never developed as a unitary state in the manner of England and France, and therefore solutions to the German problem needed to be based on an awareness both of the complexity of its history and the multiplicity of its political traditions.¹⁴³ As previously mentioned, this complexity was reflected in Dawson's identification of three rival versions of Germany, which were each able to provide the basis for a national German state.¹⁴⁴ Dawson identified these three as first, the southern and western states associated with political fragmentation and cultural brilliance, second the Austrian Germany associated with the Hapsburg multi-ethnic empire and third, the addition of a Prussian Germany, characterized by militarism and glorification of the state.¹⁴⁵

He argued that whilst the Germany of the south and the west was the Germany which was most conscious of its own nationality and culture, it was also the most internationally minded and the most shaped by the common traditions of Western culture.¹⁴⁶ This is the Germany that was to provide the basis for West Germany, after 1945, and which, under the leadership of Konrad Adenauer and the Christian Democrats would actually begin the process of union with the Low Countries and France, and thus provide the foundation of the current European Union. Adenauer drew from a Rhineland Catholic tradition which had always looked to the West. Indeed, as early

¹⁴¹ MacMillan, *Peacemakers*, p. 469.

¹⁴² Ibid, p. 181.

¹⁴³ Dawson, *UE*, p. 67.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 68.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, pp. 68-69.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 68.

as 1918, Adenauer had observed that the ancient international crossroads at the Rhine was where both German civilization and the civilization of the Western democracies could meet in order to bring about a genuine reconciliation for Europe.¹⁴⁷

Similarly, a westward-leaning focus within the southern state of Bavaria was identified by the then Cardinal Ratzinger in his book *Salt of the Earth*, when he observed that his family had ties to both a Bavarian-Austrian and a Francophile-Catholic current within Germany.¹⁴⁸ However, the future of Germany was to be fought out between the other two Germanies – the multi-national Austrian empire and the comparatively recent power of Prussia. Dawson reserved his most stringent criticism for Prussia, which he argued was not really a typical German state, but a colonial Baltic power which had imposed itself on Germany and in the process established a foreign despotism on the ruins of the Holy Roman Empire.¹⁴⁹ Indeed, it was Prussia that brought about the unification of Germany in 1870. This victory was supported by the liberals and German historians such as Johann Gustav Droysen (1808-1884), Heinrich von Sybel (1817-1895), and Heinrich von Treitschke (1834-1894) and British historians such as Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881).¹⁵⁰ In fact, after hearing of the fall of Metz in 1870, Carlyle was to write to *The Times* saying:

That noble, patient, deep, pious and solid Germany should be at length welded into a nation and become Queen of the Continent instead of vapouring, vainglorious, gesticulating, quarrelsome and over-sensitive France, seems to me the hopefulest public fact that has occurred in my time.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁷ Konrad Adenauer, (1918), cited in Terence Prittie, *Konrad Adenauer 1876-1967*, (Chicago: Cowles Book Company, 1971), p. 171.

¹⁴⁸ Ratzinger, *Salt of the Earth*, p. 50.

¹⁴⁹ Dawson, *UE*, p. 69.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ Thomas Carlyle, cited in James Joll, *Europe Since 1870*, (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1976), p. 1.

This reflected a trend in British historiography in the nineteenth century which considered that the strengths of the British national character derived from the Teutonic and Germanic invaders of the fifth and sixth centuries.¹⁵²

However, Dawson saw the solution provided by Bismarck and Prussia as being a temporary one to the problem of German unity. Thus, the Prussian-dominated solution was one-sided, as it left out an Austria whose international position had made it the natural mediator between Germany and the rest of Europe.¹⁵³ This rôle of mediator was reflected in the fact that Austria had historical ties with the Low Countries, with Italy, Hungary and the Balkans, as well as with the German states in the south and west. The 1866 victory of Prussia over Austria was ultimately to lead to a Pan Germanism in Austria itself, which, whilst denying the multi-ethnic and federalist nature of the Empire, became associated with anti-Semitism, anti-Catholicism and with a new racial cult of the Nordic race.¹⁵⁴ According to Dawson, the rise of this Pan Germanism meant that Austria committed a type of spiritual suicide, as its culture had been built on a universal religious ideal of an international Catholic culture, which had drawn to its service men from a wide variety of national backgrounds, including Italians, Spaniards, Czechs, Magyars, French and Irish.¹⁵⁵ After 1866, the old common heritage of Baroque Austria and classical Vienna was to be destroyed in a division between the Pan-Germans and the Pan-Slavs.¹⁵⁶ This division possibly influenced the post-World War I settlement at Versailles, which accepted the dismemberment of

¹⁵² Benedikt Stuchtey, "Literature, Liberty and the Life of the Nation: British History from Macauley to Trevelyan", in *Writing National Histories*, eds. Berger, Donovan and Passmore, p. 40. Stuchtey states that Carlyle was one of the Germanophile intellectuals in Britain during the nineteenth century.

¹⁵³ Dawson, *UE*, p. 76.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.* Also David Fromkin comments that Hapsburg-ruled Austria was the principal enemy of European nationalism, and that, "The Hapsburgs were a dynasty that over the course of a thousand years had come to rule a motley collection of territories and peoples- a multinational empire that held no prospect of becoming an homogenous state." Fromkin, *Europe's Last Summer*, p. 24.

¹⁵⁶ Dawson, *UE*, p. 78.

the Austro-Hungarian Empire in favour of independence for the nations of Czechoslovakia and Poland.¹⁵⁷

Writing in the early 1950s, Dawson observed that the only solution to the problem of the division of Germany was for Central Europe to be incorporated into a Western European federation.¹⁵⁸ Within a few years of his comments such a solution had begun, and by the present time, with the entry of Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary and the eastern Baltic states, it has reached its conclusion. This unity cannot be achieved by the construction of a new purely bureaucratic state based on Brussels which denies or fails to acknowledge the underlying religious, historical and cultural forces that have gone into the making of Europe. In this regard the scholarship of Christopher Dawson deepens the understanding of the basis for the European Union.¹⁵⁹

Cultural differences: German Post WWI Perspective

After World War I in Germany, there was another group of Catholics, little known in the English-speaking world, whose focus on Christianity's rôle in the formation of Europe paralleled Dawson's work. One of the most prominent of these was George Moenius, editor of the journal, *Allgemeine Rundschau*, which sought to challenge the militaristic concept of Germany that had prevailed since the Prussian dominance following the Franco-Prussian war of 1870. Greg Munro, a contemporary Australian historian, has observed that the ideology of the *Allgemeine Rundschau* was based on a traditional Roman Catholic conception of a Germany that was universal,

¹⁵⁷ Ibid, p. 78. In regard to the destruction of the Catholic humanist culture of Austria, Dawson quotes the disillusionment of Grillparzer in his prophetic assessment of 1848, that, "The path of modern culture leads from humanity through nationality to bestiality."

¹⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 82.

¹⁵⁹ The Papacy argued against the exclusion of any mention of Christianity's rôle in the formation of Europe from the proposed Constitution.

peacefully orientated and governed under a genuine federal constitution.¹⁶⁰ This group sought to reassert its own religious and cultural identity against a Prussian Germany. In the view of this group, Prussian militarism was not native to the Germany of the south and west, which had always looked to France or Austria for its inspiration and cultural ideals and values.¹⁶¹ The views of this group on Prussian responsibility for the First World War were to be expressed in the work of the revisionist German historian, Fritz Fischer, in the 1960s.¹⁶² A recent work by David Fromkin summarizes and extends the post-Fischer scholarship.¹⁶³ In particular, commenting on the critical rôle of the German general, Moltke, on the outbreak of the War, Fromkin maintains that Moltke's action and thought were a reflection of the militarisation of German life by the Prussian Junker class.¹⁶⁴ Another specialist on Germany, Gordon Craig has previously made a similar observation, when he identified that the permeation of these Junker military values into the world of business produced industrialists who ran their enterprises as if they were fortress commanders, and universities that were dominated by student organizations which copied the styles and ceremonies of the Prussian officer class.¹⁶⁵

This debate following the First World War reflected differing views on the unity of Germany, evident since the Napoleonic period, in the early nineteenth century. In Germany, however, the proponents of those representing a renewed appreciation of Catholicism's importance to Europe and a critique of Prussian values were opposed both by most historians, and by some of their fellow Catholics. This reflected the fact that significant proportions of the

¹⁶⁰ Greg Munro, *Allgemeine Rundschau: Hitler's Bavarian Antagonist, Georg Moenius and the Allgemeine Rundschau of Munich, 1929-1933*, (New York: The Edward Mellon Press, 2006), p. 60.

¹⁶¹ Massis, *The Defence of the West*, p. 46. Henri Massis referred to young Catholic Germans such as the contributors to *Abendland* who had reacted against the Hegelian concept of the state and sought to restore European values based on Christianity.

¹⁶² Georg Iggers, "Nationalism and Historiography, 1789-1996", in Berger, Donovan and Passmore, eds. *Writing National Histories*, p. 23.

¹⁶³ Fromkin, *Europe's Last Summer*, p. 9.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid, p. 304.

¹⁶⁵ Gordon Craig, *The Germans*, (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1982), p. 239.

German academic community supported ‘the stab in the back’ legend, which argued that Germany had not been defeated because of military shortcomings, but because of the weakness of the politicians. There were also deep divisions amongst Catholics about the former Wilhelmine Empire.¹⁶⁶ Two of these most prominent Catholics were Martin Spahn (1875-1945) and Max Buchner (1881-1941). Buchner, who was Professor of Medieval and Modern History at the University of Munich, used the journal, *Gelbe Hefte*, to advocate a Hohenzollern restoration and a Bismarkian style autocratic government.¹⁶⁷ Catholic support for the idea of a Prussian-dominated Germany had been evident before 1914, when a confidant to Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg had observed that:

The Catholic has been driven back upon the purely religious area of life, political thought governs the German. The leadership of the present Centre Party are not disposed to take up dissenting positions in national questions at the behest of the Pope- nor are they in a position to do so with regard to their electorate. This development, (shows) that the political cosmopolitanism of Rome has lost ground to the national idea.¹⁶⁸

The contemporary historian, John Lukacs contends that the continuation of this trend meant that the principal fault of German Catholics during the Second World War was not that they were too Catholic, but that they were too German.¹⁶⁹ Thus, he argues that the national conditioning of German Catholics, their *volkish* populism, the *aggiornamento* of *deutsches Christentum* since the Bismarkian Empire, alongside the dependence of the German hierarchy on popular sentiment, were the main reasons for German Catholic failures in regard to Nazi totalitarianism.¹⁷⁰ It is unfortunate that similar concerns were not raised about those in the Church arguing for adaptation to prevailing cultural and national norms in the decades after the 1960s.

¹⁶⁶ Munro, *Allgemeine Rundschau*, p. 30.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, p. 37.

¹⁶⁸ J.J. Ruedorffer, (i.e. Kurt Riezler), *Grundzuge der Weltpolitik in der Gegenwart*, (Stuggart, Berlin: 1914), p. 146. cited in Munro, *Allgemeine Rundschau*, p. 20.

¹⁶⁹ Lukacs, *Remembered Past*, p. 515.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, pp. 515-516.

Conclusion

This chapter has identified some of the constitutive factors in a Christian culture of Europe, and the Dawsonian and more recent analyses of such factors. The recent work of *Communio* scholars, such as Rowland, has sought to understand the difficulties involved in a denial of the past and tradition. Rowland has argued that the heritage of classical thought and language has been so important for Christianity, that to jettison key features of this culture when evangelising, in favour of either purely indigenous culture, or an alternative secularist and post-Christian culture, risks failure.¹⁷¹ The insights of Christopher Dawson on Europe are an important addition to this cultural debate.

In particular, Dawson's work also provides a framework for analysing the historiographical trends in his own era, for the scholarship on the formation of Europe in our own time and for understanding the religious and cultural differences which still exist in Europe. Thus, Dawson's key theme, that 'religion forms culture', provides an explanation for the idea of Europe and an opportunity for the Church to realize that it can play a central rôle in the cultural and historical debates of the present time.¹⁷² Although Dawson wrote extensively on the interaction between religion and culture, nowhere did he illustrate this interaction more clearly than in his works dealing with Europe. Thus, because of Dawson's acute awareness of the relationship between religion and culture, his understanding of Europe as a community of peoples with a common spiritual tradition can take on a contemporary focus.¹⁷³ Furthermore, as this paper has noted, Dawson's work provides an addition both to the historiography of his own period, as well as to the more recent historiography on the formation of, and concept of, Europe.

¹⁷¹ Rowland, *CTT*, p. 159.

¹⁷² Nichols, in *Eternity in Time*, p. 36. Nichols has observed that Dawson drew from the words of the German philosopher Peter Wust of a 'return of Catholicism from exile', to illustrate how the bankruptcy of secular ideas allowed the Church a new rôle in the contemporary world.

¹⁷³ Dawson, *UE*, p. 26.

The election of a Pope from the heartland of so called ‘old Europe’ was a signal that the Church still continues to believe that what happens in Europe is important for the entire world. Dawson’s views on Europe are useful for the Church in articulating a coherent and realistic critique of a post-Enlightenment culture, either in its Anglo-American and liberal post-Protestant form, or its Continental aggressively secular one. Our debt to our Christian and European heritage needs to be acknowledged as a real factor in Australian society. If it is not, we risk misunderstanding our European past and, consequently, the Christian underpinnings of this past and in the process remaining limited by a reductionist historical and educational *Weltanschauung*. The particular difficulty that we face is not solved by a turn to multiculturalism, which simply fosters relativism, but rather by re-focusing on a teaching of the history and culture of Europe, which recognizes the historic rôle of Christianity.

Reflecting this focus on the problems in the West, John Allen believes that Benedict will continue to concentrate on Europe and he quotes one Cardinal, who says that Europe is too big to lose.¹⁷⁴ If this is the case, the English-speaking world needs to be aware of its own spiritual and cultural debt to European Christendom, to understand the characteristics of a Catholic culture and to learn from any strategies that may be used to reinvigorate this culture within Europe.

¹⁷⁴ Allen, *Benedict XVI*, p. 188.

PART III

THE DAWSONIAN EDUCATIONAL SOLUTION

CHAPTER VI

Christopher Dawson and Christian Culture

Introduction

The first chapters of this work referred to the dramatic declines in religious practice and knowledge since the 1960s, especially among young Catholics, and the consequent marginalization of the Church in the West. Within the English-speaking countries, including Australia, this marginalization represents a continuation of earlier societal and cultural trends which have been exacerbated by more recent confusion and ambivalence about culture, history and the rôle of the Church in forming European culture. This ambivalence has had a particular impact in the educational area, as Catholic schools are not only dealing with their own internal problems, but with the broader cultural crisis in Western society. Within the English-speaking world, this broader cultural crisis has been particularly corrosive of what remains of Catholic cultural understandings, and is another factor in the marginalization of the Church on the critical bio-ethical, social and cultural debates of the present time. Therefore, in spite of the development of a comprehensive network of primary and secondary schools and the more recent expansion of a Catholic higher education system, the underdeveloped understanding of these areas represents a failure to define the major purposes and characteristics of Catholic education.

Dawson saw education as having two elements; one involved technique, which taught children how to do things; the other and more important element was tradition, through which, by means of the cultivation of the young in the social and spiritual inheritance of the community, the culture was transmitted.¹ In particular, Dawson drew from anthropology to define education as meaning ‘enculturation’, or the process whereby culture was handed on by society and acquired by the individual.² Furthermore, he believed that any break in an educational tradition could have revolutionary consequences, given the rôle of a common educational tradition in creating a

¹ Dawson, “The Recovery of Spiritual Unity”, in *CEC*, p. 236.

² Dawson, *CWE*, p. 3.

common world of thought, and a common memory, both of which were important for cultural identity.³ However, within a cultural milieu that is not only unsympathetic towards, but increasingly ignorant of Christianity, tradition and the past, this task has become increasingly difficult.

In English-speaking countries such as Australia, the Catholic population's shared identity was often related to an Irish background or, particularly in the USA, an Italian or German one, so that a Catholic identity was to a certain extent connected to ethnicity.⁴ In the second half of the twentieth century, especially for the Irish in the USA and Australia, this consciousness was attenuated at the same time as many cultural and educational features connected to the Catholic tradition were abandoned. Russello has argued that this lack of basic knowledge about the Christian past and the paucity of spiritual sustenance within popular culture, means that the Dawsonian educational proposal has a particular resonance for the Catholic schools of today.⁵ In responding to the challenges of modern culture's rupture from the past, it is useful to examine three areas, namely:

- I. the major challenges for Catholic education in the contemporary period;
- II. the Dawsonian analysis of educational challenges; and
- III. the Dawsonian solution to Catholicism's current educational problems.

I. Major challenges for contemporary Catholic education

Since the 1980s the educational curriculum has been the subject of an intense debate within Australia. In 1988 the Federal Minister for Education issued the discussion paper *Strengthening Australian Schools* as a response to public concern about issues relating to the quality of

³ Ibid, p.5.

⁴ Dixon, *The Catholic Community in Australia*, p. 2. Dixon has identified that in the nineteenth century, the predominantly Irish clergy rejected the English view of the Church in Australia and regarded priests from Germany, Spain or Italy as unsuitable for a Church which was seen as an off-shoot of the Irish Church.

⁵ Russello, "Introduction", to *CEC*, p. xv.

education.⁶ This debate has often dealt with two broad issues; first, that of standards in such areas as literacy and mathematics and, secondly, the level of historical and cultural knowledge exhibited by students.⁷ The issue of standards usually concerned such areas as reading levels, grammar, spelling, punctuation and mathematical knowledge. One area of this debate was over the positive or negative influence of so-called progressive education. This movement had been evident in England since the 1930s, but became increasingly strong after the publication of the Plowden Report in the 1960s. One result of this Report was a discouragement of formal work and memorization, and a corresponding emphasis on individual creativity. In the area of literacy, the debate around the techniques of teaching reading and spelling has centred on the rôle of phonics versus whole language teaching.

However, the debate over curriculum content has been the most contentious issue, and is one which will have the most impact within Catholic schools. Kevin Donnelly has observed that there are differences between those arguing broadly for a focus on teaching students the process of learning, and an alternative emphasis on the subject content or product.⁸ E. D. Hirsch brought this debate into prominence, particularly in the USA, with his book *Cultural Literacy*.⁹ He criticized the view, particularly strong in the decades after the 1970s, that constantly expanding information meant that content in education was relatively unimportant and that only the teaching of skills could effectively prepare students for the future.¹⁰ Hirsch observed that an increase in

⁶ Neil Johnston, "Foreword", to *Improving the Quality of Australian Schools*, edited by Judith Chapman, Lawrie Angus and Gerald Burke with Vern Wilkinson, (Hawthorn, Victoria: Australian Council for Educational Research, 1991), p. ix.

⁷ In 1996, national literacy tests showed high levels of illiteracy among Year 5 primary school children. In Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs, *Literacy Standards in Australia*, (Canberra: DEETYA, 1997). In 1994 a survey of civic knowledge by a Civics Expert Group raised concerns about levels of knowledge. *Whereas the People: Civics and Citizenship Education*. (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 1994).

⁸ Kevin Donnelly, *Why our schools are failing: What parents need to know about Australian education*, (Sydney: Duffy and Snellgrove, 2004), p. 78.

⁹ E.D. Hirsch, *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know*, (Moorehead, N.S.W.: Bantam/ Schwartz Book, 1989).

¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 1.

information reflected technological knowledge, but that the general cultural literacy that was needed for society's coherence and communication tended to remain stable.¹¹ He further argued that the general cultural awareness in America was based on a civic religion, which through its own symbols and rites such as respect for the flag and commemorative national holidays, fostered the coherence of American public culture.¹² As regards the importance of content, John Sweller, an Australian writer, has identified 'the modern myth' about instruction which suggests that because of the knowledge explosion and a limited capacity to remember, problem-solving techniques should receive greater emphasis in schools. In contrast to this prevailing view, he insists that our long-term memory capacity is enormous and its development would actually enhance reasoning abilities. He proposes, therefore, that schools once again encourage the acquisition of content knowledge rather than being solely focused on the teaching of skills.¹³

Whilst this range of new scholarship has challenged the progressive trend towards content-free education, it has yet to develop clear criteria for the selection of what particular facts need to be taught. As William McNeill has asserted, facts do not speak for themselves, or even arrange themselves accordingly, so there exists a need for a coherent framework for their selection.¹⁴ One major influence on the debate about this area has been the rise of postmodern thought. Allan Barcan, an Australian commentator on educational matters, has observed that postmodernism and an emphasis on vocational aims are two of the most prominent features of the current educational scene.¹⁵ Postmodernism grew out of the work of a number of French theorists, such as Jacques Derrida, and it has proved particularly influential in the USA and other English-speaking

¹¹ Ibid, p. 29.

¹² Ibid, pp. 99-100.

¹³ John Sweller, "Some Modern Myths of Cognition and Instruction", in *Teaching and Learning: The View from Cognitive Psychology*, edited by John B. Biggs, (Hawthorn, Victoria: ACER, 1991), pp. 71-83.

¹⁴ W.H. McNeill, *Arnold Toynbee*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 286, cited in Murray, "Introduction", to *ME*, p. vii.

¹⁵ Naomi Smith, ed. *Education and the Ideal: Leading Educators Explore Contemporary Issues in Australian Schooling*, (Epping, NSW: New Frontier Publishing, 2004), pp. 11-56.

countries.¹⁶ Postmodernism has also strongly influenced the increasing popularity of what are termed cultural studies. Greg Melleuish has argued that cultural studies are an outgrowth of Marxism, which has resulted in a focus on popular culture and which has also fostered an ignorance both of the past and of the rôle of religion within society.¹⁷ In particular, postmodernism has flourished in the intellectual climate of declining confidence in Western culture and its values. Dawson had earlier identified the ultimately destructive effects of this trend, when it manifested itself in the nihilism and pessimism of the intelligentsia of nineteenth-century Russia, and twentieth-century Germany.¹⁸

Postmodernism has attacked ‘high culture’, or the ‘Western canon’, as being a way of marginalizing the socially and economically disadvantaged and that, therefore, it is the means used by powerful groups, or individuals, to entrench their control of society. Thus, proponents of this view argue that educators need to address this problem by deconstructing these works of high culture and correspondingly, to emphasise the value of popular culture. In contrast to this view, Rowland has identified exposure to ‘high’ or ‘aristocratic’ culture, or to beauty, as important for the average person’s ability to achieve transcendence.¹⁹ Earlier, Dawson had maintained that the ugliness of modern life was a symptom of social disease and spiritual failure.²⁰

Some of the more recent trends in educational theory and practice can be traced back to earlier theorists such as Jean Jacques Rousseau and John Dewey. Rousseau, an eighteenth-century French philosopher, so emphasized the individual creativity of the child that in his most

¹⁶ Shelley Gare, *The Triumph of the Airheads and the Retreat from Commonsense*, (Sydney: Park Street Press, 2006). p. 133. This author asserts that the influence of deconstructionism and constructivism have impacted more in English-speaking countries, such as Australia and New Zealand, than in France.

¹⁷ Gregory Melleuish, “A World Without Humanities”, *Quadrant*, April, 2005, p. 19.

¹⁸ Dawson, “The Recovery of Spiritual Unity”, in *CEC*, p. 239.

¹⁹ Rowland, *CTT*, p. 168.

²⁰ Dawson, “Catholicism and the Bourgeois Mind”, in *DWH*, p. 213.

well known book, *Émile*, published in 1762, he argued against rote learning and advocated delaying the teaching of reading and the introduction of books until the age of twelve.²¹ Furthermore, according to William Payne, the effect of this book was to uproot whatever is traditional in education and religion.²² In particular, Rousseau's assertion that human nature is naturally good led to the idea that it is necessary to turn away from the restrictions of society and return to nature.²³ This contrasted with a traditional view of the need for the child to be socialized by society. Rousseau's belief that the child was naturally good and likely to flourish without external constraints would influence the progressive educational movement and, in particular, progressive schools such as Summerhill in England. During the 1950s, one of the most important books opposing this pedagogical conception was William Golding's, *The Lord of the Flies*, which traced the decline in behaviour of a group of children shipwrecked on an island and forced to live without the constraints of society.

Dawson identified John Dewey (1859-1952) as the other significant influence on modern education.²⁴ In particular, Dewey had criticized the educational philosophy of the early twentieth century for being dominated by a medieval conception of learning, where a high-priesthood of learning guarded the treasury of truth.²⁵ In contrast, Dewey argued for a complete transformation of education and for each school to construct an embryonic community life.²⁶ Joseph Clarence has stated that this idea of subordination to the needs of the community showed that Dewey did not believe that the purpose of education was to communicate knowledge, or to train scholars in

²¹ Jean Jacques Rousseau, *Émile: Rousseau's Émile or Treatise on Education*, edited by William Payne, (New York and London: D Appleton and Company, 1911), pp. 80-81.

²² William Payne, ed., *Rousseau's Émile or Treatise on Education*, (New York and London: D Appleton and Company, 1911), p. vii.

²³ Ibid, p. xix

²⁴ Dawson, *CWE*, p. 82.

²⁵ John Dewey, *The School and Society, in Dewey on Education: Selections with an Introduction and Notes by Martin S. Dworkin*, (New York: Teacher's College Press, Columbia University, 1959), pp. 46-47.

²⁶ Ibid, p. 49.

the liberal arts.²⁷ The influence of theories such as these that deny the rôle of memory and history has resulted in a situation where, according to Philip Rieff, ‘forgetfulness’ has become an intrinsic part of the curriculum in the higher education system.²⁸

The second area of difficulty is the decrease in religious knowledge and understanding. Steve Bruce has observed that although most British people still have a residual respect for religion, they have no direct connection to any church and their only ties with organised religion are through their infrequent attendance at rites of passage, such as baptisms or funerals and through their nostalgic fondness for Church buildings and hymns.²⁹ Digby Anderson has claimed that these low levels of regular Church attendance in Britain are also paralleled by a decline in religious knowledge.³⁰ Furthermore, he suggests that, whereas Christianity has been the basis for the major institutions of society such as the judiciary and the courts, this has been replaced by what he calls a vague international ‘human-rightism’, which may not be Christian and, thus, be anti-Christian.³¹ Anderson also observes that the difficulties faced by the Churches in Britain are often met with a response from the hierarchy, which by calling for optimism in response to the challenge of declining influence, fails to acknowledge that there really are serious problems caused by secularization.³² He goes on to develop the argument, which had earlier been expressed by Dawson, that society in the West has exhausted the social and moral capital that it had inherited from its Judaeo-Christian past.³³

²⁷ Joseph Clarence, “Christopher Dawson’s Analysis of Our Present Crisis”, in *La Salle Catechist*, (Autumn 1958), p. 257.

²⁸ Rieff, *My Life Among the Deathworks*, p. 107.

²⁹ Bruce, *God is dead: Religion in the Modern World*, p. 111.

³⁰ Digby Anderson, “Has Christianity been vanquished in Britain”, *The Religion Report* – Radio National ABC. <http://www.abc.net.au/m/talks/8.30/re/rpt/stories/s392827.htm>, (accessed October, 2001).

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*

Within Australia, there are difficulties in passing on religious knowledge. One survey indicated that significant numbers of Year Twelve Catholic school students found that religious education did not arouse great interest and that it took up too much time.³⁴ This may reflect that Year Twelve students rated the importance of their religious development significantly lower than other goals, such as performing well in end of year examinations.³⁵ When these figures are considered alongside the fact that 21 percent of Year 12 Catholic school students reported that what they had learnt in other school subjects had weakened or contradicted their Christian beliefs, it can clearly be seen that there is a need for a new approach in Catholic education.³⁶

II. Dawsonian analysis of educational problems

Dawson's analysis of a number of problems in Catholic education systems, particularly in the English-speaking world prior to 1960 still has relevance today. These problems included: the lack of a higher education framework; the limited impact of the literary revival; and, the lack of an alternative to the older classical humanities courses and the challenges presented by influential critiques of Christianity and Christian culture.

In particular, Dawson observed that the need for the Church to build up an entire education system within English-speaking countries meant that the emphasis was initially placed on primary schooling.³⁷ This was mainly due to the lack of financial resources in countries where Catholics were predominantly from the working class. This situation can be compared with Europe, where even in anti-clerical and secularist France, the Catholic Institute in Paris, although

³⁴ Marcellin Flynn and Magdalena Mok, *Catholic Schools 2000: a Longitudinal Study of Year 12 Students in Catholic Schools 1972-1982-1990-1998*, (Sydney, NSW: Catholic Education Commission, 2002), p. 281.

³⁵ Ibid, p. 109.

³⁶ Ibid, p. 243.

³⁷ Dawson, *CWE*, p. 130.

not permitted to confer degrees, established a well-regarded academic course.³⁸ There was also a Catholic University at Louvain in Belgium and one in Bavaria.

However, Dawson claimed that the Church in the USA, by maintaining separate schools, was actually the real defender of freedom, in contrast to the liberal democratic state's tendency towards totalitarianism through its emphasis on a common, single school and its desire to enforce a universal monopoly of teaching.³⁹ One of the most successful examples of a separate system was in Australia, where the Church managed to build a complete network of primary and secondary schools out of its own limited resources. However, the subsequent inroads of secularisation among Australian Catholics have led to questions as to whether there are theological and philosophical inconsistencies within the present system. Unfortunately, an understandable and necessary emphasis on competing with a secular system of education meant that religion was sometimes simply attached to a curriculum which either ignored, or refuted, the Catholic idea of education, history and culture, and the rôle and destiny of the human person.

The only way to resist this problem, therefore, was through an emphasis on higher education. The lack of such higher education led Dawson to believe that in English-speaking countries such as the USA, in spite of large Catholic populations there was a risk of people being Catholic in faith, but pagan in culture.⁴⁰ Dawson saw the solution to this problem as the development of higher education systems which could strengthen the resistance to the Leviathan of the all encompassing modern state. This was because the only part of the Leviathan that was vulnerable was its brain, which he suggested was small in comparison with its vast and armoured

³⁸One of the early measures taken by the Republican-dominated Chamber in the late 1870s was to remove the Catholic Institute's right to call itself a university and to confer degrees.

³⁹Dawson, "Civilization in Crisis", *CEC*, pp. 72-73.

⁴⁰Dawson, *CWE*, p. 187.

bulk.⁴¹ However, Dawson argued that there had been a failure to understand that higher education had been built on the spiritual roots of the life of a people.⁴² This failure had meant that culture had come to be seen as a sublimated abstraction, instead of a tradition which vivified the whole of society and which united the past and the present.⁴³ The answer to the problem lay in treating Western civilisation as a whole, in the same manner as the classicist dealt with ancient civilisation.⁴⁴

Furthermore, Dawson contended that the lack of a higher education system had contributed to a feeling of cultural and social inferiority among English-speaking Catholics. This inferiority was also the result of a number of historical and social factors, including Catholicism's minority position; the discrimination and exclusion from the wider culture which meant that schools usually could rely on no government assistance; and the fact that the socio-economic position of the mainly working class Catholic populations made it difficult to effectively fund separate primary, secondary and higher education systems.

In the English-speaking world during the first half of the twentieth century, there were a number of prominent literary Catholic converts. At a time when converts such as Evelyn Waugh and Graham Greene were widely read, Dawson noted the effect of religion on the literary world.⁴⁵ Joseph Pearce has stated that this Christian literary revival was an artistic and intellectual response to the predominant agnosticism.⁴⁶ However, whilst Dawson did not question the importance of this literary revival, he wrote that modern secular culture is 'sub-literary', as well

⁴¹ Dawson, "Civilization in Crisis", *CEC*, p. 74.

⁴² Dawson, "The Recovery of Spiritual Unity", *CEC*, p. 237.

⁴³ *Ibid*, p. 237-238.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p. 238.

⁴⁵ Dawson, "Civilization in Crisis", *CEC*, p. 74.

⁴⁶ Pearce, *Literary Converts*, p. xi.

as ‘sub-religious’, and that the literary world did not have the influence then that it had in Victorian times.⁴⁷ In contrast, he argued that the most powerful forces in the West were the great commercialised amusement industries.⁴⁸ Dawson believed that Christianity could not compete with these forces and, if it attempted to do so, that it risked sacrificing its own values.⁴⁹ Thus, it needed to accept its minority position and concentrate on developing greater spiritual and intellectual depth among those still practising their religion.⁵⁰ This point of view is similar to Pope Benedict XVI’s wish for the Church to strongly assert its own position within the general popular culture and to make use of what he terms ‘creative minorities’.⁵¹

According to Dawson, one of the main problems was that in both Catholic and Protestant countries Christian culture was ignored in an idealisation of classical antiquity.⁵² However, the decline of the old classical curriculum had meant that the Catholic system in particular, was left without integration and unity.⁵³ Dawson maintained that the solution to this educational problem was not solved by an exclusive focus on the Medieval era, as this failed to acknowledge that Christian culture existed before and after the Middle Ages.⁵⁴ Indeed, the old classical culture had provided an intellectual superstructure that was built on a common spiritual tradition and a religious education for the whole people.⁵⁵ Therefore, the modern problem had occurred because both the spiritual tradition - which in Catholic Europe was based on the liturgy and religious art, drama and mime and in Protestant Europe on the Bible and the catechism - and the classical tradition had disappeared. However, Kenneth Clark, the noted English art historian, maintained

⁴⁷ Dawson, “Civilization in Crisis”, *CEC*, p. 74

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Allen, *Benedict XVI*, p. 186.

⁵² Dawson, *CWE*, p. 131.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 134.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 131.

⁵⁵ Dawson, “The Recovery of Spiritual Unity”, *CEC*, p. 237.

that Protestant culture was itself based on an estrangement with the past.⁵⁶ He observed that one of the first impacts of the new Reformation culture was the destruction of images by men who owed nothing to history.⁵⁷

In particular, Dawson observed that the spiritual crisis of Western culture had occurred at the same time as immense resources and time were devoted to education, which, in a quest for universality, had sacrificed quality for quantity and led to a loss of independence as the state extended its control.⁵⁸ Whereas in the past, classical education had provided a common cultural framework for the educated across different countries, the effect of the nineteenth-century reformers, with their goal to widen the knowledge taught in schools and to focus on its more immediate practical application in terms of economic activity, had left no unifying intellectual bond.⁵⁹ Thus, a specialist such as a Russian biologist, an English atomic worker or an American social psychologist did not belong to any sort of spiritual or cultural community like the humanist republic of letters.⁶⁰ The age of classical humanist education had passed but Dawson believed that, unfortunately, a concentration on scientific specialism would not produce an educated person. Instead, he argued that the scientific person or technologist was not really an educated person, but had tended to become merely an instrument of the industrialist or the bureaucrat, like a worker ant in an insect society.⁶¹

This lack of unity in education according to Dawson, reflected a number of factors, including: the influence of nationalism; the separation of religion and culture, which had its beginnings in the Reformation period; and lastly, the fact that Western civilisation, instead of

⁵⁶ Kenneth Clark, *Civilization: A Personal View*, (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1982), pp. 118-119.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Dawson, "The Recovery of Spiritual Unity", *CEC*, p. 235.

⁵⁹ Ibid, p. 234.

⁶⁰ Ibid, pp. 234-235.

⁶¹ Dawson, *CWE*, p. 132.

being one civilisation among many, had been seen as civilisation in the absolute sense.⁶² Thus, Dawson believed that modern European studies had suffered both from an over-emphasis on nationalism, as well as from a vague cosmopolitan internationalism, which did not take into account the need to understand that Europe was based on a spiritual unity.⁶³ In particular, he argued that only if we understood Europe could we understand the modern world, as Europe was the crucial historical agent that had formed the modern world.⁶⁴

By the 1960s, however, Dawson saw some positive signs in a reaction against the nationalistic approach to history and culture, a renewed awareness of the particularity of Western civilisation, and a greater willingness to deal with the sectarian feuds which had divided Christendom. But, according to Dawson, the once confident belief in Western civilization as absolute and universal, and in the optimistic faith in progress, had been replaced by a new and debilitating collective doubt.⁶⁵ Recently, Richard Koch and Chris Smith have argued that this decline in optimism represents a danger for the future of the West.⁶⁶ Similarly, the present Pope, while still a Cardinal, commented upon an internal paralysis within Europe which has lost hope in its own future.⁶⁷

Even though the acceptance of the Christian faith is not a necessary corollary for the study of Christian culture, Dawson observed that in the twentieth century there emerged a fundamental critique of the moral ideals and psychological structure of Christian culture.⁶⁸ Pope John Paul II observed that this critique was rooted in Enlightenment thought, when the entire drama of

⁶² Dawson, "The Recovery of Spiritual Unity", *CEC*, pp. 238-239.

⁶³ Dawson, "Europe and the Seven Stages of Western Culture", *CEC*, p. 133.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p. 132.

⁶⁵ Dawson, "The Recovery of Spiritual Unity", *CEC*, p. 239.

⁶⁶ Richard Koch and Chris Smith, *Suicide of the West*, (London: Continuum, 2007), p. 182.

⁶⁷ Ratzinger, *Without Roots*, p. 66.

⁶⁸ Dawson, "The Recovery of Spiritual Unity", *CEC*, pp. 245-246.

salvation history was considered to have disappeared, and the human person could alone decide his own history and what was good and evil.⁶⁹ Consequently, the Pope argues that if people can decide for themselves what is good and evil, they can then determine that particular races, classes or groups of people are of less worth than others and can therefore be eliminated.⁷⁰ This type of thinking was evident in the actions of the German Nazis, or the Soviet Communists, and in our own day, in the legal extermination of the unborn.⁷¹ The English historian, Paul Johnson, maintained that these ideologies' influences on the history of the twentieth century represent the first distant views of a de-Christianized world.⁷² However, Dawson had been aware that even the democratic states provided a challenge for traditional religion as all ideologies, whether in the communist world or the non-communist world, sought to fill the sociological function of religion.⁷³

Dawson understood that the critique of Christian culture reflected a rejection of its moral process and an undermining of the central rôle of the individual conscience in the cultural process.⁷⁴ However, this breach was nothing less than a suicidal technique which would destroy both the moral conscience and the rational consciousness with which it was inseparably bound. The failure of different sides of the political and social debate to understand this issue is evident in his observation that,

Instead of going downstairs step-by-step, neo-paganism jumps out of the top-storey window, and whether one jumps out of the right hand window or the left makes very little difference by the time one reaches the pavement.⁷⁵

⁶⁹ John Paul II, Pope, *Memory and Identity: Personal Reflections*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2005), p. 11.

⁷⁰ Ibid, pp. 11-12.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Paul Johnson, *A History of Christianity*, (London: Penguin Books, 1990), p. 517.

⁷³ Dawson, *RWC*, p. 13.

⁷⁴ Dawson, "The Recovery of Spiritual Unity", *CEC*, p. 246.

⁷⁵ Ibid, p. 247.

Koch and Smith argue that a movement within Western culture toward collective suicide has been part of its history since 1914.⁷⁶ In contrast, these writers maintain the need for a focus on the importance of Christianity in the development of Western society.⁷⁷

Furthermore, Dawson maintained that the sociological and psychological change engendered by the acceptance of Christianity was neglected in the education system.⁷⁸ In reflecting the mid-twentieth century focus on Freudian psychology, Dawson wrote that religion was transferred from the sphere of the Id to that of the Super Ego, and that in the transference of the sense of guilt from the corporate responsibility of the blood feud to the individual conscience, a sense of sin and repentance was developed which in turn emphasised the importance of moral effort.⁷⁹ This meant that, in contrast to Hinduism, where Dawson argued that the breach with the focus on the Id did not take place, or with the regressive death impulse associated with Buddhism, moral activism became a feature of Western culture.⁸⁰

III. The Dawsonian solution to Catholicism's current educational problems

Dawson argued that education was of central importance to the rôle and mission of the Church when he maintained that, whilst the Church could accommodate itself to different political and economic systems, the right to teach was essential to its survival.⁸¹ Therefore, even though the challenge of modern secular culture could be partially solved by the religious leader, the philosopher and the statesman, Dawson stressed that the heaviest responsibility fell on the

⁷⁶ Koch and Smith, *Suicide of the West*, p. 3.

⁷⁷ Ibid, p. 28.

⁷⁸ Dawson, "The Recovery of Spiritual Unity", *CEC*, p. 242.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid, p. 243.

⁸¹ Dawson, "Civilization in Crisis", *CEC*, p. 73.

educationalists, as it was they who could supply the counter-balance to the centrifugal tendencies of specialisation and utilitarianism.⁸²

In particular, Dawson wanted the Church to engage with the world. Thus, there could not be the same detachment towards the modern crisis as that of the Hebrew prophets towards the collapsing world empires in the days of Nebuchadnezzar.⁸³ This was because, in spite of the secularization of the modern world, Catholicism's progenitive influence in regard to Western civilization over the previous fifteen hundred years meant that individual Catholics and the Church could not think of even a 'secularized' Europe in the same way as the Jews had thought of the Gentile world.⁸⁴ Dawson explained that there was a trend in Catholic thought, characterised by a type of Puritanism, which sought to withdraw from the world.⁸⁵ Even though this thought could be justified on Catholic principles as being the spirit of the Fathers of the Desert and of the Martyrs, it was an approach difficult to achieve in the climate engendered by the modern state.⁸⁶

Dawson viewed the term culture in the broader sense of being associated with anthropology and social history, rather than with the narrower focus of the English secular humanists such as the nineteenth-century poet, Matthew Arnold.⁸⁷ Dawson believed that Arnold's critical focus on the Protestant philistinism of the nineteenth century and the cultural degradation of this period had highlighted the effects of the divorce between religion and culture in English society.⁸⁸ However, the stable world that had been willing to accept the ethos of Christianity without accepting its beliefs, had been destroyed in the Great War and there were now new and more

⁸² Ibid, p. 235.

⁸³ Dawson, *CWE*, p. 170.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Dawson, "Civilization in Crisis", *CEC*, p. 81.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Dawson, *CWE*, p. 135.

⁸⁸ Dawson, "The Outlook for Christian Culture", *CEC*, p. 11.

destructive critiques of Christian beliefs.⁸⁹ Thus, in contrast to the earlier secular humanists, Dawson believed that our present Western culture could only be understood in the context of Christian culture. Furthermore, Dawson argued that as a people reared in a completely secular environment lacked an ideological key to understanding the past, a study of this Christian culture was even more necessary for them than for the Christian.⁹⁰ In spite of the vastness of the study, however, the average student can still draw upon the intellectual and spiritual riches of this tradition during his professional life.⁹¹

An ignorance about Catholic culture was related to the rise of secular systems of education. Writing in 1960, Dawson had asserted the importance of education for Christianity by observing that if there was no place for religion within schools, then there would be no place for it elsewhere.⁹² Furthermore, he argued that both the liberal and the totalitarian states had sponsored this trend and thus promoted the secularisation of modern culture.⁹³ Dawson maintained that an ignorance of the historical dimension of Christian culture had been one of the weaknesses of education. Therefore, in spite of a thorough knowledge of the principles of Thomist theology and ethics, there was a risk that these would remain theoretical, unless a student was able to understand how the behaviour and the way of life of Christians and of Christian society had been affected by Christian doctrines and ethical values.⁹⁴ Dawson was not inferring that positive theology (by which he meant knowledge of the Bible, the liturgy, the creeds, the Church Councils and outstanding saints such as Athanasius, Augustine and Thomas Aquinas) was unimportant, but

⁸⁹ John Gillard Watson, "From Secularism to Humanism: An Aspect of Victorian Thought", in *The Rôle of Religion in Modern European History*, ed. Sidney A. Burrell, (New York: Macmillan Company, 1964), p. 118. John Watson has argued that the spiritual crisis faced by intellectuals such as Arnold was a result of the challenge of Darwinian science to Victorian evangelism. p. 121.

⁹⁰ Dawson, *CWE*, p. 136.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² Dawson, "Civilization in Crisis", *CEC*, p.73

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ Christopher Dawson, "The Study of Christian Culture", in *Thought*, The America Press, (Winter 1960), p. 486.

rather that the student's understanding of this theology would be deepened and broadened by a parallel focus on Christian culture and history.⁹⁵

The difficulties in providing such a Christian Culture course were evident in Dawson's own experience in the 1950s, when contributing to an educational series on Europe for students aged between fourteen and sixteen years of age. Those responsible for this series had a number of criticisms of Dawson's contribution which included: his assessment of Lutheranism as having a revolutionary and anti-humanist character; his use of the term 'social unity', which was confused with political terminology; the fact that the study of communism took up too much space; and lastly, that no mention had been made of the birth and evolution of liberalism and modern parliamentary democracy.⁹⁶

For Dawson, the solution to the modern educational problem was to go beyond the liberal faith in progress, which had inspired the nineteenth century and, instead, to study Western Christendom as an objective reality and a spiritual whole. This would fulfil the same function as was given to the study of Graeco-Roman antiquity in the old classical humanist tradition. In replying to possible criticism of this approach by humanist scholars, Dawson observed that humanism had been transmitted, or even been created, by the Christian culture as evident in the importance of Erasmus and Vives and Grotius, as well as Quintilian and Cicero.⁹⁷ Indeed, he observed that a spiritual bridge had been built across the ages by men with a living tradition, such as Petrarch and John of Salisbury, Alcuin and Bede and Boethius and it was because of this

⁹⁵ Ibid, p. 493.

⁹⁶ Dawson Papers, "Correspondence on the History of Europe", (particularly letter of February 6th, 1958, from Dominique Le Bourg, Soci  t   Ode, Paris, to Christopher Dawson), Dawson Archives, Department of Special Collections, O'Shaughnessy-Frey Library, University of St Thomas, USA.

⁹⁷ Dawson, "The Recovery of Spiritual Unity", *CEC*, p. 240.

development that classical culture had passed into the life of Western man.⁹⁸ Furthermore, Régine Pernoud argued that this knowledge of classical thought in the Middle Ages did not lead simply to an imitation of the classical world, but rather to an awareness that this world contained treasures which could be drawn upon.⁹⁹

Dawson recognized that the main difficulty in realising his goal of studying European culture as a whole was that, in contrast to the classical curriculum's focus on two languages, literatures and histories, European culture had produced about twenty vernacular literatures and an even larger number of historical communities.¹⁰⁰ However, this difficulty could be solved by giving more attention to religious development and by realising that, in contrast to attempts to limit Christianity to a pious ideal, the Christian community of the past was a juridical fact, upon which was built the social organization of Western culture.¹⁰¹

Thus, it was necessary to develop a real understanding of the new spiritual world which had arisen since from the time of St Paul nineteen hundred years before, which, in conjunction with other factors such as the influence of classical thought and the impact of the barbarian tribes had created Western civilization.¹⁰² Dawson argued that any attempt to explain away this creative process, in the interests of modern nationalistic or political ideologies, deprived us of our cultural inheritance and of a realistic understanding of history.¹⁰³ Furthermore, those who wished to explain history in terms of material motives, or economic forces, needed to accept that

⁹⁸ Ibid. The historian Sidney Burrell has also argued that Christianity in the Latin West provided a bridge from the Graeco-Roman world to the present time and at the same time led Western political and social development through its own ethical direction and sense of morality. In Burrell, *The Role of Religion*, p. 9.

⁹⁹ Régine Pernoud, *Those Terrible Middle Ages: Debunking the Myths*, trans. by Anne Englund Nash, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000), p. 24.

¹⁰⁰ Dawson, "The Recovery of Spiritual Unity", *CEC*, p. 241.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid, p. 249.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

Christianity was one of the formative powers in medieval culture and had therefore influenced the whole course of Western history.¹⁰⁴ Dawson summed up the fundamental importance of Christianity for the future survival of the West when he declared that, “Christianity is the soul of Western Civilization, and when the soul is gone the body putrefies”.¹⁰⁵

Furthermore, Dawson asserted that the process of secularisation could be reversed by Catholics not only becoming aware of the concept of Christian culture, but by opportunities being provided for the study of Christian culture, either in Catholic or other institutions of higher education.¹⁰⁶ In particular, the Dawsonian solution to the current problem in Catholic education is based on a number of key themes including: the importance of education and an intellectual apostolate; understanding education as enculturation; the relationship between theology, history and culture; and, the unifying rôle of the spiritual element in culture, history and the development of Europe. Dawson maintained that the lack of understanding of the principle of spiritual unity, and of knowledge of the tradition of Christian culture had impacted on the individual Catholic’s ability to carry out an intellectual apostolate. Thus, whilst Dawson did not wish for Christianity to be merely for the learned and esoteric, there was nevertheless a need to be aware of the intellectual factor in converting society.¹⁰⁷ This would not be achieved by a reliance on philosophy, or even literature; for Dawson noted that society was generally philosophically illiterate and, therefore, that the remedy consisted in teaching religion in the widest sense of the word.¹⁰⁸ Consequently, this weakness in Catholic education systems led to a lack of appreciation for Catholic culture, and to the cultural inferiority of Catholics in the English-speaking world.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, p. 249.

¹⁰⁵ Dawson, *JN*, p. 98.

¹⁰⁶ Dawson, *CWE*, p. 99.

¹⁰⁷ Dawson, “Civilization in Crisis”, *CEC*, p. 74.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, p. 75.

However, the development of the Catholic college should not be to keep Catholics out of secular institutions, nor to separate them from society, but to bring back a consciousness of how the spiritual element was essential for the life and soul of true culture.¹⁰⁹ This meant an awareness that a civilization did not ultimately depend on its material resources and its methods of production, but on the spiritual vision of its greatest minds and the transmission of this by faith, tradition and education. Dawson further observed that if this unified spiritual vision was not transmitted to the community, then the people would perish and civilization would decay.¹¹⁰

Dawson observed that every turning point in European history had involved a change in education and that as we were living in a turning point in history, it was now time for a new movement of educational reform.¹¹¹ This meant that alongside an apostolate of action and of prayer, there was also an apostolate of study. In arguing against a type of intellectual laziness, he had written in the 1940s that whilst all Catholics understood the importance of prayer and all Englishmen the importance of action, both Catholics and Englishmen had tended to neglect the second intellectual arm and to undervalue the importance of thought.¹¹² Therefore, the real reason for the success of the new secularism was that Christians had tended to rely on good intentions and sound principles and had neglected to use the full power of the intellect.¹¹³

For this intellectual apostolate to be most effective, the Christians had to recover their cultural inheritance and communicate this to a neo-pagan, or sub-religious society.¹¹⁴ In contrast, a concentration on a solely utilitarian task in education meant that Christians had resembled the

¹⁰⁹ Christopher Dawson, *American Education and Christian Culture*, Address delivered at Manhattanville College of the Sacred Heart, Purchase, N.Y., (March 15, 1959). Original held by Department of Special Collections, O'Shaughnessy-Frey Library, University of St Thomas, USA, p. 5.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, p. 8.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Dawson, *JN*, p. 109.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Dawson, "Civilization in Crisis", *CEC*, p. 76.

man in the Gospel parable, who buried his talent in the earth for fear of losing it, whilst all of American higher education was suffering from the loss of that spiritual light and unity, which Christians possessed but did not communicate.¹¹⁵

According to Dawson, society in recent centuries had tended to ignore what he called the ‘super-rational’ level of spiritual experience, which was the sphere not only of religion, but also of the highest creative forms of cultural achievement and, instead, had insisted on a one-sided rationalism.¹¹⁶ This trend had only succeeded until the more sub-rational forces in modern mass culture began to dominate.¹¹⁷ He commented further that the spiritual vision of a society’s greatest minds and the manner in which this experience was transmitted to the community by faith, tradition and education, was far more important to a culture than its material resources.¹¹⁸ This concept of transmission of culture was one upon which Dawson would base his book, *The Crisis of Western Education*, in the 1950s. Indeed, Dawson saw the task of restoring the spiritual vision to education and to culture as being similar to a move from the circumference of a circle to its centre, so that the lost balance between the outer world of mechanised activity and the inner world of spiritual experience could be regained.¹¹⁹

Dawson also reiterated the need to understand this Christian culture not just in terms of a study of the Christian classics or literature, but rather as a culture with a definite sociological and historical reality.¹²⁰ This meant that students did not just need an encyclopaedic knowledge of the past, but more importantly, an awareness of the cultural process itself.¹²¹ Furthermore, this

¹¹⁵ Dawson, *American Education and Christian Culture*, p. 10.

¹¹⁶ Dawson, “Civilization in Crisis”, *CEC*, p. 77.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

¹²⁰ Dawson, *CWE*, p. 137.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

organic relation between theology, history and culture would be the integrative principle in Catholic higher education, which could replace the disappearing classical-humanist curriculum.¹²²

Dawson observed that one of the criticisms of such a Christian culture course by secularists was that it was only a type of religious propaganda.¹²³ However, he argued that Christians had a particular affinity with history, as the Christians of the past were still present as witnesses and helpers in the life of the Church today and that for Christians, the past could never be dead, since they believed the past and the present were united in the one Body of the Church.¹²⁴ This theme of the community of saints in Catholic history represented a *leitmotif* in Dawson's works and writings from his earliest years.

The manner in which the Christian faith and Christian life leaven and transform a social environment can be observed historically in their effect upon the Eastern-Roman Empire, which produced Byzantine culture, and upon the Latin and barbarian societies of Western Europe, which produced Western Christendom.¹²⁵ The broad nature of this study requires that Christian philosophy, Christian literature and Christian history be viewed as a co-operative study and be integrated in the manner of the old *litterae humaniores* at Oxford.¹²⁶ Furthermore, this study would be based on understanding that Christian culture is really the outer rim of a circle, whereas the centre holds the Incarnation and the faith of the Church and the lives of the Saints.¹²⁷ Dawson believed that the sacred tradition remained within Western culture like a river in a desert and that no matter how secularized the culture became, a genuine religious education could still change

¹²² Ibid, p. 138.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid, p. 139.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

the face of the world.¹²⁸ The real obstacle to this change was the failure of Catholics to realize the power and the depth of their own tradition.¹²⁹

The importance of an earlier Catholic understanding was significant in the development of Dawson's own thought. Thus, when commenting on his time at Winchester and Oxford, Dawson wrote that, whilst he did not learn much theology, he was affected by the fact that their institutional frameworks were Christian and that in their buildings, they preserved an impressive physical manifestation of the place of religion within higher education. This continuity with the Christian past, that extended to the time before the Reformation, meant that these places still exhibited a Catholic sensibility.¹³⁰ Dawson also observed that a better understanding of the Christian tradition as the spiritual source and moral basis of Western culture could be achieved by extending modern education, not so much in width as in depth, as ultimately the survival of Western culture depended on the Christian tradition rather than on the economic conflict between Capitalism and Communism, or the political conflict between Russia and America.¹³¹

Chapter Five of this work examined the rôle of European history in understanding our own heritage, and the challenge posed to this heritage by modern culture. Dawson had also highlighted how Europe had influenced the entire world through its politics and ideologies as well as its science and technology.¹³² Therefore, any movement towards a universal world history must first

¹²⁸ Dawson, *American Education and Christian Culture*, p. 10.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

¹³² Christopher Dawson, "The Relevance of European History", in *History Today*, vol. 6, no. 9, (September 1956), p. 615.

begin with 'a return to European history'.¹³³ This would allow a new historical analysis of the whole process of world change which charted the movement from West to East, and which identified the new factors which emerged at each stage of this process.¹³⁴ This analysis would allow an understanding that whilst the ancient tradition of the Catholic Church could be described as Western, because it was centred on Rome, the ancient metropolis of the West, nonetheless, it also had a universalist tradition, because of its origins in both the East and the West.¹³⁵ Bague observes that the independence of religion in relation to the political, meant that even when political ties were broken, Europe could transmit its religious content to other cultural domains.¹³⁶

Dawson expressed surprise that there was still debate among Catholic educators about the need for a Christian culture course.¹³⁷ Indeed, if the tradition of Western education and Western culture was to survive, a Christian culture course was needed to provide the essential understanding of how Western culture came to exist and what were the essential values for which it stood.¹³⁸ As Christian culture was essentially a sacramental culture which embodied religious truth in visible and palpable forms, it would also use art and architecture, music and poetry and drama, philosophy and history and literature for the communication of religious truth.¹³⁹ Rowland has written of the importance of these external manifestations of the essence of culture in forming a Catholic culture, and of the need to identify the negative and destructive trends evident within mass popular culture.¹⁴⁰

¹³³ Ibid, p. 607. When discussing the influence of Europe on world history Dawson decried the fact that whilst knowledge of the explorers such as Tasman and Dampier was widespread very few people knew of the great Jesuits, such as Matteo Ricci and Rudolfo Acquaviva, who had established cultural contacts between East and West during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. p. 608.

¹³⁴ Ibid, p. 615.

¹³⁵ Dawson, "Is the Church too Western", in *CEC*, p. 100.

¹³⁶ Bague, *Eccentric Culture*, p. 162.

¹³⁷ Dawson, *CWE*, p. 129.

¹³⁸ Ibid, pp. 129-144.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Rowland, *CTT*, p. 83.

Dawson envisaged that universities could help to solve the misunderstanding of the relationship between theology and culture by providing a coherent study of Christian culture, which would allow it to be viewed as an organic whole.¹⁴¹ The lack of unity and coherence within the American Catholic education system was a contributing factor to the cultural inferiority of Catholics, and this had occurred because of a lack of knowledge of the depth and breadth of Catholic culture and its formative influence on Western civilization. Furthermore, Dawson argued that this problem could be addressed if Catholics would only realize that in contrast to the pettiness and parochialism of other societies, they were members of a worldwide spiritual community, which had a tradition of spiritual wisdom deeper than anything that could be offered by the modern world.¹⁴²

The importance of the rôle of the university in this regard had been dealt with by Cardinal Newman in the nineteenth century, when he emphasized the importance of understanding the interrelatedness of all knowledge under the unifying force of the Divine.¹⁴³ Newman argued that this unity existed because the subject matter of all knowledge had resulted from the acts and works of the Creator.¹⁴⁴ This meant that as Christian culture expressed itself in philosophy, literature, art and music, and society and institutions, as well as in theology, all of these forms needed to be understood in relationship to each other.¹⁴⁵ In particular, Newman maintained that as all knowledge formed one whole, there could be no attempt to separate portion from portion or operation from operation.¹⁴⁶ Dawson defended this view as a necessary antidote to the schism

¹⁴¹ Ibid, p. 79.

¹⁴² Dawson, "Catholicism, Secularism and the Modern World", in *The Catholic Mind*, p. 267.

¹⁴³ Americo D. Lapati, *John Henry Newman*, (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1972), p. 64.

¹⁴⁴ John Henry Newman, *The Idea of a University*, (University of Notre Dame Press: Notre Dame, Indiana, 1982), p. 75.

¹⁴⁵ Lapati, *John Henry Newman*, p. 79.

¹⁴⁶ Newman, *The Idea of a University*, p. 38.

within Western education and the intellectual traditions, which had undermined the unity in education, religion and culture.¹⁴⁷

Dawson also wrote of the need to study the development of Christian culture in its three major phases, which he labelled Ancient, Medieval, and Modern; or Patristic, Scholastic and Humanist; or Byzantine, Gothic and Baroque.¹⁴⁸ This understanding counteracted a danger of focussing on one phase only of Christian culture such as occurred in the nineteenth-century Catholic revival's emphasis on medieval culture particularly that associated with the thirteenth century.¹⁴⁹ According to his daughter, Dawson believed that this focus characterised some of Maritain's work.¹⁵⁰ Dawson had also been very much influenced by the Baroque style of culture, and was concerned during the 1950s by the negative attitudes expressed toward this era.¹⁵¹

Indeed, Dawson believed that if Christians did not assert themselves on the cultural and educational level they faced a risk to their very physical existence.¹⁵² He regarded the field of higher education as a promising one, as a comparatively small amount of time and money could be more effective than great expenditure at a lower level, and because intellectual and spiritual freedom was likely to survive longest in this area.¹⁵³ Any Christian studies programme could thus be justified as an examination of one of the formative aspects of Western culture, and as a reflection on the need for modern society to reconnect with its psychological basis, and to restore its internal cohesion.¹⁵⁴

¹⁴⁷ Dawson, "Christianity and Western Culture", *CEC*, p. 90.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ Scott, *HHW*, p. 209.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 175.

¹⁵² Dawson, *RWC*, p. 81.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

Dawson's specific proposals for a Christian culture course:

At the present time, whilst Australian society is still debating about the substance and importance of history, there exists a unique window of opportunity for Catholic schools to implement a curriculum which is based on the Church's own tradition and history. In contrast to the Enlightenment focus on a threefold division into ancient, medieval and modern history, the students' understanding of the religious foundations of Western culture would unfold through an examination of the Dawsonian six stages of Christian culture. As regards the medieval period Dawson's attempt to offer a more nuanced and sophisticated reading of this period has also been paralleled by the French scholar, Régine Pernoud. She has argued that from the French perspective, this period could be divided into the Merovingian Frankish period, the time of the Carolingian dynasty, the feudal period, and finally, the real 'Middle Ages' up until the beginning of the Renaissance.¹⁵⁵

Dawson's six stages of Christian culture were the Apostolic Age, the Patristic Stage, the Formation of Western Christendom, the High Middle Ages, the age of divided Christendom, and finally, secularized Christianity. Dawson had written that in each of the six stages of the Church's history there were three phases, the first when the Church responded to a new situation with intense spiritual activity, the second when a new Christian culture was formed and the third, when the Church faced attacks from external or internal enemies.¹⁵⁶ However, even though Dawson's framework of six stages of Church history continues to have contemporary relevance, its content would need to have additions and modifications to take account of the broad range of scholarship and research that has occurred since the early 1970s. As well, Dawson's proposals could be adapted to both the primary and secondary school sectors. Hirsch has written about the

¹⁵⁵ Pernoud, *Those Terrible Middle Ages*, pp. 154-155.

¹⁵⁶ Dawson, "The Six Ages of the Church", *CEC*, p. 34.

importance of passing on the cultural heritage to young pupils between the ages of six and ten when their minds are particularly open to factual information.¹⁵⁷ Hirsch's insights highlight the fact that the Catholic school needs to use the period of primary schooling, when children's memories are most retentive and when they are most eager to learn about adult society, to teach religious and cultural literacy.¹⁵⁸

An education course based on the Dawsonian concept of multiple stages of Christian culture would enable major themes such as theology, cultural history and literature to be studied. An examination of the theological foundations of Christian culture could include a study of such areas, as the Incarnation as the centre of history and how the Church is the extension of the Incarnation in time. This study would introduce students to the riches of the Catholic liturgical tradition and further overcome the destructive sense of breach with this tradition that has occurred since the 1960s. A cultural history of the Christian tradition would further compensate for Australia's physical and historical emptiness of signs of Christian culture by a focus on art and architecture and literature.

The Apostolic Age

The first Age, between the first and the fourth centuries, was what Dawson called Primitive Christianity.¹⁵⁹ During this time Christianity was born and developed under the surface of pagan civilisation and eventually spread throughout the Roman Empire, with a particular strength in the Eastern Mediterranean.¹⁶⁰ However, Dawson was concerned that the historical and cultural

¹⁵⁷ Hirsch, *Cultural Literacy*, p. 28.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid, pp. 30-31.

¹⁵⁹ Dawson, "Europe and the Seven Stages of Western Culture", *CEC*, p. 141.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

background in the Greek and Roman world also needed to be studied.¹⁶¹ In particular, he observed that the Greek world, based in the Aegean, did not develop a consciousness of its European separation from the East until after the Persian wars. This time was also characterised by the development of the city-state, the Greek colonial expansion and the beginnings of Greek scientific and philosophical thought.¹⁶² Also this period saw the beginnings of the liberal tradition of education which influenced humanism, one of the central ideas in European culture.¹⁶³ This Greek influence was carried on through the agency of Rome and within six or seven hundred years, a world empire, administered by a common law and encompassing the whole of the Mediterranean world extending from the Atlantic to the Euphrates, was constructed.¹⁶⁴

This Graeco-Roman world would provide the environment for the first stage of the Church's history. Dawson maintained this period represented an archetype of spiritual creativity, where there was something absolutely new created.¹⁶⁵ During this time, in spite of the challenges associated with transferring the apostolate from the Jewish to the Gentile environment, and the fact that the Church remained without legal rights, Christianity was the most creative force in the culture.¹⁶⁶ Dawson described the Church during this time as a real society, with a sense of citizenship and a highly developed hierarchical order that appealed to the poorest members of

¹⁶¹ Dawson had also classified European history into seven broad phases; the first two being associated with the classical Mediterranean culture in the Greek and Roman worlds, the next three the central periods of Christian history and the last two characterized by secularisation and the subsequent disintegration of Europe in the twentieth-century wars, can parallel his six stages of Christian culture. His further refinement of these seven phases into the pre-Christian, Christian and post-Christian stages can still be useful in developing a Christian culture course. Similarly, the concept of three broad ages has been developed in a recent book by Philip Rieff, who has maintained that the first age was a pagan and mythical one, the second the Judaeo-Christian one, and the current one, which is post-Christian and based on transgression of the earlier Judaeo-Christian synthesis. In Rieff, *My Life Among the Deathworks*, pp. 4-6.

¹⁶² Dawson, "Europe and the Seven Stages of Western Culture", *CEC*, p. 134.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 136.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ Dawson, "The Six Ages of the Church", *CEC*, p. 35.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

society.¹⁶⁷ Recent historiography has added considerably to the knowledge of the Church during this early period. Thus, Rodney Stark has argued that Christianity often appealed to the better off sections of the population, who, by their influence in high places, were able to mitigate the persecutions of the Roman state.¹⁶⁸ Similarly, Brown has observed that by the third century, the number of well connected converts and the existence of a Christian gentry in Asia Minor refutes the modern myth that Christianity was solely a religion of slaves and simple folk.¹⁶⁹

In this period, Dawson also related the way in which major theologians such as Clement and Origen in the East and Tertullian and Cyprian in the West contributed to the full development of Christian culture in the first half of the third century.¹⁷⁰ Finally he maintained that the third and final phase of the Apostolic Age occurred during the last great Roman persecution under the emperor Diocletian, when the very existence of the Church was threatened.¹⁷¹

The Patristic Age

However, this was followed by one of the greatest victories of the Church when after Constantine's victory outside Rome, in AD 311, the persecutions ceased and the Church was legalized in the Edict of Milan. Before he died Constantine accepted baptism and became the first Christian emperor. In referring to the debate about whether this event was beneficial for the Church, the Australian Cardinal, George Pell, has argued that on balance, the consequences of Constantine's conversion were a blessing for the future evolution of Christendom.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁷ Dawson, *ME*, p. 35.

¹⁶⁸ Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity: How the Obscure, Marginal Jesus Movement Became the Dominant Religious Force in the Western World in a Few Centuries*, (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1997), pp. 46-47.

¹⁶⁹ Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom*, pp. 63-64.

¹⁷⁰ Dawson, "The Six Ages of the Church," *CEC*, p. 36.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷² Cardinal George Pell, "Constantine, the First Catholic Emperor", *Quadrant*, (September 2007), p. 56.

Furthermore, he contends that if Christians deny this fact, then they have succumbed to the perverse self-hatred which ignores the rôle of Christianity in forming the West.¹⁷³

In particular, Dawson observed that this second Age of Patristic Christianity between Constantine's legalization of the Church in the early fourth century and the sixth centuries witnessed the conversion of both parts of the Empire.¹⁷⁴ Dawson's classification of this era, which does not exclusively focus on the formal end of the Western Roman Empire in AD 476, predates the work of contemporary scholars on what is known as 'late antiquity'. This recent trend has allowed a more nuanced understanding of the continuities in the later Roman Empire and shown how the older senatorial and aristocratic families, represented by men such as Boethius and Cassiodorus, survived until well into the sixth century. Brown has observed that as these families still owned large estates and continued in rôles as bureaucrats and ambassadors, the end of the Roman Empire in the West was inconsequential.¹⁷⁵

However, whilst there may be a necessity to emphasize how much of the Roman way of life did continue despite the 'barbarian invasions', other historians have continued to identify the long-term effects of these events. Alessandro Barbero has identified the crucial impact on the Church occasioned by the Arian Goth's victory over the Roman and Arian emperor Valens, at the Battle of Adrianople, in AD 378.¹⁷⁶ Barbero has argued that this defeat, which had left large numbers of Arian Goth's within the Empire, influenced the next emperor, Theodosius, to declare

¹⁷³ Ibid, p. 56.

¹⁷⁴ Dawson, *CWE*, p. 141.

¹⁷⁵ Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom*, p. 194. Brown argues that it was not until the invasions of the Lombards in AD 568, that the world dominated by the senatorial aristocracy came to an end. p. 194.

¹⁷⁶ Alessandro Barbero, *The Day of the Barbarians: The First Battle in the Fall of the Roman Empire*, trans by John Cullen, (London: Atlantic Books, 2007), p. 8.

Catholic Christianity as the official religion, in AD 390.¹⁷⁷ In particular, this declaration publicly committed the Empire to Catholic Christianity, when it stated that,

We desire that all who fall beneath the sway of our imperial clemency should profess the faith which we believe has been communicated by the Apostle Peter to the Romans and maintained in its traditional form to the present day...¹⁷⁸

This period also marked the beginning of both Western Christendom and the Eastern, or Byzantine Empire, based on the new city of Constantinople.¹⁷⁹ Dawson noted that the alliance of Church and State in a Christian commonwealth, which was inaugurated by Constantine and Theodosius, would last for more than a thousand years and was to remain of fundamental importance until the present day.¹⁸⁰ This importance is recognized in Richard Southern's observation that the medieval social environment has continued to be a factor in European history and indeed still haunts the modern world.¹⁸¹

Dawson also emphasized the development of the liberal tradition in Western culture from this time. He had traced the rise of this tradition which emphasised the arts of rhetoric and style and grammar in ancient Athens and said that it resembled the influence of the Confucian tradition in China.¹⁸² Dawson identified this liberal tradition as 'humanism in search of a theology', and that this theology was eventually provided by the rise of Christianity.¹⁸³ Thus, a new learning which was Biblical and Theological and which created its own literature now appeared, and the new spiritual community created by Christianity brought into the Roman world and the Hellenistic culture a new religious doctrine and a new religious literature, which replaced the old

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Codex Theodosius, XVI,1,2. cited in Thomas Bokenkotter, *A Concise History of the Catholic Church*, (New York: Image Books, Doubleday, 2004), p. 62.

¹⁷⁹ Dawson, "The Six Ages of the Church", *CEC*, p. 37.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Richard Southern, *Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages*, (London: Penguin Books, 1970), p. 17.

¹⁸² Dawson, *CWE*, p. 6.

¹⁸³ Ibid, p. 8.

civic community.¹⁸⁴ Whereas in the Eastern part of the Empire an educational tradition which was both Christian and Greek was taught in the Palace School (or university) for a thousand years, in the West the situation became very different.¹⁸⁵ Here, after the fall of the Roman part of the Empire, the Church was left as the sole guardian and representative of Roman culture and Christian education within the new barbarian kingdoms.¹⁸⁶ Because the religious and moral ideals of these barbarian tribes were derived from the primitive heroic ethics of tribal society, the Church's main educational effort was a moral one, emphasising faith in Divine Providence and the moral and spiritual responsibility of the soul towards God.¹⁸⁷

During this period, the three Cappadocian Fathers, St. Basil, St. Gregory of Nazianus and St. Gregory of Nyssa, as well as St. John Chrysostom, a classical exponent of Scripture, were the major thinkers and theologians who developed the mind of the Church.¹⁸⁸ In addition, Dawson emphasised the importance of St. Augustine for his impact on the Church and society in the West, and of St Jerome, who was important for his historical and Biblical scholarship.¹⁸⁹ Richard Fletcher has argued that St. Augustine contributed to the further development of a trend in Western Christianity which was distrustful of secular culture.¹⁹⁰ This meant that whilst the East was characterized by harmony with the state, the West had potential for conflict and tension.¹⁹¹

Dawson's concept of the creative first phase of this Age is revealed not only in the achievements of the Fathers from St. Athanasius to St. Augustine, but also in the beginnings of the immense historical and spiritual influence of monasticism and in a new flowering of Christian

¹⁸⁴ Ibid, p. 9.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid, p. 10.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid, p. 11.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid, p. 37.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Fletcher, *The Conversion of Europe*, p. 28.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

art, architecture and liturgical poetry.¹⁹² The second phase of maturity in this Age was expressed in the art and architecture of such churches as St. Sophia's Cathedral in Constantinople, and the basilicas of Ravenna.¹⁹³ A contemporary writer William Rosen has argued that St Sophia's reflects the signature achievement of an entire age, in the same way as does St Peter's Basilica in Rome, Chartres Cathedral in France, Brunelleschi's cupola in Florence and Christopher Wren's St Paul's Cathedral in London.¹⁹⁴ Indeed, Dawson's focus on Byzantine art and architecture reflects his concern about the way in which modern history writing had tended to ignore the importance of the history and culture of the Christian Empire in the East.¹⁹⁵ However, Dawson argued that Byzantine culture represented a new creation and that it formed a background to the development of medieval culture.¹⁹⁶ The third phase of the Patristic Age was associated with the schisms of the subject nationalities in the East, and finally, the loss of the Christian East to Islam.¹⁹⁷ Rosen has argued that by undermining the Byzantine Empire, the plague which occurred during the reign of the Byzantine emperor, Justinian, was a major factor in the victories of Islam and also critical to the development of modern Europe.¹⁹⁸ Ultimately, Moslem armies would enter Europe through Spain and be stopped at Poitiers by Charles Martel, in AD 732. Le Goff has observed that the rise of Islam was important in the genesis of Europe as it heightened an awareness of the different culture and beliefs of Christendom.¹⁹⁹ Similarly, Davies has observed Islam's importance in turning Europe into Christianity's main base.²⁰⁰

¹⁹² Dawson, "The Six Ages of the Church", *CEC*, p. 38.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁴ William Rosen, *Justinian's Flea: Plague, Empire and the Birth of Europe*, (London: Jonathan Cape, 2007),

¹⁹⁵ Dawson, *ME*, p. 99.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

¹⁹⁸ Rosen, *Justinian's Flea*, pp. 322-333.

¹⁹⁹ Le Goff, *The Birth of Europe*, p. 25.

²⁰⁰ Davies, *Europe*, p. 257.

The Third Age: The Formation of Western Christendom

In the Third Age the social organisation of the Church in the West was affected by its transplantation from the cities of the Mediterranean to the coasts of the Atlantic and the North Sea.²⁰¹ Thus, in contrast to the older connection between bishop and city, the monastery became the real centre of Christian culture.²⁰² Dawson identified the relationship between religion and culture as being closer during this Age than at any other time.²⁰³ The flowering of Christian culture in the new lands was apparent both in St. Bede's work, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English Peoples*, and in the missionary work of the Anglo-Saxon missionaries such as St. Boniface, 'the Apostle of Germany'. Fletcher has argued that as well as remembering St. Boniface for his missionary work, there needs to be recognition of his rôle in the reform and vitalization of the Frankish churches and of his vigorous reinforcement of Roman loyalties and Roman order.²⁰⁴ Similarly, according to Dawson, St Boniface, by his foundation of an alliance between the Papacy, the Frankish monarchy and the Benedictine Order, helped to initiate the social order of Western Christendom in the next Age.²⁰⁵

Dawson also identified the enduring work in education and the liturgy carried out during the time of Charlemagne.²⁰⁶ Recent scholars such as Brown, have drawn attention to the development of a new, uniform and more readable script that has become known as 'Caroline miniscule'. As well, in contrast to the Roman period when words and sentences had not been separated, texts during this time were becoming 'user-friendly' by the use of punctuation such as capital letters and question marks.²⁰⁷ During this time the Church guarded its educational

²⁰¹ Dawson, "The Six Ages of the Church", *CEC*, p. 39.

²⁰² *Ibid.*

²⁰³ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁴ Fletcher, *The Conversion of Europe*, p. 212.

²⁰⁵ Dawson, "The Six Ages of the Church", *CEC*, p. 39.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁷ Peter Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom*, p. 445.

tradition so as not to be absorbed by the barbarian environment.²⁰⁸ Indeed, the Church had a direct utilitarian interest in the maintenance of the educational tradition. Thus, Latin grammar was still to be used by the Church, in spite of the need to convert the peoples from non-Roman backgrounds and diverse languages who lived in the forests of the North and on the remote islands of the Western ocean.²⁰⁹

The vehicle that both utilised this classical culture for the Church and diffused its ecclesiastical learning was the monastery, which was so important an influence in Ireland and Anglo-Saxon Britain.²¹⁰ This influence was evident in the apostolic endeavours of the English monks St. Boniface and Alcuin, and in the work of St Bede. Dawson claimed that the combination of the Graeco-Roman tradition of liberal education with the dynamic moral energy of Christianity produced the rapid flowering of a new Latin Christian culture in England, Germany and Ireland.²¹¹ This showed that Christianity was not a remnant of a dead past but a vital process, which was capable of producing new forms of culture.²¹²

Dawson also emphasized the importance of the Church as a bridge between the oriental and occidental tradition. This was most clearly revealed in the manner in which the Church acted as an intermediary between the Latin West and the peoples of Northern Europe; in the same way that Rome had earlier acted as the intermediary between Greece and the West.²¹³ Dawson constantly emphasised that the formative centre of Western culture was based on an alliance between the Frankish Empire (which included France, Belgium, and Western and Central

²⁰⁸ Ibid, p. 11.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Ibid, p. 12

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Dawson, "Europe and the Seven Stages of Western Culture", *CEC*, p. 138.

Germany), and the Papacy.²¹⁴ This new alliance had been symbolized in the coronation of Charlemagne by Pope Leo III, in Rome on Christmas Day, AD 800.²¹⁵

Derek Wilson has argued that it is difficult for the British to understand the importance of Charlemagne in developing a sense of European identity.²¹⁶ Le Goff has argued that Charlemagne's endeavours were the first of a series of attempts to build a Europe controlled by one people, or one empire, and that this trend would be evident in the careers of Napoleon and Hitler, whose projects were contrary to any true idea of Europe.²¹⁷ However, Dawson understood that the Carolingian period is important because of the emergence of a new social consciousness in Western Christendom, when a single standard of the Christian ethos was used as the basis for laws which dealt with the whole field of social activity in Church and state.²¹⁸

When the structure associated with the Carolingian Empire broke apart, the task of building Medieval Christendom would be continued by the Saxon Kings of Germany, the French feudal states and the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms in England.²¹⁹ This Age ended as it had begun, with external attacks by Vikings, Magyars and Saracens.²²⁰ The breakdown of society was evident when, in AD 909, the bishops at Rheim protested that,

The cities are depopulated, the monasteries ruined and burned, the land is reduced to a solitude. As the first men lived without law or constraint, abandoned to their passions, so now every man does what pleases him, despising the laws of God and man and the ordinances of the Church.²²¹

²¹⁴ Ibid, p. 139.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Wilson, *Charlemagne: Barbarian and Emperor*, p. 1.

²¹⁷ Le Goff, *The Birth of Europe*, p. 29.

²¹⁸ Dawson, *RWC*, pp. 80-81.

²¹⁹ Dawson, "Europe and the Seven Stages of Western Culture", *CEC*, p. 139.

²²⁰ Ibid, "The Six Ages of the Church", *CEC*, p. 40.

²²¹ Dawson, *RWC*, p. 120.

Finally, the Dawsonian notion that the Church used the old classical culture and the Latin language during this period in order not to be absorbed by the general culture has lessons for the contemporary period. However, the fact that this process occurred and therefore, that the Church used the old classical heritage and language to convert societies whose beliefs and practices were often so radically different from those of Christianity has been ignored in recent decades.

Fourth Age: The High Middle Ages

Dawson identified the next Age of the Church as beginning in about AD 1000. The view that the eleventh century witnessed a new epoch has also been recognized by contemporary historians such as Robert Bartlett, who describes this period as characterized by economic growth and dynamic cultural and social change.²²² This new spirit of optimism was also reflected in the words of the Cluniac monk, Raoul Gaber, who wrote that as churches were being rebuilt everywhere, but particularly in Gaul and Italy, one could have thought that the world itself was trying to shake off its ancient fustiness and everywhere be covered with a white mantle of churches.²²³

Dawson argued that the new centres of monastic reform, which were arising like islands of peace and spiritual order in the sea of feudal anarchy, were immensely important for the development of Western Europe.²²⁴ One of the most important reform movements was to be centred on the new monastery of Cluny which, by its alliance with the Papacy, was to free the Church from dependence on the feudal state.²²⁵ The central figure in the Cluniac reform was St Hugh. William Chester Jordan has shown how St Hugh's creation of a network of ties that

²²² Robert Bartlett, *The Making of Europe: Conquest, Colonization and Cultural Change 950-1350*, (London: Penguin Books, 1994), p. 3.

²²³ Le Goff, *The Birth of Europe*, p. 42.

²²⁴ Dawson, *RWC*, pp. 125-6.

²²⁵ Dawson, "The Six Ages of the Church", *CEC*, p. 40.

transcended local loyalties meant that his great Burgundian abbey and its many daughter houses, was to directly or indirectly affect the entire monastic movement in the West.²²⁶ John Roberts has identified the sense of independence from the secular power that the Cluniac reform sponsored, as representing an important development in Western culture, especially through its impact on Pope Gregory VII.²²⁷ Thus, he described the Investiture conflict with the Holy Roman Emperor, Henry IV, as the beginning of the tensions between the spiritual and lay powers that would result in the freedom and liberty which came to characterize the West.²²⁸

Besides Pope St. Gregory VII, Dawson also identified St. Anselm and St. Bernard as other major figures during this time.²²⁹ Dawson also asserted that the greatness of the medieval Papacy was to be most clearly revealed by the fact that it accepted the new religious movements of St. Francis and St. Dominic as an effective means of evangelising the mass of the population, in spite of the fact that in many ways, these orders marked a drastic breach with the traditional order.²³⁰ These religious orders were also instrumental in promoting the new intellectual and scientific discipline on which later achievements of Western culture were dependent.²³¹ However, whilst high clerical education was being transformed by the study of Aristotle's works and by the universities, lay education and literature was undergoing a parallel process of change which was to transform the barbarian feudal warrior into the medieval knight.²³² In particular, this new code of chivalry associated with the medieval knight was to have a major influence on the vernacular tradition of the West.

²²⁶ William Chester Jordan, *Europe in the High Middle Ages*, (London: The Penguin Press, 2001), p. 1.

²²⁷ John Roberts, *The Triumph of the West*, (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1985), p. 100.

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Dawson, "The Six Ages of the Church", *CEC*, pp. 40-1.

²³⁰ Ibid, p. 41.

²³¹ Dawson, *RWC*, p. 189.

²³² Dawson, *CWE*, p. 21.

By the end of the fourteenth century, however, the medieval synthesis was breaking down and by the end of the Middle Ages European culture was to be increasingly influenced by the humanist culture associated with Renaissance Italy, rather than by the philosophical and scientific studies of Paris and Oxford.²³³ Dawson believed that this development was to have a profound effect on Western culture for five hundred years. However, he argued that by the twentieth century this secular and humanist culture and its associated aristocratic civilisation, which found its unity in external and superficial things, could no longer satisfy the deeper needs of man's spiritual nature.²³⁴

Dawson described how the next stage of an international society of Christendom expressed itself in the Crusades (which was an international enterprise against Christendom's enemies), in the religious orders, and in the new universities such as Paris and Bologna.²³⁵ The accusation that the consequences of the Crusades were overwhelmingly negative has been a feature of historical writing from the time of Gibbon and David Hume up until the time of the twentieth-century historian Sir Steven Runciman.²³⁶ Recently, Le Goff has argued that the overall effect was negative for Europe, as it heightened the rivalry between Christian states and widened the gap between Western and Eastern Europe.²³⁷ However, Thomas Madden has argued that the Crusades kept Islam on the defensive and bought time both for the Byzantine Empire until 1453 and for Europe as well.²³⁸ As well, Piers Paul Read argues that negative perceptions of the Crusades

²³³ Ibid, p. 25.

²³⁴ Dawson, *ME*, p. 255.

²³⁵ Dawson, "Europe and the Seven Stages of Western Culture", *CEC*, p. 141.

²³⁶ Piers Paul Read, *The Templars, The Dramatic History of the Knights Templar, the Most Powerful Military Order of the Crusades*, (London: Phoenix Press, 2001), p. 310.

²³⁷ Le Goff, *The Birth of Europe*, p. 97.

²³⁸ Thomas Madden, *A Concise History of the Crusades*, (New York: 1999), pp. 213-215, cited in John Vidmar, *The Catholic Church Through the Ages: A History*, (New York: Paulist Press, 2005), p. 130.

reflect the anti-Catholicism of the post-Enlightenment period, which ignores the fact that Islam, not Christianity, promoted conversion by conquest.²³⁹

During this time Dawson states that Europe's cultural unity was at the same time expressed in the use of Latin for the liturgy, in a common conception of religious art, and in common ideals such as those connected with chivalry.²⁴⁰ The importance of the Papacy for the development of this liturgical uniformity has been analysed by Robert Bartlett, who has argued that Latin Christendom became characterized by an equation between liturgical practice and institutional loyalty.²⁴¹

At the end of the Middle Ages, the Eastern Empire, under pressure from the Ottoman Turks, had begun to decline and the cultural leadership started to shift westwards to the Italian city states.²⁴² However, in the West, the medieval synthesis began to disintegrate as northern Europe turned against the Papacy, which was itself becoming more and more an Italianised patron of the new humanist culture.²⁴³ In the next Age of the Church, Europe would become a society of sovereign states, where the temporal power of the prince either abolished or severely diminished the spiritual power of the universal Church.²⁴⁴

In the last phase of the High Middle Ages, the Church faced a major crisis associated with the Reformation, the new Renaissance culture of Italy, and the external attacks of the Muslims in the East.²⁴⁵ Its response, which characterized the next Age, would be to introduce the Tridentine

²³⁹ Read, *The Templars*, p. 310.

²⁴⁰ Dawson, "Europe and the Seven Stages of Western Culture", *CEC*, p. 141.

²⁴¹ Bartlett, *The Making of Europe*, p. 243.

²⁴² Dawson, "Europe and the Seven Stages of Western Culture", *CEC*, p. 142.

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Dawson, "The Six Ages of the Church", *CEC*, p. 42.

Reforms and to co-operate with and foster the revival of religious orders.²⁴⁶ The challenges to the West resulting from the Islamic capture of Constantinople in 1453, and the battles of Lepanto in 1571 and Vienna in 1683, are also important in developing an understanding of this era. Niccolò Capponi, a contemporary Italian historian has argued that the Battle of Lepanto was a critical factor in the survival and future success of Europe and that its consequences continue to be a factor in the interactions between Islamic nations and the West.²⁴⁷

Divided Christendom

Dawson entitled the next Age, between about 1500 and 1750, as *Divided Christendom*. The Church was faced by the rise of nationalist states, and such powerful dynasties as the Tudors in England and the Bourbons in France. The distortion of the historical narrative during this time has also been a particular problem for Catholics within Australia, where the historiography has reflected the predominant English view that the Reformation was a positive and progressive development. However, this period witnessed the destruction of a Catholic culture in England which, as part of 'Christendom', dated back to the time of St Augustine's mission to Kent in AD 596. According to Norman Davies, the Reformation period saw the imposition of a new form of 'Caesaro-papism' by Henry the VIII, whom he describes as 'the Ivan the Terrible of the West'.²⁴⁸ The resistance to Henry VIII's break with Rome was revealed in the deaths of St. Thomas More and St. John Fisher and the less well known Charterhouse monks. The Charterhouse monks were executed in appalling circumstances in 1535, as they refused to take the Oath of Supremacy acknowledging the king as Supreme Head of the Church in England.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ Niccolò Capponi, *Victory of the West: The Story of the Battle of Lepanto*, (London: Pan Books, 2007), p. vii.

²⁴⁸ Davies, *The Isles: A History*, p. 458.

²⁴⁹ Robinson, *The Mass and Modernity*, pp. 292-293.

G. W. Bernard has also identified the beginnings of broader resistance to the policies and actions of Henry VIII during 1536.²⁵⁰ In particular, Bernard has argued that some historians have sought to minimize the rôle that religion played in the northern rebellions of 1536.²⁵¹ However, the fact that in the Pilgrimage of Grace in 1536, the participants chose to wear the crusading emblem of the five wounds of Christ indicates that religious conviction rather than the fiscal or social concerns were the real reason for the rising.²⁵² The failure of this uprising was to lead to the final suppressions of all the monasteries and the destruction of shrines, so that by 1540, such features of a Catholic culture were effectively ended. The effects of these changes were to be described during the early nineteenth century by the Protestant writer, William Cobbett, as representing a disfigurement of the physical landscape and the destruction of an entire system of economic and social support for the poor.²⁵³ Régine Pernoud has also identified the increasing power of the state in Catholic countries such as France during this time, particularly after the Concordat of Bologna in 1516.²⁵⁴ The effects of this were such that for four hundred years, from the sixteenth until the twentieth century, all bishops and all abbots of monasteries were named by the heads of state, even by such Third Republican and anti-clerical politicians as Jules Ferry.²⁵⁵

However, in spite of the challenges occasioned by the rise of powerful nation states the Church used the aesthetic and architectural riches of the Baroque culture to reclaim many areas lost to the Reformation. In his book, *Civilization*, written in 1969, Kenneth Clark, although positive about the artistic achievements of the Baroque, suggests that these were based on illusion

²⁵⁰ G. W. Bernard, *The King's Reformation: Henry VIII and the Remaking of the English Church*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), p. 292.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Ibid, p. 333.

²⁵³ William Cobbett, *A History of the Protestant Reformation in England and Ireland*, (New York: Benziger Brothers, Inc. nd.), (First published ca.1824), pp. 137-150.

²⁵⁴ Pernoud, *Those Terrible Middle Ages*, p. 132.

²⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 133.

and exploitation.²⁵⁶ However, Dawson had a high regard for this period as it had influenced his own conversion. He argued that the Baroque culture reflected a successful fusion of the humanist Renaissance tradition with the Catholic revival. It was accompanied by the development of Catholic mysticism which in turn influenced art and literature.²⁵⁷ A renewed interest in this period of early modern Catholicism has been evident in R. Po-Chia Hsia's book, *The World of the Catholic Renewal* (1998), and in Michael Mullett's work, *The Catholic Reformation*, which was published in 1999.²⁵⁸

Although the disunity of Europe was a tragedy for Christendom, Dawson notes some common language and thought was maintained in the new humanist culture, particularly in the educational area.²⁵⁹ The triumph of this humanist culture was evident in the new academies, and in the Jesuit colleges and English public schools, and in the literature produced by Shakespeare, Milton and Goethe.²⁶⁰ As regards the Jesuit colleges, Richard Tarnas has identified the way in which they used a full humanistic program from the Renaissance and classical era in order to develop a scholarly 'soldier of Christ'.²⁶¹ Thus, humanist culture was greatly influenced by Christian thought, and figures such as Sterry and Trahome and Herbert and Vaughan in England, and the French humanist scholar, Yves, were keenly aware that they were heirs of both classical antiquity and of Christian thought.²⁶² Indeed, Dawson argued that from Petrarch to Milton, the

²⁵⁶ Clark, *Civilization*, p. 136.

²⁵⁷ Dawson, "The Six Ages of the Church", *CEC*, p. 42.

²⁵⁸ R. Po-Chia Hsia, *The World of the Catholic Renewal 1540-1770*, New Approaches to European History, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), and Michael A. Mullett, *The Catholic Reformation*, (London: Routledge, 1999).

²⁵⁹ Dawson, "Europe and the Seven Stages of Western Culture", *CEC*, p. 143.

²⁶⁰ Dawson, *CWE*, p. 27.

²⁶¹ Richard Tarnas, *The Passion of the Western Mind: Understanding the Ideas That Have Shaped Our World*, (New York: Ballantine Books, 1991), p. 247.

²⁶² Dawson, *CWE*, p. 42.

main tradition of Western culture was represented by the Christian humanists, who continued to dominate areas such as education, literature and art.²⁶³

However, this Age would be finally ended during the time of the Enlightenment. Dawson argued that, as the men of the Enlightenment had rejected the idea of mystery, and done their best to eliminate and ignore everything that was irrational and obscure, and to explain away the problem of existence, they only lived on the surface of life.²⁶⁴ Paul Johnson has argued that these secular intellectuals, by creating their own orthodoxies, have often generated the many irrational and destructive trends in the modern world.²⁶⁵

However, Dawson suggested that in spite of the influence of philosophers on the elites of society, new trends were emerging in education for the general population, as shown by the work of the de La Salle brothers in France and the Pietists in Germany.²⁶⁶ This meant that the world associated with the Enlightenment, and that associated with the religious educational ideal, differed markedly in France between on one side the new orders, like those of St. John Baptist de la Salle and St. Louis Gregoire de Montfort, and on the other, the Encyclopaedists. Similarly a contrast was revealed in England between the culture associated with the Evangelical revivalists, such as William Law and the Wesley's, and that of the thinkers, such as Chesterfield and Gibbon and Horace Walpole.²⁶⁷ However, some of the greatest changes in education would come from Germany, where figures such as Lessing, Kant, Herder, Richte and Fichte were all influential on European systems.²⁶⁸

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ Christopher Dawson, "Religion in the Age of Revolution", in *The Tablet*, vol. 168, (1936), p. 266.

²⁶⁵ Paul Johnson, *Intellectuals*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1988), p. 342.

²⁶⁶ Dawson, *CWE*, p. 59.

²⁶⁷ Ibid, p. 60.

²⁶⁸ Ibid, p. 62.

Finally, Dawson explained that the close identification with the absolutist monarchies was a danger for the Church, which would be revealed in the destruction associated with the French Revolution.²⁶⁹ After the destruction of the religious orders, the monasteries and the universities, Dawson observes that secular opinion could simply classify the Catholic Church as a superannuated relic of the dead past, which had now been abolished.²⁷⁰

The Sixth Age: Secularized Christendom

The Sixth Age, which began at the end of the eighteenth century, saw the secularisation of Western culture, a process initially carried out by a stylised aristocratic culture based on the courts.²⁷¹ Indeed, the rapid secularization and change in the character of Western culture occurred as the culture of the courts became stronger, and the culture of the Churches became weaker.²⁷² It can be argued that the Church's attitude to *Action Française*, the nationalist and monarchist French movement in the early part of the twentieth century, reflected the memory of the influence of the absolutist monarchies, particularly the Bourbons, in a range of areas, such as the dissolution of the Jesuits and the championing of a Gallican type of Catholicism. The principal historian of this movement, Bainville, may have seen this period as the high point of French influence and prestige, but the Papacy, particularly in the 1920s, which wished to focus on the need for European peace and co-operation after the Great War, viewed the age of the absolutist monarchies and the associated balance of power politics and diplomacy from a far more critical perspective.

²⁶⁹ Ibid, p. 43.

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

²⁷¹ Ibid, p. 144.

²⁷² Ibid.

Dawson argued that after the Enlightenment, the denial of traditional religious expression meant that there was the development of a kind of counter-religion, inspired by an irrational faith in reason and by a boundless hope for the progress of humanity, which was to be subsequently expressed in the Declaration of the Rights of Man.²⁷³ This view of modern culture as reflecting an alternative ontology is similar to the thought of the contemporary 'Radical Orthodoxy' group of scholars. An understanding that Enlightenment thought represents a type of counter-religion, rather than being an expression of a neutral and autonomous culture, is an important step in the process of developing new catechetical and educational approaches which could be utilised in dealing with its accompanying cultural manifestations.

Dawson wrote that the combination of English ideas of empiricism and the scientific method associated with Roger Bacon, and the French rationalism of Descartes within France ushered in the Age of Enlightenment.²⁷⁴ Dawson also observed that the old order, particularly in France, with lawyers against the clergy, the Gallicans against the Ultramontanes and the Jansenists against the Jesuits, was divided among itself.²⁷⁵ This development allowed the philosophers and their political allies to more swiftly bring about the dissolution of the Jesuit order which was one of the chief organs of Catholic culture.²⁷⁶ According to Simon Schama, an appeal to the same kind of Gallican sentiment which had justified the expulsion of the Jesuits would be used in the nationalization of the Church's property during the Revolution.²⁷⁷ The end of the old system was complete when the twenty-two universities of France, including the oldest, the University of Paris, were dissolved by the French Revolution.²⁷⁸ When Napoleon re-established the education system after the French Revolution, it would be a unified one under

²⁷³ Dawson, *GR*, p. 67.

²⁷⁴ Dawson, *CWE*, p. 53.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid*, p. 54.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid*, p. 55.

²⁷⁷ Simon Schama, *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution*, (London: Penguin Books, 1989), p. 484.

²⁷⁸ Dawson, *CWE*, p. 55.

secular and state control and, as a result, the Church would spend much of the nineteenth century attempting to re-establish a viable and coherent system of secondary and higher education.²⁷⁹

During the Sixth Age the Church had to rebuild after the destruction and chaos of the Revolutionary period.²⁸⁰ This was difficult because the Church was still associated with the politics and tradition of the *ancien regime*.²⁸¹ Dawson observes, however, that the rebuilding of the resources of the Church was so successful that by 1850, the Church was in a stronger position than it had been one hundred years before, because of its re-establishment in England, its expansion in America and its revival in Europe.²⁸² Philip Mansel has observed that by the 1830s in France, this revival was evident in the increasing numbers attending Lenten sermons at Notre Dame and indeed by the fact that Catholicism was becoming fashionable again.²⁸³ In particular, Dawson observed that this Age was influenced by the model of the Church in America, which was characterized by an independence from the state.²⁸⁴

Dawson also identified that the triumph of liberalism and nationalism in Europe was unfortunately accompanied by the decline of the freedom of the churches to maintain and run their own schools and universities and by the parallel assertion of a state monopoly in education.²⁸⁵ Newman had earlier observed that liberalism expressed the spirit of the age and by its anti-dogmatic tendency was antagonistic to the rôle of the Church.²⁸⁶ However, Dawson notes the two major exceptions to liberalism's restriction of the Church were in England and the United

²⁷⁹ Ibid, p. 56-57.

²⁸⁰ Dawson, "The Six Ages of the Church", *CEC*, p. 43.

²⁸¹ Ibid, p. 43.

²⁸² Ibid.

²⁸³ Philip Mansel, *Paris Between Empires: Monarchy and Revolution*, (London: Phoenix, 2001), p. 305.

²⁸⁴ Dawson, "The Six Ages of the Church", *CEC*, p. 44.

²⁸⁵ Dawson, *CWE*, p. 66.

²⁸⁶ Ian Ker, *Newman and the Fullness of Christianity*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), p. 34.

States.²⁸⁷ In England, a tradition of voluntarism and the lack of a centralised authoritarian state meant that there was more independence at both university and school levels.²⁸⁸ Dawson also referred to the influence of Matthew Arnold, who, during the period from 1865 to 1886, ensured that the ideals of Christian humanism rather than those of political nationalism were retained in the new state system.²⁸⁹ In doing this, Arnold was reacting against both a narrow philistinism which characterized many British evangelical Protestants, and a sole focus on utilitarianism in education, and instead arguing for a study of the humanities which would allow the study and pursuit of perfection.²⁹⁰

Dawson also observed that it was during this sixth stage of European culture that the ancient regimes of Europe were finally destroyed.²⁹¹ At first it had appeared that the Congress of Vienna would be successful in establishing a new European harmony.²⁹² Indeed, Dawson maintained that it was more successful than the subsequent attempts at Versailles in 1919, or San Francisco in 1944-45.²⁹³ However, the settlement at Vienna failed because of the lack of recognition of the need for a common spiritual principle which would be strong enough to overcome the centrifugal forces in European culture.²⁹⁴ This Dawsonian understanding and recognition of the spiritual factor is an important addition to the present debate about the unity of Europe and a contrast to the sole focus on economics. Thus, whilst Dawson believed that external pressures by the super powers such as the USA or Russia might make the Europeans realise their need for internal unity, the answer did not lie in an emphasis solely on the political issue of federation, or indeed economic organisation, but in an awareness of the importance of preserving

²⁸⁷ Dawson, *CWE*, p. 67.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

²⁹⁰ Melleuish, "A World Without Humanities", *Quadrant*, (April 2005), p. 18.

²⁹¹ Dawson, "Europe and the Seven Stages of Western Culture", *CEC*, p. 146.

²⁹² *Ibid.*

²⁹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 146-147

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 147.

the spiritual inheritance and common purpose of Western civilisation.²⁹⁵ The contemporary writer Remi Brague has maintained that an understanding of Europe as a cultural reality cannot be based solely on pure ideas, but needs a sane, concrete basis, particularly where the culture impinges on the political domain through education.²⁹⁶

Writing in the 1950s, Dawson saw the period from 1914 as one of disintegration, when the rise of the new totalitarian states and the outcome of the Second World War saw the division of Europe into two distinct parts.²⁹⁷ The historian, Michael Burleigh, has argued that although Russian communism was characterized by a militant atheism, it actually was itself a political religion.²⁹⁸ Burleigh has identified that the persecution of the Orthodox Church was part of an attempt to make a permanent psychological and cultural break with the old order.²⁹⁹

One debate that has grown in recent years about the period of Nazi rule in Germany, concerns the supposed silence of Pope Pius XII. However, in opposition to accusations of a supposed complicity between the Nazis and the Vatican, a recent work by Dan Kurzman has claimed that Hitler and the Nazis hated Catholicism and towards the end of the War were planning to kidnap and perhaps kill Pope Pius XII.³⁰⁰ As well, Burleigh has observed that there was no Catholic equivalent of the Nazi-Protestant movement with its six hundred thousand members, and that indeed a number of the most eminent theologians, such as Romano Guardini and Engelbert Kreb, lost their positions at universities during the Nazi era.³⁰¹ These dismissals occurred during a time when large numbers of academics, including most German historians,

²⁹⁵ Ibid, p. 151.

²⁹⁶ Brague, *Eccentric Culture*, p. 180.

²⁹⁷ Dawson, "Europe and the Seven Stages of Western Culture", *CEC*, pp. 148-149.

²⁹⁸ Burleigh, *Sacred Causes*, p. 40.

²⁹⁹ Ibid, p. 51.

³⁰⁰ Dan Kurzman, *A Special Mission: Hitler's Secret Plot to Seize the Vatican and Kidnap Pope Pius XII*, (Cambridge MA.: Da Capo Press, Perseus Books Group, 2007), p. ix-x.

³⁰¹ Burleigh, *Sacred Causes*, p. 176.

supported the Nazi movement.³⁰² Burleigh has also observed that Catholicism's strong belief in Natural Law doctrines underpinned its opposition to the eugenics policies of the Nazis. Furthermore, he maintains that this opposition was helped by the Church's authoritarian and international character, ironically, the two areas usually condemned by liberals.³⁰³ The particular challenge that totalitarian systems, whether of the left or the right, presented for the Church needs to be considered in any educational course.

Dawson believed that any decline in Europe would have serious consequences for world civilisation because of its influence not only in commerce and industry, but also in science and thought.³⁰⁴ In fact, the division in Europe was not so much a result of centuries of decay and stagnation but of the deeper division caused by the three revolutionary movements of liberalism, socialism and nationalism, which meant that the deeper spiritual foundations of Western culture were forgotten or rejected.³⁰⁵ This denial of the memory of Western culture was to mean that the movement which had begun with the worship of liberty and the Declaration of the Rights of Man had finished in the Soviet gulags and the Nazis concentration camps and in the collective suicide of total war.³⁰⁶ In particular, Dawson argued that Western civilization's ability to change the world, to widen the frontiers of human knowledge and to extend the range of human activity, without losing the continuity of its spiritual tradition and the community of its moral values was due to the persistence of its dynamic purpose, which contrasted with the unchanging pattern of institutions and customs in Eastern cultures.³⁰⁷

³⁰² Hans Schleier, "German historiography under National Socialism: Dreams of a powerful nation-state and German Volkstum come true", trans. by Stefan Berger in *Writing National Histories*, eds. Berger, Donovan and Passmore, p. 176.

³⁰³ Burleigh, *Sacred Causes*, p. 180

³⁰⁴ Dawson, "Europe and the Seven Stages of Western Culture", *CEC*, p. 149.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 150.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 151.

In analysing Church history in this manner, Dawson considered that the traditional three-fold division of history into ancient, medieval and modern could not explain the multiplicity and variety of the life and history of the Church.³⁰⁸ He believed that the study of history should have an internal principle of organic unity which would help to explain common factors such as monasticism, universities and even constitutional monarchy, and also the development of the spiritual archetypes which formed the character of the Western person.³⁰⁹ Finally, Dawson maintained that it was imperative and necessary to make an express study of the religious element in society in order to understand our past and the nature of the rich tradition which we have inherited, so as to counteract the fact that our civilisation had become predominantly and increasingly secular.³¹⁰

Dawson had stopped writing during the 1960s and did not live to see many of the societal and political changes of the last forty years. Thus, it is not clear whether he would have regarded the period since the Second Vatican Council as part of the Sixth Age of the Church, or as the beginning of a new age. One of the most interesting historical developments during this period has been the success of revisionist historians in challenging the older Marxist or Whig orthodoxies.

Conclusion

This chapter has built on the Dawsonian scholarship to argue that the current crisis of education relates to the absence of a unifying theme which had formerly been provided by the liberal humanities and the classics. However, although the study of the classics gave a unity to lay education, it failed to account for the impact of Christianity in the development of Western

³⁰⁸ Dawson, "The Six Ages of the Church", *CEC*, p. 44-45.

³⁰⁹ Dawson, *CWE*, p. 142.

³¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 143.

culture and indeed may have been a factor in society's subsequent secularisation. The current crisis in the Western culture reflects a loss of historical understanding and knowledge about the West's own tradition. The answer to this dilemma can be provided, first by an awareness of the relationship between theology and culture, and secondly, and most importantly, by a focus on the rôle of Christianity in the development of Western culture.

Finally, the attempt to distance Australia from our European past, which resulted partly from the trauma of the British entry to the EEC, and from the grievances still felt from British military decisions in the First and Second World Wars has important implications for Catholicism and its educational system. If the solely British focus of earlier decades is replaced with the unrealistic and culture-free globalization ethic of the 1990s, Catholic schools are condemned to deny the reality of the formative rôle of religion on particular cultures, and in particular, of Christianity on our own culture.

Although they have tended to focus on other English-speaking countries, Australians need to be aware of their own spiritual and cultural debt to European Christendom and to further understand the characteristics of a Catholic culture. As mentioned previously, one of the difficulties in this regard relates to the fact that most Catholics in Australia or indeed within most English-speaking countries have limited access to contemporary Catholic thought or even a deep knowledge of a Catholic culture, because of the limitations both of geographic distance and the language barrier.

A focus on the historical reality of Christian culture within Catholic schools would mean that students were better able to understand contemporary challenges such as, difficulties in the interaction between Islam and the West; the culture of Byzantium and the Orthodox Churches;

the relationship between theology and culture and the relativity of modern secular culture. Furthermore, Dawson pertinently argued that the tradition of Christian culture was not a narrow sectarian one, but one of the four great historic civilisations of the world.³¹¹ This meant that the educated person could not fully contribute to the needs of contemporary society unless he or she had developed a clear sense of the nature and achievements of Christian culture, and why and how Western civilisation had become Christian, and indeed, how far it had ceased to be Christian.³¹² Consequently, schools needed to teach students about the Christian roots and the abiding Christian elements in Western culture.³¹³

In particular the insights offered by a focus on the three domains of culture, history and the European tradition can be best realized within the educational framework of Dawson's Christian Culture course. The Dawsonian multi-disciplinary course would not be restricted by an Enlightenment view of history, but would resemble the unified approach of the older classical courses by making use of the study of history, philosophy and theology, as well as art, architecture and literature, in order to study Christian culture as a whole. This study would be based on Dawson's belief that culture and education are intrinsically connected, and by taking note of the *Communio* school's call for the importance of beauty, seek to engage the heart as well as the head to show a living religion.³¹⁴

Thus, Dawson's proposals for a multi-disciplinary course provide a radical alternative to the predominant educational trends within the English-speaking world. His proposal also allows a deeper understanding of some of the key geo-political and cultural questions that at the moment

³¹¹ Ibid, p. 135.

³¹² Ibid.

³¹³ Ibid.

³¹⁴ Scott, "Introduction", to Dawson, *PR*, p. xx.

challenge the West. These challenges have been highlighted since September 11, 2001 and the subsequent problems in the Middle East. Early in his career, when writing in *The Dublin Review*, Dawson had been concerned to articulate his vision of Europe and the rest of the West as not just founded on some type of economic and commercial hegemony, but as ultimately connected with Christianity. The present spiritual and cultural crisis in the West has revealed the importance of the Church for Europe and for all of Western culture.

CONCLUSION

The German theologian, Karl Rahner, writing in the 1950s argued that Christendom belonged to a by-gone era, that Christians had become a mere diaspora and that even though the culture of modernity is hostile to Christians, it is a 'must be', in the sense that the Cross was a 'must be'.¹ At approximately the same time the prominent neo-Thomist, Jacques Maritain, was searching for a *rapprochement* with the liberal-humanist tradition.² In the decades after 1960, his argument concerning the autonomy of the secular world would come to be interpreted as meaning that culture was a neutral domain, and therefore, independent of the religious and ethical sphere. As a result, since Vatican II the Church's pastoral and catechetical strategies often appear to be a timid submission to, or a reluctant acceptance of, the marginalization of the Church in the public sphere.

In contrast, Pope Pius X, in the early twentieth century, had stated that the Church's motto of restoring all things in Christ referred not only to leading souls to God, but also to each and all of the elements that composed a Christian civilization.³ Subsequently, the Church's relationship to the particular culture of Europe was highlighted by Pius' successor, Pope Benedict XV. He argued that the Church had diminished the differences among the European peoples and helped to form the homogenous society from which sprang Christian Europe, which whilst maintaining its diversity, tended to a unity that favoured its prosperity and glory.⁴ These papal perspectives,

¹ Karl Rahner, *Mission and Grace*, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1963), p. 39. and p. 20, cited in Rowland, *CTT*, p. 31.

² Rowland, *CTT*, p. 22.

³ Pope Pius X, *Il Fermo Proposito*, June 11, 1905, in *The Pope and the People*, pp. 190-191, cited in Dawson, *JN*, p. 99.

⁴ Pope Benedict XV, *Pacem Dei Munus Pulcherrimum*, May 23, 1920, in *The Pope and the People*, p. 228, cited in Dawson, *JN*, p. 97.

reflecting a concept of religion as the major formative influence in culture, would be evident in the work of Christopher Dawson and, in the contemporary period, the *Communio* school.⁵

The confusion reflected in the opposition between these schools of thought and the consequent ambivalence, at both a pastoral and an educational level, which has surrounded the relationship of theology to culture, has been a major cause of the marginalization of the Church in modern society and a significant contributing factor in the failure to transmit the Catholic faith to the next generation. This ambivalence and confusion has been particularly marked in English-speaking countries such as the USA and Australia. Indeed, Dawson, writing in the early 1960s, insisted that the assumption that religion and culture are two separate worlds has been the great error of the West in the last two centuries, but particularly in the English-speaking world.⁶ Thus, whereas this marginalization had been more overt within a Communist Poland or Hungary, or even within the earlier anti-clerical regimes in France and Italy, the *Communio* school is now developing a body of scholarship which contends that modern culture, particularly in the English-speaking countries of the USA and Australia, is inherently antagonistic to the flourishing of the Christian person and is predicated on a denial of the public expression of the faith. This paper has argued that the Dawsonian historical and educational understandings, when allied with this more recent work of the *Communio* school offer a unique and, as yet, underutilized framework for responding to this particular problematic within the English-speaking world.

The intellectual foundations of the *Communio* school can be traced to such theologians as de Lubac and von Balthasar, who questioned the effectiveness of a solely philosophical approach

⁵ Chapter One noted Rowland's comments that, "...Christendom is but an historical memory for a significant proportion of the population and the Christian soul is forged within a complex matrix of institutions founded upon a mixture of theistic, quasi-theistic and anti-theistic traditions", in Rowland, *CTT*, p. 2.

⁶ Dawson, *CEC*, p. 7.

to the challenge of secularism and sought a greater focus on the rôle of history and culture. Christopher Dawson's thought, although not directly connected to the *nouvelle théologie* school of de Lubac and von Balthasar and the more recent *Communio* scholars mirrored an Augustinian view of the importance of grace in regard to nature, and religion in regard to culture.⁷

The first part of this paper also identified the challenge presented by modern culture through an examination of recent data on religious belief and practice throughout the Western world. This data has shown that the optimistic claims made since the 1960s about the Church's ability to evangelise the West by adapting to its secularised culture, have proved to be unsuccessful in pastoral and catechetical terms. Indeed, in contrast to the argument that there are optimistic trends in the West, as shown by a generalised interest in spirituality, it does not appear that this trend is producing a revival of Christian understandings and practices, but rather that it is being directed into a variety of alternative beliefs. This search for alternative beliefs by many in the West has come about partly as a result of pastoral and catechetical approaches based on a horizontal dimension that emphasizes only our relationship with others, at the expense of a theocentric and vertical approach that meets the human need for transcendence.

However, Dawson's earlier understanding of modern culture as being an alternative belief system which attempts to secularize Christianity at the same time as it draws from its ethos is paralleled by contemporary writers such as Cavanaugh, who argue that modern culture is a

⁷ Dawson, "The Christian View of History", in *CEC*, p. 221. Dawson states that St Augustine's judgement on secular history means that, "...the whole course of history apart from divine grace is the record of successive attempts to build towers of Babel which are frustrated by the inherent selfishness and greed of human nature." However, Dawson did not deny the rôle of philosophy and the natural law tradition within Catholic thought. Thus he stated, "For the whole Nazi system with its exaltation of lawlessness and successful aggression, its assertion of the rights of the strong at the expense of the weak, and its cynical contempt for international law and treaties, is the denial of the traditional Western conception of natural law and is the expression of a diametrically opposed theory." Dawson, *JN*, p. 91.

secular parody of the Christian tradition.⁸ Similarly, Nichol has argued that in the modern era, the alternative to an onto-logic that bears the form of love and that is Trinitarian will most likely be mechanistic and controlling.⁹ Rosenberg's judgment that the two centuries before the fall of Communism in 1989 were dominated by an alternative, or secular creed, is paralleled by Burleigh's notion of Marxism and Nazism as political religions that were surrogates for the traditional Christianity of the West.¹⁰ Finally, Rowland has argued that modern culture is a rival tradition which is actually hostile to the flourishing of Christian practices and beliefs.¹¹ All of these writers point to the fact that modernity, by its denial of the spiritual element, represents a desolate and uninspiring view of human nature and history and culture.

The understanding that modern culture is based on an alternative ontology resulting from an estrangement with the Christian tradition was not fully reflected in the Church's predominant pastoral and educational responses before and after 1960.¹² The Church initially used a philosophical approach which tended to ignore the rôle of culture and history to confront the difficulty of an aggressive anti-clericalism, which had developed from the time of the French Enlightenment. Another related difficulty was that the dominant nationalistic, positivistic and Marxist historical schools within France had minimized or discounted the crucial importance of Christianity in the formation and unity of European culture. Within France the rich tradition of Catholic historiography had tended to focus on ecclesiastical studies and not to examine broader cultural and sociological issues. This gap in historical scholarship on the creative interaction of religion and culture in the life of Western society meant that philosophers such as Maritain were

⁸ Cavanaugh, "Beyond Secular Parodies", in *Radical Orthodoxy*, eds. Pickstock, Milbank and Ward, p. 182.

⁹ Nichols, "Foreword", to Rowland, *CTT*, p. xiii.

¹⁰ Rosenberg, "The Heritage of a Century", in *Enlightenment and Genocide*, eds. Kaye and Strath, p. 245, and Burleigh, *Earthly Powers*, p.10.

¹¹ Rowland, *CTT*, p. 159.

¹² In regard to this matter Dawson stated, "But as we have seen, the modern world is the secularized world which has discarded Christianity as a part of the dead past and which has lost the sense of the spiritual values of the Christian tradition." In Dawson, *JN*, p. 91.

left without a framework to develop cohesive and clear insights into the essence of modern liberal culture and the way in which it represents a distortion of Christian thought.¹³

It was also observed that in both France and the USA the ontology of modern liberal culture and its impact on Catholicism was still unclear. In particular, Maritain would have observed apparently positive trends in America during and after the Second World War. Thus, for at least one hundred years the Catholic Church had flourished within the world's archetypal modern capitalist country. This country had fought against Nazism, helped to rebuild Europe and was now one of the strongest opponents of Communism. As the Church fought for its existence in Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia, Catholicism in America expanded and entered the mainstream of social and political life. Furthermore, the corrosive effects on Catholic institutions, religious orders and family life of the 1960s sexual, feminist and cultural revolutions had yet to significantly impact within the Church. Within France, by the late 1950s, the friction between Catholicism and the republican tradition seemed to have passed. The survival of the Catholic values was evident in the continuing stability of family life and the maintenance and even growth in rates of religious practice.

However, it can be argued that the experience within France rather than suggesting that modern culture is favourable to the Church actually highlights the clash of Enlightenment and Catholic world views. It also reveals the success of non-accommodationist strategies in maintaining a sense of continuity and tradition. In response to the Radical anti-clericalist government's moves against the Church in 1905, French Catholics developed a flourishing counter-cultural network which focused on education, media and farmer and youth organizations. The success of these initiatives explains why the decades before 1960 witnessed increasing rates

¹³ Dawson, *RWC*, p. 13.

of Mass attendance and have been considered as glorious years for Catholicism.¹⁴ Thus, although practicing Catholics were only a minority of the population, a renewed militancy and a focus on organization, strengthened and reinforced morale and confidence during the first half of the twentieth century.¹⁵ Another non-accommodationist approach was identified in England after 1850, where the strength of ultramontane Catholicism gave it the confidence to stand outside the mainstream culture, which resulted in one hundred years of vigorous growth and the conversion of prominent literary figures such as Waugh and Chesterton.¹⁶

After 1960, the neo-Thomist emphasis in educational and pastoralist strategies tended to be replaced by strategies reflecting the thought of the transcendental Thomists, who argued that culture is a ‘given’ that needs to be accepted. An approach predicated on an accommodation to modern culture became particularly influential in the English-speaking West, partly because the earlier philosophical focus had neglected the rôle of history and culture and also because the predominant interpretations of *Gaudium et Spes* led to a devaluation and dismissal of many of the cultural riches and traditions of the Church. In the English-speaking countries the lack of an historical memory of a Catholic culture and even a type of cultural inferiority about this culture, accounts for the approving and welcoming attitude to this trend.¹⁷ However, it was observed that this trend has been a major factor in the decline in both belief and practice and furthermore, that the continued problems associated with these pastoral and catechetical approaches have led to a reappraisal of the post-1960s *Zeitgeist* of accommodation to the surrounding culture.

¹⁴ Cholvy and Hilaire, *Histoire religieuse de la France contemporaine*, cited in McLeod, “Introduction”, to McLeod and Ustorf, *The Decline of Christendom*, p. 19.

¹⁵ McLeod, *Secularization in Western Europe*, p. 69.

¹⁶ The letter of Cardinal Wiseman to the English nation, *Out of the Flaminian Gate* (at the re-establishment of the Catholic hierarchy in 1850), witnessed the beginning of at least one hundred years of vigorous growth for the Catholic Church. In Schwarz, *The Third Spring*, p. 7.

¹⁷ It was noted in Part One that this cultural inferiority among English-speaking Catholics may explain E. Michael Jones’ observation that many Catholics after 1960 “lusted after modernity”. In E. Michael Jones, *Living Machines*, p. 42.

The historical distance from a Catholic culture within English-speaking lands suggested that there is a different type of secularization in these lands to that evident within an older, predominantly Catholic Europe. In particular, the type of secularism which prevails in the English-speaking world is not as aggressive as the anti-clericalism of countries such as France. This factor may have led to a misunderstanding of its more far-reaching and permanent effects in a Protestantization of the Catholic mind. Pastoralists and educationalists need to acknowledge that the Church and individual Catholics cannot exist in some sort of compartmentalized world, where their faith and its ethical demands have no right to express themselves in the public domain. Thus, the attempt to accommodate itself to the secularized Protestant culture of the English-speaking world, where religion although apparently free has been privatized, has been a major cause of Catholicism's marginalization.

This contraction of religion to the private sphere has also limited Catholicism's confidence about whether it has anything to contribute to the wider cultural domains associated with art, architecture and music. This problem is particularly acute in Australia where the built landscape shows limited and diminishing evidence of the churches, cathedrals, shrines and pilgrimage sites that still abound in Europe. Thus, an analysis of modern culture as inimical to Christian culture suggests there is a need not only to critique modernity's ontology, but also to clarify what impact its external manifestations have on the well being of the human soul. As Rowland has observed, an understanding that ethics do have a rôle in the aesthetic domain as well as in the disciplines of psychology, education and health care, will necessarily lead to a questioning of the uncritical endorsement of modern mass culture that has characterized so much post-Conciliar thought.¹⁸ In this regard, Dawson asserted that the attempt to use and secularize the Christian ethos and the denial of the importance of spiritual factors, has meant that the culture of the modern world is

¹⁸ Rowland, *CTT*, p. 167.

narrowed and impoverished.¹⁹ This issue has been highlighted because of a willing acceptance, and even a sanctioning, on the part of pastoralists and catechists of the pedestrian consequences of this Protestant culture. Thus, an ‘imaginative failure’ on the part of Protestantism and increasingly of Catholicism in the English-speaking world encouraged a belief that God was absent from human culture and experience.²⁰

Chapter Two argued that the memory of a Catholic culture has been noticeably lacking within the English-speaking world, which broke with Rome over five hundred years ago. In particular, Australia which is historically, intellectually and geographically isolated from the sources of Catholic tradition seems especially vulnerable to all the major aspects of modern culture. Thus, French Enlightenment and Revolutionary thought, and its resulting left-wing millenarianism, has exercised an exceptional hold over the academic and intellectual classes within Australian universities, and over many of the elites in areas such as the law and education. Within France, this trend has been resisted in the first place by the existence of an ancient and vibrant Catholic culture and more recently by the development of a critical and significant revisionist historiography. This recent scholarship has challenged the previously dominant Marxist or liberal viewpoints that the Revolution was either beneficial or inevitable. Also, an English Protestant and Whig historiography dominated Australian education and consequently the popular mind, without the corrective of the continuous traditional features of English society. In particular, in England an older pre-Reformation sensibility survived, as revealed by an accepted rôle for religion in the public domain. Furthermore, all the major mass cultural trends of post-war American society had a decided impact on both the broad Australian society and on Catholics within that society.

¹⁹ Dawson, “What is Christian Civilization”, in *CEC*, p. 31.

²⁰ McGrath, *The Twilight of Atheism*, p. 213.

A suggested response

Chapter Three suggested that Dawson's belief that religion is the soul of culture can provide a valuable addition to the recent scholarship of the *Communio* school. This chapter argued for a deeper understanding of the modern cultural project and the way in which it produces a rival culture to Christianity. Furthermore, as this rival culture is unfavourable to the development of the Christian person, this chapter addressed the necessity for clearer explanations of the outward appearance and fundamental nature of a Catholic culture. These explanations also need to include a deeper study of the rich tradition of the various Christian cultures that have existed throughout the history of the Church.

One way this scholarship could be developed is through a focus on history. This focus on history is an antidote to the problem presented by the amnesia inherent in modern culture. In particular, the Dawsonian understanding that religion is the key to history and that Christianity has formed Western culture, offers an alternative framework to either the limited secularist vision of progress, which has provided an important apologetic for modern culture, or to the postmodern denial of the reality of truth. This secularist vision, and the exclusive focus on philosophy evident in many pre-1960s Catholic curricula, left many of the 'baby-boomer' generation without the deep theological understandings needed to counteract the sociological and cultural upheavals of the post-war period. Thus, a lack of knowledge of the intellectual and cultural inheritance of the Catholic tradition, as well as an acceptance of modern culture's breach with the past, has further secularized the contemporary Catholic mind.²¹

Whilst it was observed that within Australia the last decade has witnessed a renewed interest in the rôle of history and an awareness of the inadequacies of school history courses,

²¹ Schorske, *Thinking with History*, p. 4.

Chapter Four argued against a reassertion of either purely nationalistic views or of English liberal nineteenth-century views. The strength of these schools of historiography led to the marginalization of Catholicism and fostered uncertainty among Catholic ecclesiastics and laity about the determining rôle of Catholicism within Western culture.

Furthermore, a presentist mindset has meant that the debate about history has come to be seen simply in terms of a conflict between Enlightenment modern history, dominant prior to the 1960s, and a more recent postmodern trend. However, this chapter asserted that there were limitations in both the narrative of modern history which was based on an Enlightenment vision of progress, and the relativism inherent in postmodernism.

Dawson, and more recently, the scholars working within the *Communio* school have indicated the need to return to the sources of Western culture. Thus, it was argued in Chapter Four that unless Catholic educators understand the flaws existing in modern and postmodern schools of history, they will fail in the basic task of transmitting the Catholic faith to the next generation. In order to help carry out this task the Catholic school needs to help its students recognize that they exist in the dimension of time as well as that of space. The development of this historical consciousness is the foundation on which to build a deeper understanding of the Christian narrative of the Creation, Fall and Redemption and the rôle of Christ's Church through the ages.

Chapter Five stated that these historical and cultural themes will be best understood by an emphasis on the importance of the European tradition, particularly as Europe offers one of the best examples of the development of Christian culture. Indeed, an insistence on economics as the basis for European unity reflects the limitations of secularism. This secularization of Christendom

was the reason for the development of two of the major alternative ideologies of Communism and Nazism during the twentieth century. Furthermore, the European rejection of its own historic religion has led to the social and demographic problems of the contemporary period. A solution to this European dilemma must begin with an acknowledgement that European culture was formed within the matrix established by Christian thought, belief and practice. If Europe should continue to deny its Christian basis, then its culture will ultimately cease to exist. The challenges to this religious foundation of Europe, such as the attempt to formulate a European constitution that excludes any mention of Christianity, is indicative of the de-historization of its identity.²² However, even a de-historicized and secularized Europe is in a state of crisis. This was shown by the rejection of the proposed constitution by the voters in a number of European states, and also by the on-going uncertainty as to how multiculturalism, which has been the dominant social and political philosophy of the last decades, can deal with the challenge of a more militant and rapidly increasing Islamic population.

In Chapter Five it was also maintained that the attempt to distance Australia from our European past reflects a range of historical and cultural factors, such as an anti-British nationalism, the economic need to engage with Asia and the generalized ignorance and lack of sympathy about the historical dimension of culture. The pervasive presentism within Australian society is evident in the debate as to whether Australia should become a republic. Any future break with the British monarchy would mean a further decline in the sources of tradition which have a crucial rôle to play in the health of a society. However, even if there is no break with the British monarchy, the fact that Britain has experienced its own massive cultural dislocation

²² The former atheistic president of Poland, Aleksander Kwasniewski, has stated that, "There is no excuse for making references to ancient Greece and Rome, and to the Enlightenment, without making reference to the Christian values which are so important to the development of Europe." Cecilia Bromley-Martin, "Being Honest about Europe's Roots?", *Inside the Vatican*, (2003), 11, pp. 10-11, cited in Burleigh, *Earthly Powers*, p. 15.

during recent decades means that its ability to communicate living and vital experiences of a traditional culture has been sharply diminished. This traditional culture has been affected both by the demoralizing impact of popular culture and by the weakening of the aristocracy, which had maintained a sense of the importance of the past and a confidence in the older cultural arrangements.

This breach with our European past presents a problem for Catholicism and its educational system. Catholic schools cannot solve this problem if they base their school courses on either Whig or relativistic postmodern constructions of the past. These constructions which deny the reality of the formative rôle of religion on individual cultures, and in particular of Christianity on Western culture, have promoted the debilitating secularism of modern Australia. The most worthwhile alternative to a reliance on such views is for Catholics to become cognizant of their own spiritual and cultural debt to European Christendom and of the characteristics of a Catholic culture. One of the difficulties in this regard relates to the fact that most Catholics in Australia or indeed within most English-speaking countries have limited access to contemporary Catholic thought, or even a deep knowledge of a Catholic culture, because of the limitations both of geographic distance and the language barrier. The Church within Australia needs to discover anew its spiritual, intellectual and cultural riches and to make these available to the broader society. Pastoralists and educationalists entrusted to transmit the faith to the young and to be custodians of the Catholic tradition have a critical rôle to play in such a task.

Ironically, Catholic educators can use the powerful critiques of nationalist, secularist and Enlightenment views of history offered by postmodernists in arguing against any return of the old Whig and positivist model of history. As well, scholarship emanating from the revisionist school of historiography provides new research that augments and deepens Dawson's original work on

the stages of Christian culture. Chapter Six argued that Dawson's six stages of Christian culture provide an objective and erudite alternative to the modern project of partitioning history into three periods. Such a periodization fails to recognize the complexity and varied nature of history and fails to recognize the all-important rôle of theology in history. Furthermore, by blurring the boundaries between disciplines, a Christian culture course can provide a unified and coherent view of culture similar to the classical courses which had dominated the post-Renaissance era. As well as building on Dawson's belief that culture and education are fundamentally interconnected, such a study expands student knowledge of how the theology of a culture, or even a renunciation of that theology, shapes the habits and customs of that culture, as well as its supposedly autonomous and external manifestations in the built environment, art and music.

In particular, this work has addressed the problems faced by the Catholic Church within English-speaking countries such as Australia and asserted that a failure to acknowledge the rôle of culture and history has had a deleterious effect on catechetical and educational outcomes. If there is a continuing inability or unwillingness to identify the dichotomy between Catholicism and modern culture, the marginalization of Christianity in Western culture, and of Catholicism within the de-historicized and secularized Protestant matrix existing within Australia, will increase. In this regard Rowland has stated that,

Pastoral strategies that further blur the distinction between the culture of modernity and a culture rooted in a specifically Trinitarian Christendom do nothing to restore the visibility of the form and further compound the crisis.²³

Pastoral and catechetical strategies used to deal with this dilemma need to be complemented by an educational approach that highlights Christianity's formative rôle and which confronts the contradictions and limitations about the human person and society that exist within

²³ Rowland, *CTT*, p. 168.

the dominant state system. These contradictions and limitations in the predominant approaches to the issues of culture, history and the place of Europe have all contributed to the confusion and failures of Catholic education systems in the Western world, and more particularly within Australia.

Thus, for Catholics within Australia and other parts of the English-speaking world, the insights and proposals of Christopher Dawson are an important addition to the scholarship of the *Communio* school on the dynamic relationship between theology and culture and of the challenge presented by the culture of modernity. However, the most significant impact of the Dawsonian work is in Catholic education, which in the last thirty years has been the area where there has been the most disorientation and misunderstanding about cultural issues. Dawson's culture course would deepen understanding and knowledge of the doctrines and the beliefs of the faith, by showing how Christianity has formed the cultural environment over the last two millennia. This course would also be particularly suitable for students living within the culture of modernity by demonstrating how Christians have challenged and resisted cultures hostile to Christianity.

The cultural and social dislocation of recent decades has reinforced the importance of Pope Pius X's assertion that the Church is 'the guardian and protector of Christian civilization'.²⁴ Indeed, whether a unified and coherent Catholic vision of the human person and society can be re-awakened in the West is one of the key challenges for the present Papacy. Within English-speaking countries such as Australia, the theological confusion about culture impacted on a society that was already susceptible to the rootlessness and the disconnectedness inherent within modernity. The Catholic response to Australia's de-historicized culture requires an imaginative

²⁴ Pope Pius XII, *Fermo Proposito*, June 11, 1905, cited in Dawson, *JN*, p. 97.

emphasis within its education system on the importance and meaning of Christian history. It would be tragic if an earlier unrealistic optimism in the Church about modern culture were to be replaced by a pessimistic fatalism that fails to understand the importance and strength of the Catholic tradition, and ultimately the power of the spiritual factors that have formed this tradition.

ABBREVIATIONS

- BP: Christopher Dawson, *Beyond Politics*, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1936).
- CWE: Christopher Dawson, *Crisis of Western Education*, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1961).
- CEC: Christopher Dawson, *Christianity and European Culture: Selections from the Work of Christopher Dawson*, edited by Gerald J. Russello, (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1998).
- DC: Christopher Dawson, *The Dividing of Christendom*, (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1965).
- DWH: Christopher Dawson, *The Dynamics of World History*, Edited by John J. Mulloy. (Wilmington, Delaware: ISI, 2003).
- ERC: Christopher Dawson, *Enquiries into Religion and Culture*, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1933).
- GR: Christopher Dawson, *The Gods of Revolution*, (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1972).
- HHW: Christina Scott, *A Historian and His World: A Life of Christopher Dawson*, (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 1992).
- JN: Christopher Dawson, *The Judgement of the Nations*, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1943).
- ME: Christopher Dawson, *The Making of Europe*, (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2003).
- PR: Christopher Dawson, *Progress and Religion: An Historical Enquiry*, (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2001).

- RC: Christopher Dawson, *Religion and Culture: Gifford Lectures delivered at the University of Edinburgh in the year 1947*, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1948).
- RMS: Christopher Dawson, *Religion and the Modern State*, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1938).
- RWC: Christopher Dawson, *Religion and the Rise of Western Culture*, (New York: Image Books, 1958).
- UE: Christopher Dawson, *Understanding Europe*, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1952).
- CTT: Tracey Rowland, *Culture and the Thomist Tradition*, (London: Routledge, 2003).

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