

3. Society, Church, State

By society I shall mean the object studied by sociologists and social historians, by church the object studied by theologians and church historians, by state the object studied by ~~political~~^{c l} political theorists and historians.

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Sociologists and social historians study society, ecclesiologists and church historians study the church, political theorists and political historians study the state. These definitions are rudimentary and not very enlightening, but at least they point to concrete investigators and to concrete areas of empirical study.

Of the three the most comprehensive is society. It refers to individuals cooperating to realize that structure of the human good described in chapter two. As the reader may recall, the structure stands on three levels. On the first level one considers the needs and capacities of individuals; their operations which, within society, become cooperations, and the resultant recurrent instances of the particular good. On the second level one considers the plasticity and perfectibility of individuals, their training for assuming roles and performing tasks in accordance with already understood and accepted modes of cooperation, and the good of order that results from the knowledge, skill, and good-will of the community and that assures the recurrent abundance of desired instances of the particular good. On the third level one considers individuals as instances of originating value, of freedom and responsibility, now one adverts to their basic options for self-transcendence or for alienation, one examines their personal relations with other members of the society, and one notes the terminal values they bring about in themselves or they encourage in others.

a supranational state.

This shift in the meaning of the term, society, has implications for the mutual relations of society and church, society and state, church and state. Where before society was an abstraction of which church and state were instances, now it is the total process within which state and church are partial processes. Again, where before church and state could be thought of as ultimate, now they are envisaged as fulfilling functions within a larger whole. For in their different ways church and state promote community and endeavor to offset the evils that result ^{in society} from the imperfect attainment of community.

Finally, in the modern pluralist democracy, besides church and state, there are numerous other bodies that are largely self-governing and that pursue any of the specialized ends that have resulted either from the spontaneities of human nature or from the differentiations brought about by human development. Not only church and state, but also these other bodies train personnel, offer roles and set tasks within already understood and accepted modes of cooperation, and make their contribution to the good of order by which recurrent needs are met and in which terminal values emerge.

As already remarked,

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But, as already remarked, the ideal basis of society is community. Without a large measure of community, human society and sovereign states cannot function. Without a constant renewal of community, the measure of community already enjoyed easily is squandered. There are needed, then, individuals, groups, and in the modern world organizations that labor to persuade people to intellectual, moral, and religious conversion and work systematically to undo the mischief worked by alienation and basic ideology. Among such bodies should be the Christian church and to it in its contemporary situation we now turn.

4. Christian Church and Modern Situation

The Christian church is the community that results from the outer communication of ~~XXXX~~ Christ's message and from the inner gift of his love. The message announces what Christians are to believe, what they are to become, what they are to do. The meaning of the message, then, is cognitive, constitutive, and effective. It is cognitive inasmuch as ^{the} Christian message tells what is to be believed. It is constitutive inasmuch as ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ the message crystallizes the inner gift of love into Christian fellowship. It is effective inasmuch as it directs Christian service to mankind to bring about the kingdom of God.

Both the situation within the church and the situation within society tend to be overlooked by a classicist mentality. Such ~~an~~ a mentality knows of good and evil, of saints and sinners, of ~~XXXX~~ corruption and reformation. It is guided by the wisdom born of eternal verities and by the prudence that deals with contingent eventualities. It may think of history as a

case-book of good examples to be praised and imitated and of bad examples to be shunned. It thinks of man as possessing a human nature that is ever the same and as acquiring a culture that is universal and invariant because it is conceived normatively.

With the emergence of modern science and especially of historical consciousness, society, state, and church are ~~seen~~ conceived as processes. Immediately situations leap into vast significance, for every situation is the product of previous process and, at the same time, it fixes the conditions under which future process will unfold.

To repeat this in slightly greater detail let us say that, for historical consciousness, what a man is and does is in part constituted by and directed by the meanings he grasps and by the values he cherishes. Over time such meanings are developed enormously and such values are greatly refined. What any man is, then, primarily is a product of previous history, and only secondarily is it ~~the~~ the product of the man himself using previous achievement in his own way. Finally, the further becoming of each individual and group is conditioned by their total situation. For it is the contemporary situation that has to be taken into ~~the~~ account in selecting the ends to be achieved, the resources available for reaching the ends, the conditions under which operations will be performed, and the optimal plan of operations that will employ the resources under the conditions to obtain the ends.

Now what is true of all human becoming, also is true of ~~Christianizing~~ men becoming Christians and acting like Christians. For that becoming and that acting are the fruits not only of the inner gift of God's love but also of Christ's message which calls upon that love to bear witness, crystallizes it

into Christian fellowship, and directs it to the service of the kingdom of God. But to bring about the kingdom of God is to transform human history, and the transformation of human history, if consciously intended and intelligently willed, supposes an understanding not only of historical process but also of the situation within which the transformation is attempted. For once more it is the situation that has to be taken into account if one is to determine the ends to be aimed at now, the resources that are available now, the conditions under which operations for the ends will occur, and the optimal plan of operations to attain the selected ends under the known conditions with the available resources.

into Christian fellowship, and directs it to the service of the kingdom of God. Indeed, since God can be counted on to bestow his grace, the whole task of a practical theology is to direct the communication of Christ's message.

Now to communicate is to have another share in one's cognitive or constitutive or effective meaning. Those then that would communicate the cognitive meaning of the Christian message, first of all, must know it. At their service, then, are the seven previous functional specialties. Next, those that would communicate the constitutive meaning of the Christian message, first of all, must live it. For without living the Christian message one does not possess its constitutive meaning; and one cannot lead another to share in what one oneself does not possess. Finally, those that would communicate the effective meaning of the Christian message must practise it. For actions speak louder than words, while preaching what one does not practise is sounding brass and tinkling cymbal.

to confer the double benefit of both the gospel and genuine culture. In contrast, the pluralist acknowledges a multiplicity of cultural traditions. In any tradition he conceives the possibility of several diverse differentiations of consciousness. He has no doubt that every cultural tradition is more or less distorted by alienation and ideology, and that any differentiation of ~~x~~ consciousness can lead to abuses. But he is no revolutionary dedicated to the total liquidation of things ~~XXXX~~ as they are. Rather he is a ~~x~~ reformer. He proceeds slowly and methodically. His first aim is religious conversion: the acceptance of Christian witness, the entry into Christian fellowship, the participation in Christian service to mankind. His second aim is to facilitate moral conversion.

to confer the double benefit of both the true religion and the true culture. In contrast, the pluralist acknowledges a multiplicity of cultural traditions. In any tradition he envisages the possibility of diverse differentiations of consciousness. But ~~it~~ he does not consider it his task either to promote the differentiation of consciousness or to ask people to renounce their own culture. Rather he would proceed from within their culture and seek ways and means for making it into a vehicle for communicating the Christian message.

Through communication there is constituted community. That community is named the Christian church. But at the present time that statement is highly ambiguous, for the church is divided. Different bodies entertain different notions of what the church is. Each has ~~xxxxxx~~ its own already understood and accepted modes of cooperation. Each trains personnel to fulfil roles and perform tasks it considers of moment. None the less, there is remembered Christ's prayer: ~~xxx~~ "... may they all be one..." (John 17, 21). There goes forward the dialogue of ecumenism and, thereby, communication ~~xxxxxx~~ invites a divided church to unity.

Not only in this redemptive aspect but from every viewpoint is the church a process of self-constitution, a Selbstvollzug. If it may be still named a society in the medieval sense of that word, none the less in the modern meaning it is a process of ~~xxxx~~ self-constitution occurring within worldwide human society. The substance of that process is the Christian message conjoined with God's gift of his love and resulting in Christian witness, Christian fellowship, and Christian service to mankind.

Further, the church is a structured process. As does human society, it trains personnel. It distinguishes roles and assigns to them tasks. It has already understood and accepted

of perpetual renewal and it would be revealed to all men of good will that ■ it was seriously concerned not only with another world but very seriously with this one. The spiritual and corporal works of mercy have ever been a vehicle in which the church expressed his love for suffering humanity, and the intention once expressed by those works today calls for a fuller ■■■■■■■■■■ expression that takes into account contemporary scholarship and science, contemporary expansion of knowledge and of consequent change, contemporary urbanization, ■■■ population growth, ■ media, techniques.

I have been speaking mainly of the redemptive action of the church in the modern world. But no less important is its ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ constructive action. In fact, the two are inseparable, for one cannot undo evil without originating what is good. Such origination however is not simply a matter of forming policies and planning operations. There is the far more arduous work of advancing science and of convincing practical people both of the superiority of the advanced science and of its relevance to their policy making and planning.