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**The Effects of Secularisation on the Christian Church
in England.**

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Abstract

Secularisation has many meanings and it is the desire of the present writer to formulate a consensual definition or, at least, to describe its nature in the various forms in which it manifests itself: namely, in personal, intellectual and political ways.

We envisage this phenomenon in society as resulting from developments which have occurred in the last century, such as modernisation, post-modernisation, globalisation, fragmentation and rationalization, all of which bear a close mutual relationship. In its turn, secularisation is conceived as promoting the qualitative decline in church membership, attendance and the number of church baptisms and marriages. It is further believed that it has contributed to a qualitative decline in religious belief and is attended by the emergence of New Religious Movements and New Age Movements.

Such a scenario is an unhappy one for the institutional Church in England and the present author seeks to confront the decline in religious observance and the other negative effects which secularisation has had, such as the Church's disengagement from society, religious pluralism, privatism and a 'this-worldly' attitude. Although this is a massive problem, the author suggests some strategies that Christian communities could employ in order to minimise these effects.

Preface

The author has found research on the topic of secularisation not only interesting but also fascinating. He is indebted to the Reverend Dr. Peter Naylor and Professor Dr. Ben de Klerk, his co-promoters, for their encouragement and the positive comments made by them throughout the period of writing this dissertation. He wishes to thank John and Maura Hudson for technical assistance in compiling the graphs and diagrams and to Dr. Peter Brierley of Christian Research for permission to use and adapt the material from their publications; and Professor Andrew Greeley for the data on religious belief.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 KEY WORDS: Secularisation; New Age; New Religion; Social and Religious Differentiation

1.2 BACKGROUND

Every church leader in England is conscious of the decreasing numbers of Christians practising their religion. It is sometimes puzzling why people leave the church. It is a matter of concern, and enquiry. The reason for this decrease in church attendance is placed at the door of secularization. Yet not all sociologists agree that it has taken place: whereas most sociologists like Bruce, Berger and Wilson believe it is a modern phenomenon others, like Martin, are not so sure. This study will therefore examine the ideas of these experts in order to arrive at a consensual understanding of secularisation in England. It will look at this sociological reality in its various forms through consultation of the Encyclopaedia of Modern Christian Thought. It will then proceed to examine the causes of secularization using the works of Bruce, Bird and Berger as a guide. The investigation will examine the effects of Secularization, using the data supplied by Christian Research, which has produced a vast body of authoritative numerical and descriptive literature on the Christian Church in the UK. The British Social Attitudes Survey of 1992, which also produced evidence of belief in Great Britain will be studied.

It is not my intention to suggest that the Church has, in any way, abandoned the gospel. Neither do I wish to infer that the Church has absorbed non or anti-Christian ideas or that secularisation is assumed as being anti-religious. I am interested in this problem because my own communion has suffered a numerical decline.

In the UK and the western world vocations to the priesthood have declined, resulting in parishes losing their pastor or being amalgamated with adjacent parishes. A careful analysis of secularisation and its effects on the Church will be of great importance and utility to the church in fulfilling its mission today. My final chapter will therefore consider how the Church can proclaim the gospel more effectively in the light of the negative aspects of secularisation.

1.3. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The study will be concerned with the quantitative effects that secularisation has had primarily on the Christian Church in England. If a careful analysis of the effects is made, it could be of utility to the Church in Decision-making with regard to Church administration, and knowledge of the weaknesses of secularisation, so that a minimizing of its influence can be achieved.

This research will therefore seek to throw light on a problem that is as pervasive as the air we breathe by examining the following.

- How should we arrive at a consensual definition of secularisation?
- What are the patterns of secularisation?
- What are the causes of secularisation? How did secularisation come into existence?
- How should one evaluate the quantitative effects of secularisation in the light of the information retrieved?

1.4. AIMS & OBJECTIVES

1.4.1 **Aim:** The aim of this study will be to evaluate the effects of secularisation in the Christian Church in England as a contemporary issue.

1.4.2 **Objectives:**

- To arrive at a consensual definition of secularisation. For this purpose the following sources, all of which advance and define secularisation, will be studied.

Bruce: (*Religion in Britain* (1995) and *Religion in the Modern World; from Cathedrals to Cults* (1996)); Bird: *Investigating Religion* (1999); Wilson: *Religion in Sociological Perspective* (1982); and Berger (1990).

The objections and arguments against secularization will be examined in the work of Martin in *The Religious and the Secular* (1982), *the Encyclopaedia of Modern Christian Thought* (2000) and Bruce (1996). The decline of Religion put forward by Schluthter will be surveyed, and the direction of secularisation formulated by Bird (1999).

- To ascertain the patterns of secularisation: this will be sought through consultation of the *Encyclopaedia of Modern Christian Thought* (2000) (edited by Alister McGrath); and Berger in *The Social Reality of Religion* (1967).
- To determine the causes of secularisation. These are advanced by Bird (1999), Heelas (1996) and Bruce (1996).
- To evaluate the quantitative effects of secularisation in the light of the information retrieved. The effects of secularisation will be sought through data supplied by the *UK Christian Handbook* (2001), *Steps to the Future* (2000) and *Religious Trends* (2002) all edited by Brierley, and the *British Social Attitudes Survey* (1992), that provides information on religious belief.

1.5. CENTRAL THEORETICAL ARGUMENT

The central theoretical argument is that a considered investigation into secularisation, understood as a social reality, will lead to the conclusion that it is responsible for a quantitative decline in the Christian Church in England.

1.6. METHODOLOGY

- To survey contemporary literature in order to determine a consensual definition of secularisation.
- To review the patterns of secularisation using the *Encyclopaedia of Modern Christian Thought*.
- To analyse the thinking of contemporary sociological writers of standing on their respective proposed causes of secularisation.
- To analyse data presented in a graphical and tabular form, with description.

The study will be done from within the Roman Catholic Tradition.

CHAPTER 2: SECULARISATION: How To Arrive At A Consensual Definition

2.1. Outline of the chapter

In this chapter, the question of the nature of secularization will be addressed. A definition of secularization will be assumed at the outset, with which the present writer agrees. A brief description of what occurs, or what has occurred in society as a result of this perspective, will then be outlined from the writings of various social scientists who, in some instances, provide their own definitions of secularization. These will be compared with the original definition. Further, a different view of secularisation will be contrasted and evaluated against this scenario. Thus, the initial definition will be enhanced, considered as normative, and formally stated in a concluding note.

In view of the declared definition of secularisation, a description of the decline in institutional religion will be made from the viewpoints of several social scientists. Objections to the secularization thesis will be put forward and rebutted.

Finally, the direction of the process of secularisation will be considered. The chapter will conclude with a summary of the material and the present writer's viewpoint of secularization.

2.2. What is secularisation?

We will start with a definition given by Bryan Wilson, who writes: "... secularization is that process by which religious institutions, actions and consciousness lose their social significance" (Wilson, 1982:149). He also states that such a definition does not imply that all men have acquired a secularised consciousness, or that most or all individuals have relinquished their interest in religion. The definition means that religion has ceased to be significant in the social system.

From this it can be inferred that at some previous time there existed the condition in which social life was not as secular, or at least less secular than in our own times. Even though, in earlier ages, not all people were devoutly religious and the Church may have been plagued by heresy, laxity and corruption, still the social significance of religion

was greater than it is now. The definition above is clearly wider than those of many Christian commentators who equate secularisation with de-christianisation, which is a different issue.

Wilson (1822: 151) believes that secularisation is a long-term process occurring in society. It evolves in association with the process in which social organization itself changes from something that is community-based to something that is societally-based, where society is understood as any permanent, bounded and internally coordinated collectivity of human beings. He defines community as "the persisting local, face-to-face group as typically represented by the clan or village" (1982: 154) that is not a bond of persons but of role performers. The same writer (1982: 155) thinks that religion does not disappear: institutions survive and new movements emerge that are presented in a more rationalized form and with large followings.

Religion, according to Wilson (1982: 159), was the invocation of the supernatural. There were (and are) religious procedures to which the family could relate. It provided for healing of the sick, inducing respect for the elderly and for coping with bereavement. Its language employed the symbolism of father, brethren, mother and child. Wilson (1982: 159) argues that these functions and many more have declined in significance as human involvements have ceased to be primarily local. At one stage in history the individual was born in the local community, married in the local community and died in the local community. All these events were celebrated and legitimated by the Church. In modern or post-modern times the individual finds himself in several community sets, whether it be at work, at leisure, in the home, or in the Church. These communities do not overlap. Personal gain is the aim of modern life, needing no further legitimation. Local life does not need celebration now. Wilson (1982: 159) asks: "What is there to celebrate when the community that sleeps together is not the community that works together or plays together?" Sickness today is only very marginally a matter for religious action and, for those who mourn, funeral services often appear less of a source of comfort than an occasion for discomfiting remarks.

If a stable community declines because of the pattern of mobility in the world of commuters, because of annual migrations and tourism, because of the frequency with which one moves house, and because of the separation of school and home, then Wilson asks (1982: 160): "What need is there for a child to be publicly received and initiated? Into what would he be initiated? When community is not a reality, initiation must be either a sentimental recollection or a travesty".

Again, he asks: "If divorce becomes an increasingly recognized way to terminate a marriage, as abortion terminates a pregnancy, then the symbolism of baby, mother and father ceases to have a resonance of ultimate verities that in settled communities they may once have had." (Wilson, 1982: 161.) A societal system does not rely on moral order but on technical order. Personal dispositions are not important with respect to conformity to custom, to the process of socializing. Why have moral behaviour if we find ourselves dealing with data retrieval systems, credit ratings, conveyor belts and electronic eyes that can regulate an individual's behaviour? The imposition of a code of moral behaviour is queried by Wilson (1982: 161) as to its being time-consuming and harrowing. He (1982: 161,162) concludes that the moral order covers all aspects of human life, whether working in the kitchen, at a drawing board or at the factory bench. If there are moral problems, they can be legislated for, as in codes on racial and sexual discrimination. Yet where morality persists it can be made the subject of coercive law by the state. One might ask if this is not an imposition of a moral code. As for personal morality, modern man might question whether it has not become redundant, whence it follows that "to canvas public morality is to insist on censorship and to espouse such a cause would be to set oneself in opposition to the diverse forces of contemporary liberation" (Wilson, 1982: 161,162).

In past ages, Wilson (1982: 161,162) maintains, a personalized world was part of a moral universe. The individual was involved in a society in which moral judgments were purported to be the basis of decisions, the world being suffused with values. In a societal system such judgments do not tend to have any relevance. In past times there was a shared apprehension of the supernatural, the moral order being thought to derive from the supernatural sphere, whereas in advanced societal systems the supernatural

plays little or no part. The environment is hostile to the supernatural. Instead, societal systems rely on rational, humanly conceived, planned procedures.

The same writer (1982: 161,162) admits that the contemporary social world still retains remnants of community. That is, the human will to sustain communal relationships and personal connections tends to resist the bureaucratic structures of the state and big business. Yet, although the communally organised past still persists within the societal-structured present, community has been severely weakened, and even intimate relationships have been invaded by our dependence on technical devices, for instance in matters such as birth control.

Religion in past ages established a focus for community loyalty and provided occasions for the expression of group cohesion. It supplied a basis for social control. It legitimated policies and interpreted the cosmos. These expressions operated at a local level. Today, the individual does not rely on unintended consequences for the ordering of life. The emphasis has shifted to self-consciousness, management, programming and planning. Cohesion is no longer expressed by shared adoration of symbols, and religion no longer explains the world, still less the cosmos.

According to Wilson (1982: 170), when Catholic or Anglican bishops today wish to pronounce on social affairs they rely neither on revelation nor holy Writ: "they set up commissions often with considerable reliance on the advice of sociologists" (1982: 170). This may be true, but there are two points to advance.

First, bishops may set up commissions, but they make representation to God through prayer that they may be guided into taking the right course of action, as Catholic bishops did when confronted with the problem of paedophilia in the Church. In England, the Nolan Commission was set up and findings were accepted so that the churches' ministry to young people would be performed honestly.

Second, Christians, including bishops, believe that the knowledge of experts, even though they may be sociologists, should not to be repudiated for such knowledge and expertise derives ultimately from God. However, the subject of sociology could hardly form a book in the New Testament.

Peter Berger, one of the more profound thinkers on the sociology of religion, writes that he "believes that modern industrial society has produced a centrally located sector" (Berger, 1990: 239). By this he means a liberated territory with respect to religion. One interesting consequence of this view is that religion is deposited between the most public and the most private sectors of the institutional order. The state no longer serves as an enforcement agency on behalf of the previously dominant religious institution (Berger, 1990: 240).

In the spheres of family life and relationships, religion continues to have considerable potential, but: "It cannot any longer fulfil the classical task of religion, that is of constructing a common world within which all social life receives its ultimate meaning binding on everybody" (Berger, 1990: 242). Berger (1990: 243) writes that there has been a breakdown in the traditional task of religion, which originally was the establishment of an outlook on the meaning of reality to be held in common by all the members of society. This breakdown has produced a set of religious sub-worlds. He (1990: 243) thinks also that because the family is notoriously fragile, a religious system that rests on it must be tenuous. In his (1990: 243) view, secularization causes pluralism, by which he means that religious bodies can no longer take for granted the allegiance of their clients. This is an interesting idea, since most Christian communions base their teachings on the family, and in particular regard the congregation as a community. If, as Berger and Wilson maintain, community is a thing of the past, then the Christian church is clinging to an inappropriate concept.

Religious tradition was previously authoritatively imposed, but now, because of pluralism, has to be 'marketed'. In Berger's (1990: 244) view it must be 'sold' to a clientele that is no longer constrained to 'buy'. This pluralistic content invades the social institution of religion to the extent that there is a bureaucratization of the institution. He (Berger, 1990: 245) believes that our day-to-day problems are dominated by the 'logic'

of bureaucracy. Externally, as well as with one another, religious institutions deal with other social institutions through the typical forms of bureaucratic interaction and by means of employing public relations with the consumer, lobbying with the government and fund raising with both governmental and private agencies.

Berger (1990: 246) admits that pluralism also introduces the practice of consumer preference. Originally, this was the wish of kings or the vested interests of the classes. In today's society, consumer preference is fluid. This means that a dynamic of change has now been introduced. It becomes increasingly difficult to maintain orthodox religious traditions as expressions of unchanging religious belief or practice.

Consumer preferences are being introduced into the religious sphere. Thus, nowadays, as Berger (1990: 247) concludes, religious content becomes subject to fashion, a trend that no group can escape completely. Religious products that are consonant with a secularized consciousness will be preferred.

Secularization occurs when religious thinking, practice and institutions lose their social significance, according to Paul Taylor (1998: 521). He thus agrees with Berger on this point. The author then posits the following questions:

- What power, prestige and influence do religions have?
- What influence does religion have on people's thinking, attitudes and consciousness?
- To what extent are religious practices observed?

The author states that however these are measured, it is difficult to compare with the past, from which imprecise valid information is difficult to obtain. On this basis he concludes that whether secularization has occurred or is occurring is a contentious issue. However, in the present writer's view, although a statistical comparison between past and present cannot be made, a comparison of the power, prestige and influence on society and people's thinking and attitudes can be effected.

Bird (1999: 85) makes a similar observation when he remarks that as societies become more complex, institutions become more specified and differentiated. As a result, it is harder for religious institutions to maintain their hold on the whole of our complex society. He states that the change from a society in which there was one dominant religion to one in which there is an enormous choice suggests that secularization has occurred. New religious movements and new-age movements require less commitment, and involve fewer people than did churches in the past; their beliefs are often only tenuously religious. For instance, Scientology contains beliefs that are as close to science and psychotherapy as they are to religion. Also, it has a limited social role and does not operate as churches did as centres for whole communities where, for example, people met and were involved in non-religious activities.

2.2.1 Alternative views on secularisation

The definition that Wilson proposes - namely that secularisation occurs when religious thinking, practice and institutions lose their social significance- is shared also by Paul Taylor (Taylor, Richardson, Yeo et al, 1998: 521). Thus Wilson, Berger and Bird have a common view on this, and the only dissenting voice with regard to secularisation is that of David Martin (1969: 115-6), who speaks about a general process occurring in societies involving the rapid acceleration of social differentiation and segmentation. In this milieu, institutional religion ceases to be the hub of life and becomes a compartment, while the religious role becomes just one among many others working in a wide variety of contexts. He does not regard this as secularization, but believes that religion becomes truly itself when welfare and education are removed from its control or where it need not legitimate the state.

Bryan Turner (1999: 143) terms the definition of secularisation formulated by Bryan Wilson as 'attritionist theory'... Turner understands the secularisation process as being measured in terms of declining church membership, the loss of ecclesiastical prestige and the encroachment of secular knowledge in the private and public domain.

Turner (1999: 143) proposes that objections can be raised by the prevalence of cults, which demonstrate to him that modern society is not dominated by technical rationality. He (1999: 143) says, "... a religious purpose to life is a permanent feature of human nature, independent of the major changes in society." It might be thought that such activities, which are often to be found among young people, are peripheral, ephemeral and individualistic. Turner (1999: 144) maintains that cults do not change society, but adapt the individual to society through meditation and mysticism. Cultic groups are not anti-cultural but a-cultural, appealing only to marginal groups, and reducing to a minimum any commitment to family or to work. Such groups are not evidence against the secularization thesis, but a confirmation that religion in industrial society survives, even if it is an eccentric private disposition. He (1999: 144) states that society has experienced a number of religious revivals during the period of industrialization, suggesting that secularization is not a matter of institutional decline. However, Wilson (1982: 152) sees these movements as "the diffusion of religious dispositions among a sector of the population previously unsocialised."

Turner (1999: 144) provides an alternative to the 'attritionist' theory, which he terms the 'atrabilioussness' position contained in David Martin's (1969: 31) view of secularisation. He describes the normative elements from which, as a starting point, the secularisation 'myth' proceeds. These elements are "the temporal power of the Church, extreme asceticism, realism in philosophy and ecclesiastical dominance in the spheres of artistic patronage and learning" (1969: 31).

Turner (1999:144) believes that this does not serve as a valid sociological criterion because it is partial and selective. His (1999: 144, 145) second objection is that the secularization thesis adheres to an over-secularised concept of man in contemporary society, a concept that minimises the continuity of pre-modern consciousness - magic, superstitions and irrational belief. Religious belief and practice in the spheres of magic and superstition may have continued through to our modern age, but they have little adhesion to society and therefore their continuance is not an argument against secularisation.

However, the fact that they have little adhesion to society is, in the present writer's view, evidence for the secularisation thesis. Christianity in the past may have been much weaker than is commonly assumed, whereas Christianity in the present may be much stronger than 'attritionists' believe. The present writer uses the terms 'weaker' and 'stronger' in the sense of the influence and adhesion Christianity had or has on society.

Turner (1999: 145) is correct in saying that the 'attritionist' and the 'atribilioussness' positions appear on the surface to be incompatible, and he seeks therefore to harmonize them. He also states that it is difficult to disagree with Martin that the historical evidence suggests that the mass of the population in pre-modern times was indifferent to any form of religion. He claims (1999: 145) that the two perspectives, which refer to the cultural organization of society as a whole, are not incompatible, but actually need each other to produce a general theory of secularisation.

Turner (1999: 146) subscribes to the view that the 'attritionist' view is empirically valid in the sense that, in the dominant class, religion had the function of organising social behaviour. The 'atribilioussness' position is valid in that the peasantry was largely excluded from the religious system of the dominant class. Given this interpretation, secularization means that religion lost its social significance in the dominant class because religion was separated from the economy. Therefore, to understand the importance of religion in feudal society, it is vital to examine specifically the impact of religion on the dominant class, rather than on society in general. Religion was not significant in the subordination of the peasantry but played an important part in the social and economic organization of the land-owning classes.

This is an appealing and reconciling theory, bringing together two different and separate perspectives of secularisation. However, it does not appear to command much support from social scientists who seem to favour the definition of secularisation proposed by Berger, Bruce, Wilson, Schlutcher, Bird and Acquaviva.

2.2.2. Normative statement of secularisation

In conclusion, secularisation, as compared with secular - which means the absence of religion – may be defined as that process by which religious institutions, actions and consciousness lose their social significance. We are therefore adopting Wilson's definition as normative (Wilson, 1982: 149). This phenomenon does not imply that all people have relinquished their religion, but means simply that institutional religion, traditionally Christianity, has ceased in England to be socially significant in the society in which we live. It may not have occurred elsewhere, and its progress may be uneven.

Again, as Peter Berger (1990: 242) says, if religion can no longer fulfil its task of establishing an outlook on the meaning of reality to be held by all members of society, and has become a sub-world, then the consequences for religion are that, for whatever reasons, there has been a severe rupture from society and that, far from being a social cement, it has become privatized and no longer possesses a significant popular dimension.

2.3. Decline in institutional religion

2.3.1. The views of Wilson

Religion has not declined because people are better educated. Some believe that religion has lost its medieval dominance because our contemporaries are too clever to believe in superstitions. Some critics like to think of religion as a kind of delusion which societies have outlived as science has replaced the alleged falsehood of religion with secular truth. Sigmund Freud showed he was no friend of religion when he produced an essay called *The Future of an Illusion*. Further, Auguste Compt, considered as the founding father of sociology, believed that this newer science would replace the ancient myths.

Bryan Wilson (1982: 154-5) states "... that religion may be said to have its source in and draw its strength from the community. Whereas religion once entered into the very texture of community life, in modern society it operates only in interstitial places in the system." One might juxtapose the two phenomena: "the religious community and the secular society".

2.3.2. The views of Taylor et al

Increasing knowledge or holistic maturity cannot explain the decline of religion. It can therefore be asked: why is it that religious beliefs are less plausible or credible than they once were? Paul Taylor (1998: 521) states that there can be little doubt that the power and influence of the Church has diminished. 'Power' may be defined in this context as the ability or capacity to exercise authoritative political control, whereas 'influence' may be described as the ability to persuade or induce an effect, by one person or body, on another. Whereas the Church had power to rival kings, a power that peaked in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, this has since diminished considerably. It was central to political life and the life of the people, from serf to king. The Church was the major employer, with its own courts, judges, lawyers and physicians. Further, it could dominate the imagination. It provided one of the few opportunities for literacy. At a time when not more than one in a thousand could read, the Church told its story in stone, painting, glass, embroidery, and buildings which towered above the small huts in which most people lived. Today, the power and prestige of religious bodies such as the Anglican and Roman Catholic communions have long since decreased, although they still possess some influence in the West. Fewer people present themselves for ordination as priests, men and women who are paid very little. Church membership, Church attendance, Church marriages and Church funerals have all declined. Taylor (Taylor, Richardson, Yeo et al, 1998: 522) observes that the 1851 census showed that 40 per cent of the population went to Church, whereas today it is about 10 per cent. The Roman Catholic Church in England grew numerically up to 1960, largely through immigration from Ireland. As a provider of information and guidance, it can be said that the media and possibly the Internet have eclipsed the Church.

Taylor, Richardson, Yeo et al (1998: 522) argue that secularisation has permeated the very fabric of life. In terms of family life it reflects itself in the socialisation of children in their moral attitudes. Instead of being trained to control their emotions, they are invited to express themselves freely, thus encouraging hedonism. It is a process that is accelerated by television and advertising with their emphases on material things as a means to happiness and fulfilment. They replace church and school as a source of social values. Morality becomes a private matter, no longer shaped by religious doctrine.

Work no longer has any religious justification, and involves no moral commitment. It is seen as impersonal and demoralising. It is just a job.

In the realm of the mass media, very many people tune into religious services on radio and television, a tendency that could be called a privatised form of religion. Yet listening to a religious broadcast, whether a talk or a service, does not necessarily prove that the listener is religious or that he believes in God. Some people do tune into *Sunday Half Hour* or watch *Songs of Praise* because some of the hymns are reminiscent of their youth. Some watch or listen because they are housebound, and it is the only way they can participate in a religious service. Others may do so because they are bored by not taking part. Taylor (1998: 527) states that *Songs of Praise* claims to have seven to eight million viewers. The programme has been running for twenty-eight years, its appeal suggesting a powerful folk culture, which includes both committed Christian believers and those who retain some religious sentiment but do not possess any particular Christian commitment. Most of the viewers and listeners do not go to church. It could even be argued that these programmes have been denuded of some of their religious content, thus displaying further evidence of the decline of religion.

2.3.3. The views of Bruce

Steve Bruce, who is a professor of Sociology at Aberdeen University and has specialized in the subject of secularisation, maintains (1995:1, 2) that in medieval times religion was coextensive with society. The Church had power and status and was identified with the rich. It was a landowner, and its leaders possessed prerogatives and influence with secular princes. The clergy were of a separate class or estate, by virtue of being celibate and by episcopal ordination, and were expected by uneducated people to be religious experts. The Church made few demands on the common folk apart from requiring frequent attendance, financial support and a verbal commitment to its Creed.

He (1995: 2) thinks that there can be no doubt that at its highest level, the Church was linked to supra-national bodies such as the Holy Roman Empire. At local level it entered people's lives through the cathedral and the church. The clergy were frequently

the only literate or learned men in any community, and this reinforced their position in local life. The Church was the only place where people gathered.

In describing the past, Bruce (1999: 2) sees that in pre-modern societies clergy performed a calendar of rituals for the benefit of the laity. The offices, spoken or sung in the cathedrals and parish churches, were believed to be effective in honouring God, even if few understood much of what was going on. Most church buildings had no heating or seating, and the offices were spoken or sung in Latin by a priest who had his back to the congregation. Bruce (1999: 2) believes that it is surprising that the laity ever attended activities that were a complete mystery to them. The present writer does not find this surprising at all. The Church in those times validated the important events in one's life, such as marriage and the rites of passage. It was the very focal point of the community. It is no wonder then, that people attended a liturgy they could not understand. Bruce (1995: 2) thinks that although many attended regularly, most attended only for the more important religious feasts. He does not state the source of this information. (The present writer understands that no statistical records are available).

The notion that the Church's 'professionals' could glorify God independently of the people may seem strange to us, but it rested on the implicit assumption that religious merit could be transferred from the religiously observant to those who were less so. Individuals paid to have Masses said for their souls after they had died. This, it was believed, would speed them to heaven. Bruce (1995: 2) debates whether the common people of that age could be regarded as religious although he believes that in some ways they were superstitious. Our view is that they were uneducated and relied on the clergy to instruct them in religious matters. Perhaps, too, they were superstitious in those areas of belief they could not understand and therefore endeavoured to rationalise. It is not inconceivable that they could be both religious and, in some way, superstitious. The clergy may have had misgivings about superstition, as Bruce (1995: 2) says. Nevertheless, the present writer does not agree with Bruce when he (1995: 2) claims that they reluctantly allied it to religion. Why should the clergy accommodate superstition if they could offer a rational view? He (1995: 2) states, in order to illustrate his point, that saints and their shrines were held to possess powerful remedies for various ailments, and were believed to protect the people and visit their enemies with

plagues. Our view is that this may not be a superstitious practice. The idea that the intercession of saints, through the power of God, can alleviate suffering and disease is still held today in the Roman Catholic communion. Thousands of people visit the Marian shrines of Lourdes and Fatima in the hope of increasing their faith and, if it is God's will, their condition being ameliorated.

Bruce (1995: 4) believes that the Reformation was as much a social, political and economic event as it was theological. It produced a massive change in English society. Two key themes, at least, in the Reformation were individualism and egalitarianism.

The Reformers rejected the idea that religious merit could be transferred. In particular, indulgences - by which one could have a specified duration in purgatory partially or wholly remitted by the recitation of prayers or the performance of works of mercy - were abolished. Also, the notion that one's penance could be transferred and performed by another individual was rejected. It was felt by the Reformers that individuals should be made responsible for their own souls. But if people were to act in such a way, they had to be able to know what God required of them. This meant that religion had to be demystified. The present writer believes that demystification implied that superstition and superstitious practices had to be eliminated, thereby effecting a purer religion. In particular, the Bible had to be made available to the laity so that they could understand the word of God. This signalled the end of a priesthood, which mediated between God and man. In the eyes of God, all people were equal and each person had the right to try to understand the scriptures when they were exposed to them. The Medieval Church had evolved a system that embraced human frailty: all have sinned, but by confessing sins and repenting of them, and by accepting the penances prescribed by the Church, the believer could periodically regain a state of grace. This system gradually became corrupted by a relaxation of the basic requirement of a change of heart. If people could lead a life of sin and then, by leaving money in their wills, arrange others to perform a religious work that would cleanse their souls, there was no incentive for people to live morally or ethically. Bruce (1995: 4,5) observes that Protestants rejected the idea that the clergy could absolve people of their sins, and stressed the need for each person to attend constantly to the state of his or her soul.

The Reformers stressed the rights and responsibilities of individuals and the equality of everyone in the sight of God. The present writer concurs in this appreciation. Moreover, it would be impossible to discover any historian who could present a contrary position. As Bruce (1995: 5) sees it, the action of the Reformers fragmented Christendom. The present writer believes that it was not their intention to do this: they wanted to purify a religion which had lost its credibility through its representatives' dishonest and immoral living in ceasing to be credible in the ways of the Lord. In the event that everyone could be his own interpreter of the Bible and could thereby discern the will of God and deny the existence of a single terrestrial authority of religious truth, there resulted the break up of Christendom into competing organisations, each claiming a monopoly of the truth. Bruce (1995: 5) is perhaps exaggerating the idea that distinct Reformation communions claimed to have such a monopoly.

However, he believes that the Reformation marked the beginning of cultural pluralism, a concept that will be discussed in chapter 3. It may be noted that Bruce does not speak on behalf of any communion, and certainly not that of Rome. Indeed, he describes himself as an agnostic, a position that gives him neutrality on this subject. The present writer, though, does not necessarily agree with all his views, nor is he presenting them with any confessional bias.

When the English Church was severed from Rome, it became a state church, yet retained many features of its predecessor. Ecclesiologically, before the Reformation the Church was an hierarchical body composed of bishops and priests whose powers were devolved from the pope. Christ himself, it was believed, bequeathed these powers to the apostle Peter, who then passed them to every successive bishop of Rome, or pope, who in turn delegated these powers to all validly ordained clergy. When an ordained priest performed the Mass, the bread became the Body of Christ and the wine, his Blood. Priests could forgive sins *in persona Christi* because Christ's powers had been passed on to them. The break with Rome, in Bruce's (1995: 5) opinion, undermined the Church of England's claim to be part of the apostolic succession, even though it retained the hierarchical structure of archbishops, bishops, priests and deacons.

Bruce (1995: 6.) believes that nowadays, the Church of England, in large measure, embraces an uneasy alliance between evangelicals and Anglo-Catholics, an unease that showed up in the 1990s with the ordination of women. As a result, some prominent high Anglicans, particularly Graham Leonard, former bishop of London, left the Church and joined the Roman Catholic communion. A significant number of Anglicans today wish to dis-establish the Church.

Bruce (1995: 7) states that a powerful obstacle to change in the medieval world was social and political pressure. The power of the lord of the manor was such that he was able to define the ethos and worldview of his people: they really were his people. Methodism, when it came, was able to spread most rapidly in those areas where people were free to determine their own religious beliefs. These were independent small farmers in Lancashire and the north of England, tradesmen and craftsmen living in free villages as opposed to those owned by the gentry; and the new working class in the towns and cities. The Church of England, on the other hand, flourished in those areas where it was well organised and funded, having conscientious vicars and lay involvement.

Bruce (1995: 8) advances the claim that Methodism became the religion of the oppressed. Perhaps this is an over-statement, but not without truth. It offered a critique of the rich that was comforting to the poor, whose lack of inheritance in this life could be offset by an inheritance in the next. It turned present privation into an asset. It did not matter if one could not afford rich food, or wear expensive clothes; it did not matter because the doctrine of Methodism, as interpreted by Bruce, told one that these things were an impediment to salvation. In the eyes of God the believer was blessed. The converted Methodist who stopped drinking, smoking, gambling and womanising became a better worker. Because laymen in a democratic fashion organised the movement, it gave people a greater opportunity to take charge of a large part of their lives, and gave them the sense that they could affect their own destiny. Methodism offered a cure to the alienation of the new urban mass society by providing strong fellowship for the converted. The latter invented a new social form, the voluntary society, in bringing about such schemes as Sunday schools, temperance bands, choral

societies, boys' clubs, penny savings banks, mutual insurance societies, sports clubs, trade unions and political parties.

Bruce (1995: 125) makes the point that, in today's society, the Church is generally unpopular: its teachings are ignored or are not given the priority they once had. Its leaders no longer have the ears of the establishment. By 'establishment' he means that group or class of people, which has institutional authority within the state. The Church's efforts to glorify God are barely noticed, except for state occasions, and their beliefs no longer inform society. Bruce believes that individualism and egalitarianism, which played so large a part in the disruption of Christianity, have led to a decline in religion.

According to Bruce (1995: 125), within the churches at present, much of the specific belief content of Christianity has been allowed to disappear from sight or has been radically rewritten to make it accord with rational or secular thought. This, however, is an over-simplification. Bruce does not specify what he means here. The Scriptures and the teaching of the Church have not been re-written in the sense that they have been accommodated to secular thought. Certainly, the liturgy in the Roman Catholic communion has been drastically revised from a Latin-oriented service to a vernacular one.

People are more focused on family life rather than the life of the Church, which receives comparatively little attention; although, when an issue of major importance, such as a threat to world peace through terrorism approaches, people appear to seek help and guidance from God. There is no doubt that an extreme form of individualism pervades the Church. Possibly, the pace of modern life and the uncertainty of job tenure are the reasons for this focus on the family. In the past, communities were more stable. It was on the basis of this stability that people could devote more time to their church community.

The same author (1995: 125) remarks: "... many of those who attend to the supernatural are orientated, not to an external God and his writ over the world but to the inner self." But then, on the other hand, there are many who see him acting within themselves and

others because he has revealed himself once and for all in Jesus Christ. It is the external that has informed the internal.

2.3.4. The views of Schluchter

Schluchter (1990: 249) defines religion as "the product of that world-forming action of human beings through which they constitute a sphere of the sacred which at the same time is a realm of the superior power." The sacred appears as a reality that exists beyond or above the profane, but that also remains connected with it. He supports the secularisation process when he says that our present religious situation appears as a result of a process of secularisation that has been going on for centuries, replacing religious values with secular ones. On the level of consciousness, it has replaced an 'other-worldly' orientation in the individual by an 'inner-worldly' one, and on the institutional level secularisation has replaced the religious with political and economic institutions. Schluchter (1990: 250) is almost saying that through the process of secularisation all the levels and values mentioned have been desacralised.

Secularisation has, in Schluchter's (1990: 250) view, denoted that dialectical process through which the Christian religion furthered both the rise of modern industrial capitalism in the modern state and the rise of modern science, at the same time as it was being weakened by these self-same worldly powers. "Secularisation is an historiographic and sociological category of a process, a summary term that describes a historical development that should be understood neither one-dimensionally nor one-sidedly" (1990: 250). In his view, religion has been depoliticised. That is to say, it is no longer identified as a cohesive component exercising political influence, as was the case in previous centuries. Nevertheless, although secularisation has driven a wedge between religion and politics, this does not mean that religious associations forego politics; religion makes the political order instrumental for the religious worldview.

By this Schluchter means that although religion and politics do not enjoy a complete communion, religion will encapsulate all aspects of life including the political, since a world view cannot be maintained and would have no veracity if the political order were excluded or ignored. Even so, religion has to an extent been privatized.

Modern society, he (1990: 258) believes, has structurally changed the relation between the religious sphere and other spheres, thus bringing about a privatisation and depoliticisation of religion. The religious sphere has been differentiated segmentally. This began at the Reformation, which broke the spiritual monopoly of the Medieval Church. A religious pluralism reinforced the depoliticisation and privatization of institutionalised religion. Our contemporary religious situation, he concludes, is characterised by two tendencies. The first is that of modern culture, which treats the religious world-view as a partial one, and makes religion subjective. The second tendency is that, having been depoliticised and privatised, religion needs to specify what social function it will perform, particularly in regard to its relationship with human beings and the sacred.

2.3.5. The views of Bird

Many people believe in entities that are religious, although fewer people now than in the past practise their religion, as Bird (1999: 87) observes. Churches themselves are concerned about declining membership. According to Berger and Schlutcher, religion has declined through the very process of secularisation. It must be observed that religion has not declined because it is necessarily false, nor has it declined because people are smarter; no one believes that truth has replaced falsehood. No account of secularisation assumes that we, or our culture, are superior to what went before. Whether a religion is true or false is a theological issue. People are not more intelligent now than preceding generations, although a wider mass of knowledge, unavailable previously, is now open to us. Science in particular has broadened and deepened our knowledge of the world we live in, and we believe in accordance with what is available to us. Basically, our culture is a development from the past.

2.4. Objections to the secularisation thesis and its counter arguments

2.4.1. Some general objections to the secularization thesis

A question raised earlier was: what influence does religion now have on people's thinking, attitudes and consciousness? Supporters of the secularisation thesis state that popular thinking and attitudes are no longer based on religious belief. Paul Taylor

(1998: 522) says that whether or not religion in the past dominated most people's outlook is not proved. But this is to ignore history, which clearly illustrates that religion in the past played a more dominant role in society. It can be argued that if secularisation has occurred, society was much more preoccupied with supernatural beliefs and practices, and accorded them more significance.

Taylor (1998: 522) reckons that critics of the secularisation thesis say that apathy and agnosticism had been underestimated long before the industrialisation process occurred. If this statement is accepted, then a possible interpretation is that secularisation has not taken place. Agnosticism and apathy are also features of the present age. Further, the alleged moral laxity of the clergy in the Middle Ages and in religious observance is depicted as a denial of the secularisation process.

As against this view, it can be argued that although morals may have been lax, people nevertheless believed, although they may have believed in heterodox religion or magic. Statistics from these ages are not available. This point has already been given comment. Although mainstream Christian churches and denominations declined numerically during the last century, cults and sectarian movements have generally grown. For instance, non-Trinitarian groups like Jehovah's Witnesses and the Mormons have enlarged, as well as evangelical charismatic Protestant and Catholic churches. The house-church movement and new-age groups have also proliferated, as well as quasi religions such as Scientology. Between 1980 and 2000 the mainstream Christian churches fell by 11.1% to 7.4 % of the population in England, while world religions, such as Islam, more than doubled their numbers. Yet, whilst adherents to these religions have been increasing, they have not yet compensated for the decrease in the mainstream churches, although they are growing at a faster rate than the latter are decreasing.

This answers the claim often made that secularization cannot have occurred, since secularization causes religious decline. If this is the case, how is it that the new religious movements and the new-age cultures have emerged? It could be argued in return that the very emergence of these groups owes its birth to secularisation. In fact, Paul Taylor (1998: 527) and his co-authors make the point that the appearance of the new-age movements and the non-Trinitarian bodies is a result of secularisation, which is a self-

limiting process, generating religious revival that may not take place within the mainstream religions.

The authors (1998: 527) continue by remarking that established religious organisations can become too worldly, causing vigorous sectarian movements to break away. The opponents of the secularisation thesis state that when people sense that religion is in decline, they focus their attention too narrowly on the shrinking of conventional religious organisations and ignore the equally constant cycle of birth and growth in the new movements. However, the genesis of new movements has not replaced the numerical decline in the mainstream churches.

2.4.2. Objections raised by Bruce and their rebuttal

Bruce (1996: 52) posits a number of objections to secularisation, the most obvious being that it might be an ideology presented by people who wish to see the end of religion or wish to discredit its influence. But not all sociologists who maintain this position are atheists or agnostics; Peter Berger is a committed Lutheran, and Bryan Wilson, although he is an atheist, believes that shared religions are important for social cohesion, and mourns their passing. Roy Wallis also was an atheist who shared many of Wilson's misgivings about the modern secular world.

A secondary counter-argument to this objection is that an objective theory like secularisation can be held though the theorist may find it unpalatable. His discipline as a social scientist would ensure that he proceeds along the path of discovering the facts, analysing them and arriving at a particular conclusion; the theory is separable from the person who avows it. It is not known why the social scientists named above are interested in secularisation any more than we know, according to Bruce (1996: 52), why Galileo opted for the view that the earth rotates round the sun. (This may not be an exact analogy).

A more serious criticism of the secularisation thesis is that it mistakenly implies a past golden age of religious orthodoxy. Bruce reckons that there is evidence that medieval Christians were not too attentive. Middle Age court records show peasants charged with playing at cards, failing to attend church services and even engaging in pagan rituals. The church courts were in place for enforcing discipline.

The same writer (1996: 53) admits that what is often complained about in such records is not the absence of religion, but a blanket superficial attitude. It must be remembered that in Medieval churches there were no seats, and a priest whose back was turned to the people muttered the liturgy in Latin. The vast majority of the congregation would not have understood what was being said, and the congregation would have been free to mill about and gossip with one another. Today, we might view this as disrespectful, and discern in it a lack of personal piety, but we would miss the essential point, which was that people felt obliged as much by God as by social pressure to attend Mass, even when there was so little for them to do.

Certain parts of the Mass were believed to warrant greater attention than others. Hence, when the Host was elevated, which was signalled by the ringing of a bell, people stopped milling about and knelt in reverent silence. Bruce (1996: 54) believes that in the Middle Ages, large numbers attended church services in which no concession was made to their presence. In contrast to our present age, in which the key word is 'participation' in regard to an ever-decreasing laity, there can be no doubt that our medieval ancestors were overtly religious people.

Evidence for this fact can be seen in the wills left by some of the faithful, according to Bruce. For instance, he cites (1996: 54) Gilbert Kerk of Exeter, who in 1546 bequeathed to each householder of St Mary Arches Parish "to pray to our Lord God to have mercy on my soul and all Christian souls". In many places foundation Masses were instituted, accompanied by a sum of money; the dead person instructed that Masses be said in perpetuity for the repose of his soul. When the Reformation came, it brought to an end to prayers and Masses for the dead.

Bruce (1996: 54) maintains that the Golden-Age criticism misses the point because the secularisation thesis does not demand that pre-modern people were all well-informed, active participants in their local churches. In parts of the country where religious services were rare, many clerics were illiterate and unable to preach well, while others preached over the heads of the populace. Nevertheless, the historical evidence suggests that most medieval people believed in the supernatural, and frequently called on its powers for assistance, whether for fine weather or for the harvest, or for rain to cause the seed to grow. Even among the ungodly, a fundamental supernaturalism prevailed. Christian beliefs were far more widespread and central to the lives of ordinary people than they are now.

In Bruce's opinion (1996: 54), contemporary Protestants are never known to make provision in their wills for prayers for their souls, and this because of their theology, but they can and do leave money for missionary work or to subsidise a church-building programme. Benefactors today are more likely to leave their money to an annual charity or a cancer research agency than for the promotion of religious activities.

Bruce (1996: 54) concludes his list of challenges by advancing the point that secularisation underestimates the present popularity of religion. It could be argued that the UK, and certainly England, are not as secular as they look. This means that we have to revise downwards our estimate of the religious past and revise upwards the present popularity of religion. There are strong residues of Christianity in the culture of English society. The critics of the secularisation thesis want to present such residues as evidence of a latent demand for religion. It could be, but there might be a more obvious picture. Like the house of a once-rich person who has fallen on hard times and been forced to sell his family possessions, the culture of a once-Christian society still possesses a few glowing ashes, a few reminders of the past. The trend shows those marks exist of an enduring interest in religion beyond the churches becoming weaker and more rare. If we call these marks 'implicit religion', then they are decaying in the same way as the explicit. Atheism, which could be called a positive belief, exists because in some way the atheist is interested in religion. Today, atheists are rare.

Bruce (1996: 58,59) believes that people have not replaced religion by adherence to a rational law-governed world of the scientists' invention. The decline of mainstream Christian denominations allows people to entertain a very wide range of privatised beliefs. Secularisation concerns itself with the phenomenon that individual beliefs are not regularly articulated and confessed in a group: they are not refined and shared ceremonies; they are not objects of systematic and regular elaboration; they are not taught to the next generation; they are not likely to exert much influence upon outsiders; they are not likely to exert much influence on those who hold them; and they are likely to induce few social consequences.

He (1996: 59) thinks that this sort of implicit religion cannot be seen as a counter to explicit religion, since it is declining in parallel with explicit religion. Even if implicit religion is important, the shift from institutional religion to some form of amorphous religion could be described as 'secularisation.'

2.4.3. Objections raised by Martin and their rebuttal

In his work, David Martin (1969: 30) states "... secular history tends to accept Catholic lamentations about a period when men were truly religious". He believes that such thoughts look back to an utopian period. However, secularisation theory does not indulge in such a phantom. It does not take a backward look at society in Medieval times, regarding it as a more religious period than the present. It may well have been. What the theory expresses is not primarily a perception of religiosity, whether individual or communal, but of the binding nature of society and religion.

Martin (1969: 55) maintains that a paradox is implied in the 'secular' and 'religious'. The height of ecclesiastical power in the Middle Ages can be seen either as a triumph of the religious or at its most blasphemous, secularisation. But this is not secularisation as the present writer defines or understands it. In fact, in his book, Martin claims that no effort was made on his part to establish consistency. The book appears to be a collection of essays, chapter 3 being the kernel of his thoughts on secularisation. He describes himself as being sceptical in regard to the secularisation theory, and in the above chapter he argues that there is a dialectic "... of which the Church is a guardian, which

depends on the tension between a transcendent and an immanent frame of reference" (Martin, 1969: 40).

It is this transcendent reference which tends to fossilise the very dialectic of which it is the origin - a dialectic between love and power, the letter and the spirit, forgiveness of sin and counsel of perfection - observes Martin (1969: 37). In his introduction Martin (1969: 2) states that the concept of secularisation includes a large number of discrete separate elements loosely put together in an intellectual hold all. Concerning these 'discrete elements,' he believes it is dangerous to speak as if one of them or a group of them would constitute a master trend, temporally or locally irreversible. Yet in what way it would be dangerous to speak of discrete elements as constituting this master trend, he does not explain, although he rightly says that master trends are rooted in attitudes towards the movement of history. This is another way of saying that secularisation is considered to have occurred by an examination of change in society and religion's place in that society up to the present time.

Of course, the religious and the secular are not opposites, but are intertwined and complementary. Martin (1969: 6) points out that there is nothing regarded as religious which cannot also be secular, and almost no characteristics appearing in secular contexts that do not appear in those which are religious. Perhaps dialectic operates between them. He sees a master trend such as secularisation -which most sociologists concede - as rooted in an ideological view of history. But then, history is not just a stream of past events. Historians view the past from a certain standpoint, and interpret it accordingly. Instead, one cannot approach history from a dispassionate point of view. Proponents of secularisation interpret the movement of history and the change in society in a certain way. Martin, in fact, concurs in this view of the movement of history and the change in society in a particular fashion when he says that disagreement about secularisation is dependent on how one views history. He follows the thought of Frederick Heer, who sees history as a long, perhaps unending, debate with the contradictions embodied in Augustine, and the kinds of secularisation or secular versions of religious notions, such as the translation of the Naked Soul of John of the Cross into the naked 'I think' of Descartes. This type of historical appreciation brings out the complex interrelationships between the religious and the secular, rather than

adopting the notion of a transition to the secular. The concept of secularisation, according to Martin (1969: 6), is that it attempts to simplify a complex phenomenon in history in the interests of ideology or an over-neat intellectual economy.

What Martin has to say concerns at root the relationship between the religious and the secular, viewed from an historical standpoint. Secularisation, which is the lack of adherence between religion and society, can be demonstrated to have occurred since the social influence of religion has declined.

2.4.4. Objections raised by Turner and their rebuttal

Turner, as we have seen, opposes the secularisation thesis, and then attempts to reconcile the particular Martin and Wilson schools of thought by saying that both are correct in some sense. The 'attritionist' position, represented by Wilson, is valid in that, within the dominant class, religion had a function in regard to social custom and behaviour. The 'atribilioussness' position is valid in that the peasantry was excluded from the religious system. Therefore, according to Turner, secularisation has occurred because religion has lost its importance in the ruling classes. However, this theory says nothing about the rest of society either then or since.

Since the 1960s, there has been a vigorous debate as to whether secularisation has taken place. Some sociologists have challenged the notion of secularisation as inaccurate and ideological, in particular David Martin, who has been reviewed above.

2.4.5 Objections raised by the *Encyclopaedia of Modern Christian Thought* and their Rebuttal

Three objections to secularisation appear in the *Encyclopaedia of Modern Christian Thought* (2000: 596). The first is that there are obvious religious tendencies such as folk religion, even in secular societies. These retain views and beliefs about divinity, superstitions, the practice of astrology and rites of passage. However, their hold on society is negligible. This, however, is merely to say that religious practices are diverse. In that one of the signs of secularisation is that religion loses its hold on society, this objection does not carry any weight.

The second objection (2000: 596) is that everyone to some extent holds a faith; one has only to discover the mode of expression. It is argued that what has been called secularisation is really religious change, not a decline in religion. However, this is easy to say and hard to prove. These religions, whatever they may be, are hard to determine in regard to their significance for society. As far as mainstream Christian religions are concerned, they have declined numerically, whereas new religions, such as the New-Age movements, hardly compensate for this decline.

The third objection cited in the *Encyclopaedia* (2000: 596) is that institutional Christianity flourishes in many parts of the world, such as the USA, Poland and Ireland. Evangelical and Pentecostal Christians enjoy a rapid numerical increase. It may be that secularisation is neither uniform nor is found everywhere. Against this, it may be advanced that modern societies are not homogenous, and that secularisation is necessarily uneven. This is due to the fact that we are dealing with human beings and not objects of natural science... The present study is, in any case, confined to secularisation in England. Some sociologists suggest that it is difficult to assess whether the mass of the people in past ages were religious. In this context, the critics of the secularisation thesis argue that there is an over emphasis on the religiosity of people in past ages, and that because the dominant social class attended church regularly in the fifteenth century and understood the Latin Mass, the vast majority of the population, too, either went to religious services or were able to understand them. If they did attend the Latin Mass, this would support the secularisation thesis, since more attended then as compared to the present. But it could also count as evidence against the thesis. The Church would have been the major social institution, and attending its services would have been expected. If such was the case, as is probable, attendance would have had no religious significance. If there was a golden age of religion, then we do not live in such a golden age, and secularisation has occurred. If there was no golden age, then we may be noticeably less religious than our grandfathers, and the process of secularisation has still taken place, yet has a lesser significance (Bird, 1999: 82 -3). Nevertheless, Bruce (1995: 125) argues that there is convincing evidence that people in the past were more religious than they are now.

2.4.6. Bird's view of secularisation

The historical argument does not clinch the matter one-way or the other, according to Bird (1999: 83). He gives two main reasons.

First, the evidence is not sufficiently comprehensive: the further back we go in history, the sketchier is the data. According to him, we cannot rely on other information, such as novels, paintings or autobiographies to supplement this data because they may be no more reliable as indicators of religiosity than are statistics on church attendance.

Second, when there is evidence of a fall in church attendance, the question of the secularisation theory is stirred up again, supporters of the secularisation thesis seeing this as conclusive. Opponents point to the continued significance of religious belief and the growth of religious sects and the newer religious movements. Bird (1999: 83) believes that as societies become more complex, institutions become more specified and differentiated. As a result, religious institutions find it harder to maintain their hold on the whole complex of society. If such is the case, then secularisation has occurred or is occurring.

2.5. Direction of secularisation

2.5.1 The normative view

Supporters of the secularisation thesis say that it is an unidirectional process, proceeding from societies in which religion is important, to societies in which it is less so. A function of religion - that of uniting people into a single community with a set of common beliefs as suggested by Durkheim - is unlikely to be re-established. There can be no reversal of this process, any more than there can be a return to pre-industrial society with strong communities and high levels of face-to-face contact among people, as Bird observes (1999: 81). Bryan Wilson states the issue succinctly when he says that: "Secularisation is not only a change occurring *in* society, it is also a change *of* society in its basic organisation" (1982: 148).

2.5.2 An opposing view

An opposing view, suggested by Bird (1999: 82), is that secularisation could be described as cyclical.

There are periods when the significance of religion declines rapidly, and there are periods when it revives and increases. This is possibly what occurs in countries such as Poland and the United States. It is not the sole fact that religion is less important that constitutes secularisation, but whether its social significance is lessened.

2.5.3. Conclusion

Our view is that secularisation has occurred and is occurring in English society. The present writer agrees with the assumed definition of Wilson that secularisation occurs "... when religious institutions, religious actions and religious consciousness lose their hold on society". Religion in the past was based on community. It is now divided between the private and public sectors of society. That is to say, religion occupies the formal public sector when some state occasion is celebrated, as is illustrated by the funeral of the Queen Mother, or the Armistice Day ceremonial. On the other hand, religion, for the most part, occupies the private sphere. In the past, the state was the secular arm of the Church. It does not possess this position today. Institutional religion also no longer serves the purpose of providing a common world-vision conveying ultimate meaning of reality to everyone. This has occurred because a single community does not exist. Secularisation is, in Bryan Wilson's words, not a *change in* society, but a *change of* society.

2.6 Summary

A definition of secularisation by Bryan Wilson was assumed at the outset as that process by which religious institutions, actions and consciousness lose their social significance. This does not mean that interest in religion has declined, but that it has ceased to be significant in the social system. It can be inferred from this position that at some previous time, social life was not as secular, or less secular, than it is at present. At some earlier time, one's birth, marriage and death was celebrated and legitimated in the

community by the Church. Nowadays, rites of passage cannot be celebrated or legitimated because the individual finds himself or herself in more than one community. Social organisation has changed from a community-based to a societal-based system, in which the latter relies on technical, rather than moral order, whereby the supernatural plays little or no part.

Since social organisation has become more complex, it is harder for religious institutions to maintain their hold on society. Further, religion cannot fulfil its traditional task of constructing a common religious world in which social life receives its ultimate meaning, binding on everybody. Religious institutions nowadays cannot take for granted the allegiance of their members, since religion must be 'sold'. This causes some religious institutions to become bureaucratic, though there are others that may be bureaucratic and yet not seek to 'sell' their brand of religion...

It is sometimes alleged that there is a difficulty in obtaining information on the past. However, a comparison of the power, prestige and influence of the Church on society in both past and present renders a clear perception that secularisation has occurred. There can be no doubt that the power and influence of the Church has declined. Generally, morals have become a matter of private opinion, uninfluenced by religious doctrine.

The Reformation fragmented Christendom and, in doing so, introduced cultural pluralism. To some extent, it released the potentiality for secularisation. Today, religious leaders have little influence on the establishment, and religious beliefs no longer inform society. The decline in religious practice and belief has arisen partly through egalitarianism and individualism, both associated with the Reformation.

Secularisation is a phenomenon that applies to the whole of society. It represents an irreversible change in it.

CHAPTER 3: PATTERNS OF SECULARISATION

3.1. Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to discover the meanings of the various patterns of secularisation, that is to say, secularisation as it affects personal views and actions; secularisation as it affects intellectual pursuits and as it affects political processes. This will be achieved by analysing the writings of important social scientists. The chapter will consist of analysing the relationship these patterns bear to one another. A description of the secularisation process and the reasons for it will conclude the chapter.

3.2 Some general observations

Secularisation has had a long history. In Medieval times, secular clergy lived in the world in contrast to religious clergy who lived in monasteries and in various orders. Later, secularisation took on the meaning of the state removing property from the Church, a view expressed in the *Encyclopaedia of Modern Christian Thought* (2000: 593). According to Berger (1969: 107), the term secularisation was also used in the wake of the wars of religion to denote the removal of property from ecclesiastical control, and in Roman Canon Law it was used to denote a return to the world by a person in holy orders. The term will be used in a descriptive and non-evaluative way, which may not have been the case previously.

The Encyclopaedia of Modern Christian Thought (2000: 593) states that the secular implies an absence of religion, as shown, by example, by the Enlightenment. Today, secularisation refers to a process by which society rejects or disregards religious beliefs and practices, or where the influence of religion does not impinge on society or its values. Secularisation can only be said to exist when what is religious can be clearly differentiated from what is not. *The Encyclopaedia of Modern Christian Thought* (2000: 593) claims that, as a crude yardstick, the level of secularisation is inversely proportional to the level of religion.

Secularisation is a process that is of great importance in England. Whether this process is to be welcomed or deplored is an irrelevant issue, as Berger (1969: 107) maintains. He states that it is possible to enquire into the historical connection between secularisation and Christianity without assenting to either denigration or to a fulfilment of the latter. In his view, a distinction can be made between a logical connection that exists between Christianity and secularisation, and the idea that secularisation is the result of the social involvement of Christianity. In the opinion of the present writer, this is an important distinction to make. However, in our view, the social aspect of Christianity *per se* cannot be regarded as contributing to secularisation.

Secularisation is more than a socio-structural process. Berger (1969: 107) maintains that it affects the totality of life and may be observed in the decline of religious content in the arts, philosophy, literature and the rise of science as a secular perspective of the world. This writer (1969: 107, 108) states that secularisation has therefore a subjective side as well as an objective one. Since there is a secularisation of society and culture, so also there is a secularisation of the consciousness, which can be considered as being prior to objective secularisation. There is an increasing number of individuals who interpret the meaning of the world without the benefit of religion. This tendency still remains today.

This raises the question as to how religion is defined and whether it can be measured. From a sociological point of view, two approaches to a definition have been proposed: religion is either a system of beliefs and practices related to an ultimate being, beings, or to the supernatural, or that which is sacred in a society, in which ultimate beliefs and practices are inviolate. Furthermore, secularisation can be examined in three spheres, namely the political, intellectual and the personal.

3.3 Political Secularisation

Political secularisation, according to the *Encyclopaedia of Modern Christian Thought* (2000: 593) exists in societies where the state in its constitution makes little or no reference to religion. Religion may be allowed, but the state or the government will not make use of its ideas.

In previous periods of history, there was a close relationship between religion and the state, as occurred in Medieval times or lately in southern Ireland. In these cases, the state was supported by the Church, to the extent that sometimes the state was regarded as the secular arm of the Church and was controlled by it. Political secularisation usually means an absence of religion in state institutions, such as medicine, education, hospitals, social work and local government. In all these areas, with the exception of education, where state-funded religious schools operate, there exists a notable absence of religion.

Political secularisation has now given rise to religious pluralism in which all religions have an equal standing in law. This is evidenced in England, where individuals can choose to which religion to belong or even to choose no religion. *The Encyclopaedia of Modern Christian Thought* (2000: 593,594) notes that a wide variety of religions exist from which to make a choice, a fact that weakens the popular notion of the ultimate superiority of any one religion. This results in the choice of a faith that rests on subjective criteria rather than on objective truth.

Moral norms can find their homes in progressive crusades like the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. Martin (1969: 119) points out that these norms can take their reference from either a Christian or humanist base, and can arrive at similar conclusions. It is alleged that no crisis of faith is involved should an individual Anglican retract his belief. He (1969:119) observes that a different situation exists for Catholics in England over the questions of birth control, divorce and euthanasia, where there can be a crisis of faith for the individual believer. According to this view, the norms reinforce one another instead of competing. They exhibit not only a contrast but also a mingling of Catholic and Protestant aspects, according to Martin (1969: 120). He (1969: 121) reckons that the English do not go very often to Church, but they like to have the institution in place. It is part of the legitimate order, proving that God is in his heaven and that all is right with the world. This is a view with which the present writer concurs.

Secularisation exists in ecclesiastical institutions when the latter have some standing in the wider society, although its power structure may remain separate. This gives rise to a contradiction that is regarded as a betrayal of religion, in Martin's (1969: 49) opinion. He (1969: 49) believes that loss of power and all the other negative losses have to be seen both as secularisation and de-secularisation. He states that the areas in which ecclesiastical institutions can lose power and influence are in the state and the professions. Areas of life may be removed from ecclesiastical patronage and control, namely, the arts, administration, medicine and welfare, and the laicization of the professions, such as teaching.

Martin (1969: 49) states that instead of a religious legitimation there is a secular legitimation and, consequently, the removal of areas of thought from religious control. Hence, religion becomes a private matter in a pluralist society where institutions compete on equal terms. Church lands may forego religious control and be given over to non-religious uses in instances when their buildings become museums or private dwellings. It must be emphasised that Martin's definition of secularisation is not the one at which we have arrived. Secularisation for him (1969: 50) mirrors the essence of the times without historical or social detail, and in the area of customs it generally means a diminution of their frequency, number, intensity, and in a downward estimate of their importance and efficacy. Their appropriateness in certain instances may be called into question, and they may be considered marginal to life's concerns.

The once common custom of frequent attendance at Church and of religious observance in the home has been weakened.

According to Martin (1969: 50), people pray less frequently and show little interest in appealing to God, even when they are in danger, and make no reference to him. However, the present writer disagrees with this last point. There is considerable evidence that people resorted to prayer and to taking part in religious services after the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York on September 2001. Such enthusiasm may, however, be short-lived, and the appeal to God may be marginal when the danger has passed. Martin (1969: 50) claims that religious formulae in legal documents are rare; religious sanctions, sacred names and objects being equally

downgraded. There occurs a greater conventionality and insincerity. Motivation is more social than religious, and religious values are less salient than public opinion.

Conversion becomes less frequent and less lasting. The number of personnel available to conduct services decreases. Vocations to the priesthood are less valued and the whole concept of vocation becomes generalised.

He (1969: 51) believes that low levels of observance and faith go together or even that true religion and observance may have no connection, from which it would follow that genuine secularisation cannot be measured. Mass observance carries strong elements of conventionality, a religious aspect paralleling the secular. A decline in religion is therefore difficult to interpret.

Another aspect Martin (1969: 51) considers is conduct, which is notoriously difficult to estimate in regard to secularisation, particularly when religion emphasises motive and contrition, neither of which can be measured. It can be the case that conduct considered wrong by one religion may be considered allowable or right by another. For instance, artificial contraception is considered wrong in the Roman Catholic communion but is perfectly acceptable in the Anglican tradition. Martin is correct when he (1969: 52) says that one cannot overcome this anomaly by regarding one religious tradition as more secularised than another.

Although Acquaviva does not discuss secularisation as such in his book *The Decline of the Sacred in Industrial Society*, he speaks of the effects of desacralisation on the institutions of society, both formal and informal. His (1979: 136) observations in regard to desacralisation can be applied to that of secularisation in that the family has evolved from being a closed nucleus to an open group and does not remain unchanged from one generation to the next. It does not defend or maintain common traditions. In previous times, the family kept the individual immune from external influences, whereas today the nucleus — the parents and children — have become molecular. Inter-family relations are being replaced by social relations: a difference that engenders change in the religious environment. Moreover, Acquaviva (1979: 136,137) believes that power struggles between religious and non-religious movements have created channels for the dissemination of irreligious attitudes.

Through an appeal made to irreligious values and through class struggles strengthening these values, there has been generated a resentment from the frustrated classes towards the dominant groups; in turn these latter have appealed to religious values in order to defend their position.

Berger (1969: 129) advances the idea that there is a secularisation of the political order that accompanies the development of modern industrialism. According to him (1969: 109), industrial society today has a secularising influence. The tendency is for the state to be emancipated from religious institutions or religious rationales for political action.

A modern industrial society such as England requires a large number of scientists and technological personnel whose training and on-going social organisation pre-supposes a high degree of rational thinking. Any attempt to reverse such a situation would threaten the foundations of society. Such a secularising potential, in Berger's (1969: 131) view, is in any case both self-perpetuating and self-aggrandising. It tends to expand, and with this increases the attendant difficulty of applying traditional controls over them. Since expansion is international, it becomes increasingly difficult to isolate any nation from its secularising effects without the threat of economic suffering

3.3.1 Summary and conclusion

Political secularisation is clearly evidenced in England, since most political parties make no reference to religion. Individual politicians may choose to contest a seat on a moral issue, such as abortion, but not to the exclusion of other political issues. Political secularisation can also be seen in state-supported organisations, such as hospitals, social work, local government and medicine. Although the educational programme is mainly driven by secular needs, there exist a small number of schools run on a denominational basis. It is believed that political secularisation has evolved through the influence of the Industrial Revolution.

3.4 Intellectual secularisation

The *Encyclopaedia of Modern Christian Thought* (2000: 594) claims that intellectual secularisation refers primarily to intellectual elite who are seen as the leaders of society by virtue of their acquired knowledge and expertise. They could be scientists, philosophers, artists or writers. This can imply that there is an absence of religious references in scientific, philosophical or artistic statements and works, an implication that often arises from the growing acceptance of scientific thought and achievement as legitimate tools by which to discover the truth about the natural world. God, as a Person, or substance, has no place in this thought, and religion is held to be no longer the vehicle of truth. English intellectuals, according to Martin (1969: 118), tend to absorb new ideologies within the Christian framework, and liberalism, socialism and existentialism can assume a Christian colouring. There is a polarisation of belief and unbelief amongst intellectuals much more so than in the rest of society.

Martin (1969: 121) believes that Protestantism in England has prevented any great confrontation with radicalism and that the holding on to an elite form and convention has prevented a vulgarisation which he sees as endemic in religion in America and which suffuses the culture as a whole. In England this has resulted in a separation between the gentry and the working classes. A gap had succeeded in which each developed its own forms of culture. Religious belief is, as a consequence of this, amorphous, in that practice is low and mostly middle class. And, in fact, Martin (1969: 121, 122) thinks that there is only a loose connection between religious belief and practice, so that those who practise are fairly unorthodox and do not show reserves of religiosity in terms of private prayer. The present writer believes that the latter point may be true, but to practise one's religion can surely not merit the appellation 'unorthodox', unless there exists a standard notion of 'orthodoxy' against which the religion in question can be identified clearly as 'unorthodox'. Martin does not place any evidence for this before us.

The majority of English people approve of Christianity with its mandatory programme of religious education in church schools, a probable reason for such sympathy being that there must be something beyond this life and that 'one must do as one would be done by'. The simplistic opinion that one can be a good Christian without going to Church

still persists today. Middle-class patterns turn on voluntary associations, including the Church, while working-class patterns centre round kinship like the home, the family, the public house, the cinema and sports outings. Martin (1969: 123) observes that Christianity is linked with decency. While this may have been the case in the past, the present writer believes that the distinction between the classes is not as sharp as it was. The attitude towards the Church is the same, except that membership of voluntary associations is not so prevalent now.

Martin (1969: 52) thinks that the intellectual sphere of secularisation is not simply an epistemological position, although this is important. The adoption of a rationalistic, empirical or sceptical viewpoint is normally regarded as a secular tendency, though it must be exclusive in temper. Religious rationalism, scepticism and empiricism exist, although sceptical positions leave more room for faith, and rationalism has until recently been the philosophical norm of Catholicism. Martin (1969: 52) states that if stress is laid on an exclusively rationalistic or empiricist framework, then secularisation can be seen as the adoption of that framework. This involves an emphasis on observables, which in turn means that mysteries and the mysterious are rejected, and the dominant perspective becomes naturalistic. In social science, Martin (1969: 53) observes that there are no purposes beyond human ones. These secular attitudes reject appeals to the ontological or the traditional, and substitute empirical data that can be falsified. No account is taken of transcendental powers. There may be flashes of imagination, but no appeal is made to the book of Revelation or revelations. The present writer believes that Martin has missed the point of the object of social science. It can only observe the observable. It evaluates empirical data and the transcendental cannot be part of its remit.

It has been remarked that secularisation has affected the arts. In particular, David Martin has written about the decline of religious content in music from A.D. 1200. In the present writer's view, even in the ages of Palestrina and Bach, 'secular' music did not occupy as much prominence as it does now. The early twentieth century saw the development of Jazz and popular music for the working classes, performed in the music halls of the country and often sung in public houses. As time went on, this was succeeded by popular ballads and love songs. Liturgical music could be said to be

located within the vein of classical music, although at this same period it was reserved for choirs in monasteries and cathedrals, which sang the ancient form of Latin plain chant or, in the case of the cathedral choir, a Mass setting by a twentieth-century composer or earlier.

By the 1960s, church music was located in both classical and popular fields. The Second Vatican Council had suggested reforms in the Catholic Church, one of which was participation in the liturgy by the laity. This could and did take the form of singing. Unfortunately, the Church did not possess contemporary liturgical music. In fact, the latter does not exist. So the floodgates of musical composition opened and parishes were urged to witness to the spirit of the times by performing and singing this music, which was undoubtedly written in the popular-music vein. Cathedral choirs mostly adhered to traditional church music. Within music generally, the secular notions of physical love, for instance, are more common, and there is a corresponding diminution of the sacred element. These compositions often focused on the erotic in a hardly disguised manner. A consequence is that in some instances, the style of modern church music is hardly distinguishable from modern popular music. It is reasonable to conclude that as individual consciousness becomes more secularised, religious music will not be performed or perhaps not even be composed in the profixity in which it is done now. Religious music no longer has an impact on the mass of the people, and especially on those outside the boundaries of the Church.

In a similar fashion, it may be observed that whereas painters in the Middle Ages worked their art for the glory of God, it would be hard nowadays to find an artist who visualises art in this way or even uses his skill to paint a religious theme. Further, if one walks into a bookshop, it would only take a momentary glance to see that most readers of books are interested in novels, science fiction, the sciences, cookery, self-improvement and the New Age. There is little in the way of religious or spiritual books apart from the Bible. This shows in an approximate manner that the vast majority of the population has abandoned religious literature. If one wants to read a religious classic, then one has to find a specialist bookshop.

3.4.1 Summary and conclusion

Secularisation in the intellectual sphere is highly developed in England. There are very few scientists, artists or philosophers in whose work one can detect a religious reference. Some scientists regard religion as a fable. The theological questions, such as the existence of God, which used to be the preserve of the theologian or philosopher, now appear to be occupying the mind of the scientist. Very few artists in today's society — painters or musicians — are driven by religious considerations, or produce work that contains religious themes. There appears to be a loss in the sense of the sacred, and an emphasis on the visible.

3.5 Personal secularisation

The *Encyclopaedia of Modern Christian Thought* (2000: 594) states that personal secularisation occurs when the actions and beliefs of an individual show no regard for the claims of religion. In this instance, scientific ideas have percolated through society over a period of years and the individual has accepted them in such a way that traditional ideas about God have been eroded. Instead of looking on God as the author of natural events, the individual regards God as a God of the 'gaps'. These gaps in our knowledge cannot be explained by natural science... In this scenario, religious faith is weakened or can even die. The most religious action performed by an individual in such an event may be attendance at a place of worship or holding a particular moral stance, should this have a religious base. Religious belief and action can then be measured in some way. It could be said that an indicator of belief is present if there exists a presence or absence of religion objectively. Such indicators can then be analysed and related to various aspects of belief, such as church attendance, the levels of baptisms, marriages and burials, statistics which can be related to periods of time, region, denomination, class, age, occupation and sexual differentiation. Evidence in most of these areas will be considered in chapter 5. *The Encyclopaedia of Modern Christian Thought* (2000: 595) asserts that according to generalised surveys, personal secularisation has affected men more than women, the young more than the old, the working classes more than the middle classes, urban dwellers more than the rural dwellers, traditional Protestant societies rather than Catholic. This view is also held by Berger (1969: 107). He (1969: 107) affirms that personal secularisation has not given rise to atheism or even hostility

towards religion. Indeed, this is to be expected, for atheism is a disbelief in God, an active position. But where religion loses its social grip, not only does the level of belief suffer, but so also does the level of unbelief. Similarly, hostility to religion is absent today in England because religion is seen as of little importance, being regarded as antiquated and irrelevant to people's needs, as his (1969: 107) work states. Therefore, people do not argue about religion in this age as they used to do: they sidestep it. The *Encyclopaedia* (1969: 107) comments that even those who are affiliated to a church organisation decide for themselves what doctrines they will believe and the moral teachings they will adhere to, and what moral teachings they will reject.

Personal secularisation involves an intensification of the attitude which rejects the reverential or which is indifferent to charismatic appeals, awe, and the numinous. There is a diminution of the sense of anything beyond this life. The world is accepted for what it is, especially as regards disease and death. There are no compensations except human ones. The world is believed by Martin (1969: 55) to be disenchanting, neutral and maybe quantifiable in some aspects.

Berger (1969: 108,109) says that secularisation of the consciousness exists within religious institutions, and traditional religious consciousness outside the previous institutional contexts. Indeed, this is a pre-requisite before any objective secularisation can take place. On the other hand, Martin (1969: 55) offers a different perspective when he says that the secular attitude to the psyche claims it as free, flexible, not obsessive or ritualistic, and indifferent to taboos unless they have some human benefit. Human or social needs are made the measure of all things. This leads to a basic problem or paradox in terms of attitude. As far as Martin is concerned the problem is either that anything is natural, which includes religion, or that only certain things are natural, a view that cannot be empirically established since it involves a metaphysical preference. Martin (1969: 54,55) claims that secular attitudes either propose a metaphysically privileged definition of 'natural' which is equivalent to the religious definition of 'natural', or the whole concept of 'nature' must be denied. If the latter position is assumed, there is no criterion for defining religious preferences for certain types of conduct as unnatural. The word 'secular' is predicated of both options.

He (1969: 57) goes on to say that it is impossible to define 'secular' in the same way as defining religion. Only four terms can be regarded as exclusively religious. These are 'transcendental', 'other-worldly', 'next-worldly' and 'supernaturalist', expressions which cannot have a secular meaning... All other terms such as 'sacralising', 'reverential', 'dogmatic', 'immanent', can have either a secular or a religious orientation.

Aquaviva (1979: 137) maintains that there is less time now for religiosity, meditation and those concerns which belong to periods of rest. New patterns of work and leisure have left less room for a religious life. The organisation of the modern working day has become a hindrance to religiosity, squeezing out religious experience. The cinema, the press and radio, which focus on profane concerns, mount a constant psychological attack on the personality. The unintended effect is to make religious concerns unduly remote. The sensual and the material are favoured through this development. In the anonymity of the city, the individual can find himself rootless, and this may be seen as promoting the spread of eroticism.

The present writer agrees with Acquaviva when he (1979: 137) states that loss of the sacred can be effected by housing conditions, work, the acquisitive mentality, the tendency for women to go out to work, commerce, dancing, the public bar, means of transport and the car. These have spread into the countryside, no village today being inaccessible from the city, and no rural area being immune to technology and the mores of the city where they have not yet become established.

Through these developments, the psychology of man appears to have become deeply rationalised. Acquaviva (1979: 137, 138) explains that men now live in circumstances in which they are permanently served by machines, pre-eminently computers.

Consequently, the individual is subjugated to the environment that surrounds him, an environment that is different from the natural environment of earlier times. The more primitive the technology and the more precarious and uncertain the results of his own efforts, the more religion was used to bolster man's endeavours. But as he became master of his environment, the function of labour changed. With it, changes in human psychology have occurred which have affected his religious appreciation. Although human labour has evolved over the years, it has never changed with the rapidity and

profundity of recent times. Modern technology and the production of a technologically determined environment have generated entirely new effects.

He (1979: 140, 141) cites an invention that is used by large numbers of people: contraceptive devices. This has led to a transformation in the behaviour of women, not just sexually, but in that they find more leisure and so occupy themselves with various issues. This was not previously the case when they were bearing and raising children. Changes have come about in social, political and cultural life, relations between the social classes and income distribution. Thus, a technical device exerts an influence over a wider area than was its primary aim.

Further, the worker or the man who lives within the productive system is easily disposed to form or participate in atheistic or a-religious associations. This happens because his personality is affected by being in an industrial society, finding himself in a complex network of relationships that is sustained by science, by the machine, by technology and by new conditions of life. All exert a desacralising effect in Aquaviva's (1979: 151) belief. He (1979: 141, 142) thinks that only within the individual's psychology do we find a relation between changes in society and attitudes towards religion and a sense of the sacred.

Martin (1969: 116, 117) also speaks about the impact of science on the individual when he says that the subjective impression of human power is increased. This occurs through the limiting of contingency and an awareness of the divine operation having been curtailed to a great extent. This is understood to be in a general sense. The individual still feels the sense of contingency, and may suspect that he is even less powerful than before. The threat of nuclear war did have an impact in arousing peace movements that had religious overtones. Science still coexists with superstitions, magic, talismans, sacred myths and pre-Christian religions. This lack of power, when individually held, Martin (1969: 116, 117) claims, is associated with belief in magic, luck and superstitions. Berger (1969: 126) thinks that a crisis in credibility in religion has affected the man on the street.

In the matter of consciousness, the latter tends to be uncertain about religious matters. Objectively, he is confronted by a range of religions that are non-coercive and that compete for his attention or allegiance. This means that religious pluralism is a social correlate of the secularisation of the consciousness. Secularisation appears as a negative phenomenon, dependent upon processes other than itself. Berger (1969: 132,133) speaks of the trait of individualisation, using this term to refer to a privatised form of religion of the individual or family, though the religion itself may lack a common binding quality in regard to the rest of the community. Such a religion, Berger (1969:132,133) argues, does not fulfil the orthodox task of religion, which was to construct a common world within which all social life would receive ultimate meaning, and binding on everyone. Instead, religion is restricted to specified sections of society. Thus, an individual may faithfully adhere to the religious standards of family life but at the same time conduct his professional and business activities in the public domain without reference to any religious values. In this instance, Berger (1969: 132,133) concludes, religion performs a functional role.

This author (1973: 29) develops his ideas concerning the secularisation of consciousness in his work *The Homeless Mind: Modernisation and Consciousness*, when he enquires about the essential associating factors of technical production that affect the consciousness of man. Berger's (1973: 38) response is that when an individual is a real worker, his identity is anonymous; but his identity is less in this capacity than that which is expressed as a private person. This, he (1973: 38,39) argues, is because each part of his identity relates to specific roles: that part of his identity, which is more real, must be protected from that part which is less real. The individual may seek psychological refuge from the alienation of his work situation in his private life, although it is possible that he may seek refuge in his working life because he finds his private life intolerable. There must exist a private world in which to express those elements of his subjective identity, elements that would be denied in the work situation. If not, individuals would transform into robots, not only in an external fashion but also in the subjective level of their own consciousness of self. This is an extreme case, and Berger (1973:39) thinks that it is impossible to attain because of the deep-seated features of the constitution of man.

Berger (1973: 62,63) speaks of 'life worlds,' by which he means living in a reality that is ordered and gives sense to the business of living. He points to earlier worlds (unspecified) that had a high degree of integration. Presumably, he means that all sectors of social life possessed the same 'life world': whatever the differences between the various sectors of social life in these earlier times, they coexisted in an orderly manner and were socially integrated into a cohesive whole exuding a meaning to the common man. This integrating order was religious. Whether with his family, or at work, or engaged in political processes, or taking part in a festivity or ceremonial, the individual was in the same world because the same symbols permeated the different sectors of everyday life. If he left the society in which he lived, he would experience the feeling of being removed from his life world.

The situation in modern society is quite different from the society that has a high degree of integration and where there exists one 'life world'. Different sectors of life today, according to Berger (1973: 63), relate to vastly different and discrepant worlds of meaning and experience. Modern life is segmented to a large degree, which phenomenon is denominated 'pluralism'. This is manifested not only in the level of observable social conduct but also on the level of personal consciousness. A basic aspect of this pluralisation is the dichotomy between private and public spheres.

Berger (1973: 75) argues that the pluralisation of 'life worlds' has an important effect on religion. By this, he means that the 'life worlds' in which the individual lives possess different symbols. The religious life world is not integrated into society, and therefore does not have the powerful legitimation that it did have when only one 'life world' existed for him. When he speaks of religion, Berger understands it as the cognitive and normative structure that makes it possible for man to feel at home in the universe. This function of religion is threatened by pluralisation. Different sectors of social life are governed by widely discrepant meanings. It thus becomes difficult for religious traditions and for the institutions that embody them to integrate this plurality of social life worlds into a comprehensive and overarching world-view. Also, the plausibility of religious definitions of reality is threatened from within, by which he means the subjective consciousness of the individual. In previous ages, everyone in everyday life acknowledged the same overarching symbols, and thus validated in a corporate manner

the credibility of those symbols. In the context of pluralisation, this is no longer the case. Berger (1973: 76) maintains that as pluralisation develops, the individual is forced to take cognizance of others who do not believe what he believes, and whose life may be suffused with contrary values and beliefs. Thus, pluralisation has a secularising effect that weakens the hold of religion both on society and on the individual. The public sphere is dominated more by civic creeds and ideologies accompanied with vague religious contents or no religious contents at all. In the private sphere, religious rites in connection with important events in the life of the individual such as birth, marriage and death are still used.

The forces of pluralism have robbed individual consciousness of assumed religious meanings.

Religious definitions have lost their certainty and have become matters of choice. It is sometimes asserted that faith is caught, not taught, and according to Berger (1973: 77), no longer conveyed through the community but must be individually achieved. Faith is therefore much harder to come by in a pluralistic situation. It becomes ever harder when the social pluralistic situation develops into a religiously pluralistic one. Uncertainty has been introduced into everyday life by pluralisation, whereby there exists a serious crisis of plausibility. This has urged Berger (1973: 165) to coin the expression the 'homelessness of modern life.'

3.5.1 Summary and conclusion

Personal secularisation has occurred through a scientific rationale having been introduced into the cultural life in England. Faith in God has to some extent receded and scientific explanations of ordinary events have been accorded pride of place. It is believed that due to scientific and commercial thinking, faith in God has been weakened over the last forty years. Personal secularisation implies an emphasis on the present.

Personal (objective) secularisation is dependant on secularisation of the consciousness. The individual is often uncertain about religious matters; he faces a range of religious options, all vying for his acceptance. Some individuals will choose a privatised form of religion, mainly used in the family, but having no further application.

It is possible that today an individual may possess two identities; that of the private person, which is his true identity, or his identity in the workplace. Such a situation dislocates the person from an holistic framework and dislodges his religion, if he has one, into compartments. He does not possess a coherent and integrated world of meaning. Thus, a pluralist situation develops, having a secularising effect because the individual must engage with others who do not necessarily share his beliefs. This also means that pluralisation of the individual consciousness has robbed him of religious meanings. Religious definitions have lost their force, and have become matters of choice. Uncertainty has thus been conveyed into everyday life, and personal faith is not quite as easy to attain, from a human point of view.

3.6 Relationship between political, intellectual and personal secularisation

The idea that secularisation possesses these three patterns, or dimensions, implies that it is not necessarily a unified or coherent force. Some thinkers place great emphasis on intellectual secularisation, which has affected every area of religious life... Since man operates from personal knowledge, his actions are determined by what he knows and believes. However, although scientific thought has grown considerably over the last two hundred years, religion has not died, even though its influence and practice have declined. The *Encyclopaedia of Modern Christian Thought* (2000: 595) states that the negative influences of science have focused on social life, but not to the extent of loss of communal life, the expansion of the cities and towns, the workplace (which is far removed from family life), monotonous factory work, a consumerist outlook, geographical and social mobility. These combined factors have affected and effected secularisation by breaking up religious affiliation. Perhaps it is impossible to prove that any one factor is responsible for causing secularisation, or that it has contributed to it. All that can be done is to show that a high level of probability exists between these factors and secularisation.

David Martin (1969: 129) discusses the secularisation pattern in England. However, he uses the term 'secularisation' to cover belief, practice and attitude. It must be noted that he does not accept the concept of secularisation retained by Bryan Wilson, and whose definition opened the present work.

He (1969: 114) classifies societies firstly in terms of Protestant or Catholic dominance, this being associated with patterns of individual striving or collective class antagonism. This gives rise, he maintains, to great cleavages based on class. However, while this may have been true in the past, in the present writer's opinion, it no longer applies in England.

His second classification involves two sub varieties of Protestantism: the American pluralist and the Protestant state churches (Anglican, Lutheran, Calvinist). In the first type, he (1969: 114,115) thinks that religion is vulgarised and popular, whereas in the second, religion is permanently allied to an elite culture that becomes alien once industrialism breaks up the organic nature of society.

The third classification, which Martin (1969: 125) lists, is in two sections. Firstly, that in a general way, where a nation is denied self-determination by another dominating society it will either seek sources of differentiation in religion, or use the existing religious difference as a rallying point. In this connection, Martin (1969: 115) describes the single-class character of Catholicism in the last century, which intensified homogeneity and operated against divisive forces. The Catholic gentry were few. Localised concentrations of Catholics, and their partial homogeneity in terms of class, go hand in hand with a minority-embattled status. This certainly does not apply now. Secondly, minorities tend to have higher levels of practice than majorities, particularly when they are excluded from the ruling classes. The present writer agrees with this statement. Some social scientists call it cultural defence.

3.6.1 Summary and conclusion

The relationship among the patterns of secularisation is neither coherent nor unified. These patterns are found in people, and people vary. A person's consciousness is affected by his social life, which is the result of scientific influences, working conditions, social mobility, consumerist options, housing and educational background. These factors have contributed to secularisation, although it is impossible to evaluate each factor's contribution. If a person's consciousness can be secularised, and it is the view of the present writer that it can, then his manner of expression, whether in a political or intellectual context is similarly replicated. Clearly, if a large number of people have a tendency to a secularised consciousness, then its expression will be consolidated.

3.7 The secularisation process

3.7.1 Motivation

In our view, it is important to discover and understand the roots of the secularisation process. This activity cannot be separated from the patterns of secularisation analysed in 3.5. Such a discovery will possibly throw light on the contemporary manifestation of this phenomenon.

3.7.2 A description of the process of secularisation

According to Berger (1969: 113), scholars of sociology accept the historical connection between secularisation and Protestantism. But, whether the secularising potential of Protestantism contributed solely to secularisation or whether the secularising potential was contained in an earlier period, is questioned. The present writer does not believe that Protestantism contains any secularizing potential. Berger (1969: 113), however, believes that it had its roots in Biblical tradition. He further asserts: "... historically speaking, Christianity has been its own gravedigger" (1969: 127). This is a staggering claim coming from the thinking of one who is a committed Lutheran. "The form of Christianity represents a retrogressive step in terms of the secularising aspects of the Old Testament" (1969: 121). Berger (1969: 121) assumes that in Christianity, the

transcendent nature of God is asserted, but the notions of Incarnation and Trinity represent significant developments of the Israelite conception. Berger (1969: 121) says that although the Reformation and Renaissance may have been thought to trigger the birth of secularisation, it pre-dates them. In other words, he (1969: 127) believes that the religious developments which originated from Biblical tradition may be seen as the causal factor in the foundations of the modern secularised world.

Berger (1969: 122) believes that the Christian idea of the Incarnation brought with it other modifications of transcendence, such as angels and saints, with which Catholicism populated religious reality culminating in the glorification of Mary as mediator and co-redeemer. In fact, Berger is incorrect in saying that Catholics believe Mary to be co-redeemer with Christ, a view which has never been held by the Church. He (1969: 122) sees Catholicism as re-establishing a new interpretation of the universe bringing together both Biblical religion and concepts that are not Biblical. It envisions a Catholic universe that provides security for its adherents. Catholicism continues the presence in the modern world of some of the most ancient religious aspirations of man. Through this process, Berger (1969: 122) thinks that the ethical nature of Biblical religion was halted, and Latin Catholicism inherited and absorbed the legalism of Rome. However, through its sacramental system, it provided 'escape hatches' which prevented it from falling into the legal mould of the Old Testament.

On a practical level, Catholic piety and morality made unnecessary any rationalisation of the world. Berger (1969: 122, 123) therefore maintains that it is plausible to hold the view that Catholicism reversed or at least arrested the secularising elements of transcendentalisation and ethical rationalism.

Berger (1969: 123, 124) points out one thing that served unintentionally the process of secularisation, alias the social formation of the Christian Church: the latter, apart from specialising in religion, is an institution that works with other institutions in society. The concentration of religious symbols and activities in one compartment defines the rest of society as 'the world', this being regarded as a profane realm removed from the jurisdiction of the sacred. The secularising potential of this idea could be contained as long as Christendom with its balance of sacred and profane existed as a social reality.

Since this reality has disintegrated, the 'world' could all the more be secularised, even though it has already been defined as a realm outside the jurisdiction of the sacred. However, the Protestant Reformation, Berger (1969: 124) claims, may then be understood as a powerful re-emergence of those secularising forces that had been contained within Catholicism, by going far beyond the Old Testament conception. Berger (1969: 122) explains this statement by stating that religions that have been derived from the Old Testament have implicit secularising forces. Judaism brings these forces together in an historically ineffective way. This ineffectiveness can be attributed to an extrinsic factor, which is that the Jews are an alien people within Christendom, and the intrinsic factor is the legalistic aspect of Christianity. Catholic Christianity, both east and west, arrests the forces of secularisation, in Berger's (1969: 122) view, although the potential for secularisation still exists by virtue of the Old Testament tradition. He (1969: 122) sees the Protestant Reformation as a powerful unleashing of those secularising forces contained within Catholicism, not only by replicating the Old Testament, but also by going far beyond it. Berger does not enter into details at this point. His object is a search for the roots of secularisation in religious traditions in the west.

Secularisation therefore poses a novel situation in our era. For the first time in history, the religious legitimations of the world have lost their plausibility, not only for intellectuals but also for the broad mass of mankind. As a result, the problem of meaning has presented itself, not only in the state but also in the ordinary routines of life. This problem has exercised the minds of philosophers, psychologists, and theologians as well as the minds of ordinary people who wish to solve the crisis in their own lives. In particular, Berger (1969: 125) thinks that the Christian idea of suffering has lost its plausibility, and this has opened the gateway to secularised thinking, though the latter has proved incapable of explaining or providing a reason for the sorrows of individual life from a humanitarian point of view.

The collapse of the Christian worldview has released a philosophy of thought that has de-alienated and humanised social reality. The study of sociology is one of the movements that has contributed to this, in Berger's (1969: 125) thought. According to him (1969: 106), in anticlerical circles, secularisation has come to mean the liberation of

the modern man from religious tutelage, which, when connected with traditional churches means de-christianisation. The concepts of plausibility and legitimation will be discussed in chapter 4.

The carrier or mediator of secularisation, according to Berger (1969: 109, 111), is the modern economic process, or industrial capitalism, and its corresponding styles of life and the pervasive influence of modern science. Berger thinks that there may be an inherent connection between Christianity and the modern world. Philosophers, theologians and historians have repeatedly asserted this connection. Thus the modern world could be interpreted as a higher realisation of the Christian spirit (as Hegel interpreted it), or Christianity could be regarded as the principal cause or production of the assumed sorry state of the world, which is the disease, (as Schopenhauer or Nietzsche would interpret it). These latter thinkers believed that Christianity was false and had introduced harmful and alien concepts into the life of mankind.

Berger (1969: 111) maintains that Protestantism can be regarded as “shrinkage in the slope of the sacred.” By this he means that Protestantism can be thought of as a decline in the sacred. In this perspective, the sacramental is reduced to a minimum. The miracle of the Mass has disappeared as well as the less routine miracles; at least they may lose their significance for the religious life. The intercession with the network of the saints and with the faithful departed disappears. The three most ancient concomitants with the sacred — mystery, miracle and magic — have all been divested of their traditional importance and meaning. Berger (1969: 111) says that Protestants do not believe in a world peopled by sacred beings. However, this is incorrect, since they do believe in an immanent angelic host. There exists, in Berger's (1969: 111,112) view, a polarisation of the transcendent divinity and a fallen humanity, devoid of sacred qualities. In the middle is the natural universe, which is God's creation but devoid of the numinous. The world is lonely indeed, from a religious standpoint.

According to the same writer (1969: 112), the Catholic lives in a world of the sacred mediated to him through a variety of ways: the sacraments of the Church; the intercession of the saints; supernatural occurrence in miracles. Protestantism abolished most of these mediations, breaking the tie between heaven and earth and throwing man

back on himself. This, of course, was not intentional. It denuded the world of divinity in order to emphasise the terrible majesty of the transcendent God, and it threw man back on his fallenness in order that he might be open to God's grace, which is the only true miracle in the Protestant universe. In the present writer's opinion, God's grace has never been defined as a miracle. Berger believes that through this it has restricted man's relationship to the sacred by means of a narrow channel that is called God's word. With nothing remaining between a transcendent God and an immanent human world except this one channel, the sinking of the human world into implausibility has left an empirical reality in which some philosophers have applied the notion that 'God is dead'... This reality then became amenable to a rational penetration in thought and activity associated with modern science and technology. It could be maintained that in Berger's thought Protestantism has served as an historical prelude to secularisation.

Secularisation manifests itself nowadays in a variety of ways. For instance, in the writer's opinion, it may be observed that it has affected the use made of church buildings themselves, as they become venues for concerts, recitals and plays. In many instances, these events do not have a religious purpose, but rather a secular one. The conception of the church building as a sacred place in which God is especially present and which is exclusively devoted to prayer and the celebration of the Sacraments and other religious ceremonies is negated. It becomes a multi-purpose building hosting secular events for the benefit of a large number of people as well as performing its more traditional role. In the past, churches were used as meeting places, primarily because there was no other building available. In that instance they were used as communal meeting places. In the modern use of churches, there is no such community emphasis.

It must be emphasised that secularisation is not an evil, and no moral evaluation has been assigned to it. It is an orientation of society with respect to religion. Since society has changed from being a simple to a complex entity, secularisation is clearly uneven in its operation, affecting some groups of people more than others. This orientation of society has been shaped by several factors that will be considered in the next chapter. The advent of mechanisation and the incursion of computers into the home as well as the workplace have produced a profound change in human consciousness.

Secularisation, admitted by most social scientists, has dislodged religion from its community affiliation. The credibility of religion is no longer assigned to a single community base. This has occurred because man finds himself not in one community set but in several. The religious symbols that used to validate him in whatever sphere he found himself can no longer do so. The practice of religion has therefore retreated into the private domain.

Through the technical operations and knowledge that are required for modern day-to-day living, the conception of an all-powerful God has dimmed somewhat within the consciousness of man. His conscious state has been affected so that he cannot always readily interpret the meaning of his religious world, and so he tends no longer to believe in a redemption which is freely offered, but as something that has to be earned. In other words, it is a product to be worked for and purchased rather than given gratuitously.

3.7.3 Conclusion

Although Berger believes that secularisation is rooted in Biblical tradition, which he alleges, flowered through the Reformation and Renaissance, the present writer does not hold this view. It is more likely that the roots of this phenomenon lie in the Reformation, which introduced a spirit of enquiry into theological matters. The Reformation brought the notion of individuals taking personal responsibility for their salvation. It also made available the practice of reading and studying the Scriptures. The Renaissance, on the other hand, opened up the avenue of personal thought and enquiry. Unfortunately, it created a plethora of religious opinion that manifests itself in the large number of religious organisations today. As a result, the meaning of life in one's ordinary routines and one's relationship in the political arena is confused. This is due to the fact that a Christian world-view no longer exists which, in turn, has resulted in a philosophy of thought that alienates the human mind.

Secularisation is mediated by the economic processes of capitalism and the influence of modern science; both of which deeply affect the style of modern life. Through these features, society has changed from a simple to a complex reality. Man finds himself not in one community, but in several. The religious symbols that used to validate his

religious experience, no longer do so, and religion tends to be privatised. The orientation of society is shaped, not only by its historical aspects, but also by factors that will be considered in the next chapter. It can be said, that mechanisation and computers have changed human consciousness.

The Church works with the secular institutions of society. The Church represents the sacred, with its appropriate symbols, and the latter represents the profane. Where the religious compartment disintegrates, the world becomes more secularised and the Church infiltrated by the secular world.

Through technical operations, which are required for modern living, the idea of an all-powerful God has receded from the mind of man. He cannot always interpret the meaning of his religious world. Salvation and redemption, like other 'consumables', have to be worked for and earned.

3.8 Conclusion and Summary

Secularisation exists as a social reality in a political, intellectual and personal form. It may exist in these forms where the individual's mode of operation does not rely or relies negligibly on religious ways of thinking and action. Consciousness informs the individual in regard to what he thinks, and informs his acts in accordance with his thought. There is a relationship among the patterns of political, intellectual and personal secularisation since each one is a mode of operation in society by an individual or a group of individuals.

Secularisation is a process implying a change in the orientation of society. The present writer does not believe that the potential for secularisation is found in Biblical tradition. Neither does he believe that the Reformation and Renaissance nurtured its growth. This analysis was rejected earlier. Our view is that social conditions such as globalisation, modernism, fragmentation, the end of the community, which will be analysed in the next chapter, are responsible for the progress of this phenomenon.

The real potentiality lies in the Reformation and Renaissance. It is our view that, without these social conditions, secularisation would not have advanced as rapidly as it has done.

CHAPTER 4: CAUSES OF SECULARISATION

4.1. Introduction

The goal of this chapter is to express the relationship of the suspected causes of secularisation. This will be achieved by examining the work of Berger, Heelas, Bruce, Bird and Wilson in describing and analysing each cause and determining, if possible, how far it has contributed to secularisation. These causes comprise:

- modernity and modernism
- globalisation
- post-modernism and post-modernity
- plausibility
- fragmentation
- the end of community and
- rationalization

It is not suggested that these are the sole causes of secularisation, but it is expected to show that they have either brought about this phenomenon or have contributed to it in some way.

4.2. Modernity and modernisation

Bruce (1995: 127) defines modernisation as "the whole package of economic, political, cultural and social changes that comes with increasing reliance on inanimate rather than animate sources of power". This is a very loose definition but one the present writer believes is as comprehensive as one can enunciate.

To illustrate this, he (1996: 37) compares the example of pyramids built in previous times by men and beasts, with buildings that are constructed nowadays with the aid of machines and carbon fuels.

Bruce (1996: 37) claims that modernisation is associated with economic growth. Modern technology introduces changes in social structures, social relations and the way people think in society. Most social scientists believe that modern societies possess features that do not make them conducive to religion. These features comprise the fragmentation of societies, of social life, the disappearance of the community, the growth of massive bureaucracies and increasing rationalisation.

One feature of modernisation cited Bruce (1995: 127) is the division of single social institutions into specialised units. The family was once the unit for economic production as well as the place for biological and cultural reproduction. Now, work is generally performed outside the home. The family was once the site for socialisation and education. Now, schools exist in which specialists perform the work of education.

The writer (1995: 128) sketches a comparison between the modern economic process and what formerly existed. He looks back to the period of the Medieval Church in which it attempted to exercise control over production and the exchange of goods. In the fourteenth century the Church regarded money lending for profit as sinful, and its courts claimed jurisdiction over usurers.

Before this, in the thirteenth century, craft guilds used Church courts to enforce their restrictive practices in order to try breaches of contract. Modernisation saw the freeing of economic activity from the Church and the development of the world of work as a separate and autonomous entity, driven by its own values. Other aspects of life such as education, social welfare and health care also have passed out of Church control. Where the Church runs such activities, they do so within the framework of the secular authority.

Bruce (1995: 128) pictures life itself as becoming divided into specialised areas so that people form distinct social groups and classes. Economic growth has fathered a far greater range of occupations.

Considerable disparities of health existed in feudal times, but most people lived in close proximity. In medieval houses and castles the gentry and the servants slept in the same room, separated only by curtains. They ate at the same table, which had a salt dish marking the division between the gentry and the common people. A strong hierarchical structure nevertheless existed, even though both classes inhabited the same physical and mental space. As classes and cities developed with the expansion of the population and the growth of large factories, people spent more and more time with their own social group and less and less time with their superiors and subordinates.

Bruce (1995: 128) maintains that innovation and economic expansion have brought with them occupational mobility. People no longer do the jobs their forebears did. People do not think of themselves as always occupying the same social class, or remaining in a fixed level in a hierarchical world. Modern man is essentially egalitarian.

Economic expansion inevitably brings contact with strangers. In a complex and mobile society, there is no way of knowing whether one is superior or subordinate to another person. Soldiers can move from one regiment to another because there is a uniform ranking system. When people do not know who should bow first, they give up the attempt and assume that equality exists. The separation of work and home, the separation of the public and the private makes for equality. One cannot be a serf in the mornings and an autonomous individual in the evenings. One has to be a serf or an autonomous individual full-time. The decline in religion removes a shared belief system and consequently the sanctioning of inequality and subjection. The default position seems to be that of egalitarianism, in Bruce's (1995: 129) opinion.

He (1995: 129) thinks that when democracy emerged, it brought with it the conception that we were all alike. This exaggerated rather than diminished social distance. The better off, now unsure of the legitimacy of their superiority, moved away from the confines of the relatively poor in order to safeguard their prerogatives. As towns and cities developed, they did so with clear class divisions. Different social groups began to see the world in different ways. The idea of a single universe populated by all manner and conditions of persons having a place in some single grand design became less and less plausible.

Bruce (1995: 130) states that the Protestant tradition, which came to dominate English Christianity by rejecting an external authority, made it possible for existing groups to re-work the gospel in ways suited to their changing circumstances. Instead of one great split, the religious culture fragmented into small pieces, like a car windscreen. Bruce (1995: 130) does not inform us what he means by the gospel being re-worked. Possibly, he means that each existing group emphasised certain aspects of the gospel, according to their perception of social conditions.

He (1995: 130) then argues that in the twentieth century, close knit, integrated and small communities disappeared, undermined and replaced by large scale commercial and industrial enterprises, by the emergence of nation states having large impersonal bureaucracies, and by the development of urban agglomerations as typical residential settings. The present writer agrees with this position. This process described by Bruce (1995: 130) by which life is increasingly enmeshed and organised in society, not locally, but societally is termed by Bryan Wilson as 'societalisation'.

Bruce (1995: 130) states, quite correctly, that the decline in community damages religion in three aspects: when every birth, marriage and death in generation after generation was celebrated and marked by the same rituals in the same building, then the religion that legitimated those rituals was powerful and persuasive because it was woven into the fabric of the life of the village. When the total community that lived and played together gave way to the suburb, there was little held in common left to celebrate.

The decline of the community not only brought changes in things to do. It altered fundamentally the way religious beliefs were held. Beliefs are held more strongly when they are not examined but left as they are. This condition, of course, is most easily achieved when the entire group shares a worldview uncritically.

He (1995: 130,131) believes that modern societies are culturally diverse places which no longer offer a constant reaffirmation of any particular world view, especially if the latter is grounded in a democracy, where a basic egalitarianism and freedom of belief exist, preventing an elite minority imposing its own vision on society. A practical

freedom where one may worship at any altar, or none, has profound consequences for the way one can think about that worship. For one tends to think that we choose God, rather than he choosing us. One may respect and love God, but that he may no longer be feared might mean that one major source for establishing religion correctly and ensuring that one's children follow in the footsteps of their parents has been removed. As opposed to this view, it might be argued that love, which, we are told, is as strong as death, might provide an even greater impetus to formulate religion in such a way that faith would be conveyed and passed on to one's children. If, Bruce (1995: 130) asks, modernisation brings cultural choice, the latter makes it less likely that one will choose to believe in God, and also that such belief will reflect the posture of the modern era.

Modernity, as noted above, is a term that social scientists use to describe the change that society undergoes through the effects of the Industrial Revolution, according to Bird (1999: 16). As a result, societies become more complex in their organisation, and the pace of social change increases dramatically. Such societies tend to be urban, often economically highly productive with varying forms of inequality. They often contain a wide range of different cultures and belief systems.

Sociology developed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in two ways. First, to investigate the new society which was forming in the west, as a result of the Industrial Revolution; and second, to investigate the small scale societies in Africa, India and South America. There is no universally agreed definition of modernity, but its main features can be identified in a society that makes it distinct. For instance, most of the population of England live in cities; the organisations in which people work are large, whereby complex, bureaucratic and scientific ways of thinking about the world occur: religion has declined in importance; society is complex, with ethnic, class, gender, age and religious divisions. All these features are characteristics of a modern society, according to Bird (1999: 16).

As society grows more urban in nature, close-knit communities decline, and as the choices concerning what to believe become wider, religion becomes less significant. Modernisation and its concomitants, which are discussed in this chapter, are clearly a cause of secularisation, in the present writer's opinion. Bird (1999: 80) lists six meanings of the latter, namely:

- religious symbols become less important;
- things are regarded as 'this-worldly', rather than supernatural,
- religion becomes less engaged with society, and has less to say about how society is run;
- ideas about the sacred and the magical decline in significance;
- rational ways of doing things take over from religious way of doing things;
- religious beliefs take on a non-religious or quasi-religious form, as is evidenced; in the New Age Movement and the New Religious Movement.

In fact, modernisation has effected the movement of large sections of the population away from the countryside, disrupted the pattern of religious life, a pattern established over many centuries.

4.2.1. The effects of modernity

The New Age Movement and the New Religious Movements are phenomena that are believed to have arisen through modernity. People who are attracted to the New Age Movement are unsure of their identity.

4.2.1.1. Uncertainties connected with modernity

In Heelas' (1996: 137) opinion the uncertainties, which are implicit in modernity, generate this problem. It is worthwhile to consider for whom these movements cater where they are not attracted to traditional forms of religion. At the same time, some people have faith in the certainties of modernity.

New Age solutions are likely to be an attraction to upper or high-class people whose lives are not functioning as well as they believe they could. Adherents of the New Age have lost faith in conventional remedies such as the capitalist system. They view the New Age as an alternative to a way of life that will end in disaster. On the other hand, there are those whose vision is set on the capitalist system itself. Again, a conventional remedy is considered as non-violable and they resort to magical systems, in Heelas' (1996: 137,138) view.

Heelas (1996: 138-140) states, that those who pay no attention to what modernity has to offer, regard work as alienating. Politicians are seen to be corrupt, and consumerism is taken as undermining the future of the planet for which they have a deep concern. In order to save the latter, they need to save themselves. Although this need provides a strong motivational role, it does not explain why people turn to the New Age rather than to its alternatives. Such people sever themselves from modernity because they feel that they have been pinned down by the institutional order. They see that rules, regulations and imperatives, the routines of bureaucracy, the necessity of the consumer and the timetable of the individual have dominated their lives. It is this domination that has secured a reaction. Some people feel they must escape the 'iron cage' of modernity. They are uncertain that materialistic consumption provides the answers. It is not that consumption is bad for the future, rather, there is more to life than identity as a consumer. Consumerism, by itself, is not self-satisfying. The New Age is a seedbed for those who perceive some failure in institutional religion.

Various aspects of modernity such as capitalism, technology, liberalism, pluralism and the degree of communication that is now possible have had a corrosive effect on the institutional order. Social scientists such as Paul Heelas have associated this de-institutionalisation with a turn to the self. Loss of faith in the institutional order of society is associated with an increasing reliance of what the self has to offer, this writer (1996: 142) thinks. The authors (Berger, Berger & Kellner, 1973: 85,86) of the book *The Homeless Mind* agree with this position when they say: "The institutional fabric, whose basic function has always been to provide meaning and stability for the individual, has become incohesive, fragmented, and thus progressively deprived of plausibility. Institutions then confront the individual as fluid and unreliable, in the

extreme case, unreal. Inevitably, the individual is thrown back upon himself, on his own subjectivity, from which he must dredge up the meaning and stability that he requires to exist." They also say (1973: 85,86): "Mainstream institutions cease to be the home of the self."

Heelas (1996: 143) sums the New- Age state adherent as an individual, who, instead of seeking reality externally, seeks it internally. It is the place where he or she can find meaning.

If this argument is true, then as Heelas (1996: 143) states, the New Age provides a cultural momentum in which people go deeper into themselves. Berger (1973: 89) and his associates agree: "It may even be that man's constitution is such, that inevitably, he will construct institutions which will provide an ordered reality for himself."

Heelas (1996: 144) believes that perhaps the point made by Berger and his associates is over-stated. Institutions have not weakened their hold, neither have they failed to determine the lives of many people. Traditions and regulated forms of life have not disappeared. Organised Christianity still exists, even though it has less of a social hold than formerly. Fundamentalist Christianity, also, has not withered, and work is even more demanding than it was previously. The calendar determines the future, and the manuals tell us what to do. Nevertheless, not inconsiderable numbers of people have identified themselves as 'expressivists', interested in themselves and what they could become. But, Heelas (1996: 144) inquires whether the turn to self is due to the experience of modernity as an 'iron cage', or an 'iron cage' which is disintegrating.

People, on the contrary, can pay attention to what modernity has to offer. In this instance, the self-worth ethic is paradigm. By achieving one's goals, one comes alive. Accordingly, work is to be valued. The previously named author (1996: 145, 146) maintains that the effort required for authenticity or spirituality and the effort required to make a living within the capitalist system, become healed.

Berger (1967: 217,218) expresses the relationship between the public and the private in his book *The Shape of Human Work*: "The two spheres (public and private) are geographically and socially separate. And since it is in the latter that people typically and normally locate their essential identities, one can say that they do not live where they work. 'Real life' and one's authentic life are supposed to be centred in the private sphere. Life at work tends to take on the character of pseudo-reality and pseudo-identity. The private sphere, especially the family, becomes the expression of the 'one who really is.' The sphere of work is apprehended conversely as the region in which one is 'not really oneself', or that in which one plays a Role."

Heelas (1996: 146) thinks that if this view is correct, then many individuals have identity problems when they step outside the family setting. It is reasonable to suppose that such people could become interested in the New Age, which promises to restore life to work, provided, that is, such people do not possess a sufficient rationale to counter the identity problem at work.

Heelas (1996: 146) cites one such New Age group as Findhorn, which runs an event called 'the spirit of business', sub-titled as 'a working retreat for tomorrow's business leader'. The rationale behind this event is that people are hungry for a more meaningful approach to life and work. If we are in touch with our inner promptings and potential, surely we will be more effective, productive and fulfilled at work. Heelas (1996: 146) believes that potential aspirants are those who hold that their individual value is not being catered for at work. That such is the case is witnessed by the growth of courses and seminars aimed at transforming the experience of being at work whilst enhancing productivity.

This approach to life is clearly a result of secularisation. Heelas (1996: 147) states that it is difficult to dispute the claim that the New Age therapies have benefited individuals and enhanced their efficacy as human beings, especially those who work in high-powered jobs. He (1996: 148) remarks: "Many get involved in the New Age for reasons to do with prosperity."

Bryan Wilson's (1982: 8) contention is that sects, including the New Age variety, "proliferate in periods of social unrest" and "in times of rapid and social change, when people experience a dissonance between observed reality and the beliefs and values of their culture and the established religions, there is an increased interest in mysticism." Whether there is cultural unrest, which promotes New Age values today, is hard to say. In Heelas' (1996: 149) opinion, when people are disturbed in their customs, it is more likely that they will seek for replacements or alternatives, and if rapid change undermines the securities of the established order it is conceivable that, in the absence of other options, people will turn within for identity provision. For such individuals, the New Age provides alternatives to the conventional world.

4.2.1.2. Certainties connected with modernity

We have viewed modernity from a position of uncertainty in which the New Age provides alternatives, with the promise of handling difficulties arising from the modern age. We now turn to consider those who view modernity from a position of certainty, in which the New Age has a core position advancing the individual's interests and expectations.

Heelas (1996: 155) believes that in this position of certainty the traditional self is thought to be embedded in the established order of things. Tradition-formed ways of life are those that a person considers to be external paths of authority, control and destiny, rather than a reliance on the self. Therefore, living a good life, solving problems, seeking advancement or obtaining salvation is a matter of heeding social, cultural or religious duties and obligations. In such a milieu, there is little incentive to exercise one's autonomy. The person is other-informed rather than self-informed or individualistic. The cultural domain has been weakened since the time of the Renaissance, and over the last couple of centuries people have ceased to think of themselves as belonging to or being informed by an over-arching system. Such de-traditionalised selves have adopted cultural values and assumptions that are based on an individualistic and unsupported role. Such people consider themselves to be self-directing, relying on their inner sources of authority, control and responsibility.

The shift to the self takes two forms. One version of the ethic is utilitarian individualistic, in which the person concentrates on "seeking to satisfy his wants and interests" (1996: 156). Such concerns are common in modern society.

The second version, the expressivist individual, assumes that there is more to being a person than satisfying those wants which are triggered by the capitalist system. Utilitarian pursuits are minimised on the grounds that they encourage greed, selfishness, envy and superficiality. What matters most to the expressivist individual, according to Heelas (1996: 156,167), is creativity, personal growth, being in tune with oneself and meaningful relationships. This school favours an ethic based on the belief that good acts are those that manifest one's authentic nature. The individual does not live by extrinsic moral precepts but by the reflexive organisation of the self. Evaluative and moral judgements are nothing but expressions of preference, attitude or feeling.

Heelas (1996: 157,158) believes that the New Age is unlikely to appeal to those who are locked into other-directed forms of life and identity. Such people have public selves and look for guidance from outside, and not within. The New Agers would regard the person in a tradition-dominated culture as exclusivistic.

It is sometimes stated that detraditionalisation paves the way for a religion of humanity, a theory initially proposed by Durkheim. Detraditionalisation has not completely taken place in England. According to Heelas (1996: 158,159), detraditionalisation is more associated with utilitarian values than with expressivistic. Those who are involved in the materialistic or hedonistic are unlikely to be attracted to teachings concerning authenticity. Disintegration of the sense of belonging to a community need not result in the adoption of New Age values; it could be a retreat into selfishness. Detraditionalisation of cultural barriers paves the way for New Age beliefs but it does not provide the necessary conditions for the development of the New Age. Where traditionalisation is associated with humanism, or an internalised view of religion, then involvement in the belief of self-discovery that the individual is the primary agent for progress, growth, responsibility and judgement will be effected. The New Age quest then becomes plausible.

Heelas (1996: 164) holds the view that *mainstream* contemporary Christianity is more de-traditionalised in contrast to the past. Authority has passed from a God-centred locus to a self-centred locus. Belief in the inherent sinfulness of humankind is less evident today than it used to be.

Themes consonant with empowerment and self-actualisation are more important in the Church now. Also, relatively few Christians are content to heed religious teachings and remain faithful to a particular organisation. Heelas (1996: 164) thinks that Christians exercise their authority to decide what they believe in the Bible, sometimes combining religious teachings with those drawn from elsewhere. Some even claim that one religion is as good as any other. For many people today, according to Heelas (1996: 165), it is considerably easier to draw on a number of religions than it was in the traditional past.

The present writer agrees with Heelas that more and more Christians may emphasise the immanence of God, although it was always a Christian teaching. Increasing numbers accord Christianity a therapeutic role, which has as much to do with self-actualisation in the here and now as with eternal salvation.

4.2.2 Summary and conclusion

Increased wealth and economic growth, generated by the advancement of technology, are the forerunners of modernisation. Growth in the economy has also introduced occupational mobility and, to some extent, equality. Social groupings have become more distinct and each one sees the world in a different way. As economic growth continued with the emergence of large-scale industrial enterprises, small closely bound communities disintegrated. Large numbers of people moved from a rural to an urban setting. The decline of the integrated community affected adversely institutional religion. Where, in previous times, one religion dominated the community, an individual's birth, marriage and death could be celebrated and legitimated by the dominant religion whose life was enmeshed with that of the community. As the integrated community broke up, different cultures and beliefs arrived extending the possibility of choice. Hence, the legitimation of any one religion is reduced, since the significance of the choice of any religion is lessened.

Modernity has not only contributed to secularisation but is believed to have been a condition for the establishment of the New Age and New Religious Movements, whose ideas are based on the certain and uncertain elements within modernity itself.

The uncertainties of modernity arise where professional people believe their lives are not functioning well. Their faith in the capitalist system has waned, but their faith in the New Age will save them. They are not attracted to traditional forms of religion that they believe have failed to supply a remedy. The uncertainties of modernity sometimes bring about an attitude that regards work as alienating. They believe that consumerism, which is unsatisfying, undermines the planet for which they have a deep concern. The system does not allow for life beyond consumerism. Instead, bureaucracy governs their lives.

Concern for self has arisen because capitalism, technology, liberalism and pluralism have adversely affected the institutional order. The institutional fabric, which formerly provided meaning and stability to the individual, has now become fragmented, implausible, fluid and unreliable. Thus, the individual is thrown back on self, which is the only place where he can find meaning.

A second form in the uncertainty of modernity is expressed in the self-worth ethic. In this mode, by working hard and achieving goals, one becomes alive. What is required for authenticity and what is needed to make a living becomes integrated and healed.

Despite concern for the self, institutions have not weakened, nor have they failed to govern the lives of many people. Organised Christianity still exists even though it has less of a social hold on society than formerly.

The certainties of modernity arise in those who consider the paths of authority and destiny to be more important than a reliance on the self. To obey social, cultural or religious duties provided the manner of living a good life, solving problems, seeking advancement and obtaining salvation. Such a person is other-informed rather than self-informed or individualistic. There are two forms: one is utilitarian individualistic, where a person seeks to satisfy his wants and interests. Those who follow this form are

unlikely to be attracted to authenticity. The second form, the 'expressivist' individual, believes there is more to being a person than the satisfaction of his desires, which have arisen through the capitalist system. On the contrary, one must minimise one's wants so as to obviate greed and superficiality.

Instead, one should exercise creativity, develop personal relationships and growth. Good acts, which are not governed by an external moral code, manifest an authentic nature.

4.3 Globalisation

Bruce (1996: 55,56) points out that where there is a move away from religion dominated by churches to one dominated by either sects or denominations, and in the late twentieth century the emergence of religious movements having the features of cults, these changes have been brought about by the development of a more modern global society, bringing with it a consequent increase in individualism.

As a result of the growing ties of interdependence that now affect everyone, the world has become a single social system. This process may be called 'globalisation'. In such a society, individuals have a greater choice of things to believe in, inasmuch as the beliefs of many cultures become available.

Bruce (1996: 58) says that this has a profound effect on the nature of religious practice, religious belief and how religions are organised. The decline in the support of the established religions is not matched by a corresponding increase in the New Age and New Religious Movements. A declining number of people choose a belief system that is religious, according to Bruce (1996: 58).

The secularisation thesis implies that modernity causes the decline of religion and that modernity itself is becoming more global. Part of the process of globalisation involves the decline of the social significance of religion in all modern societies. According to Bird (1999: 84), those who experienced modernisation at an earlier time would

experience secularisation sooner. Globalisation will now be discussed in relation to post-modernism and post-modernity.

4.3.1. Summary and conclusion

The world has become a single social system in which various ideas, culture systems, beliefs and attitudes have effected an increase in individualism. There now exists a greater choice in what to believe. Modernity itself has become global, and thereby has effected a decline in the social significance of institutional religion.

4.4 Post -modernism and post -modernity

One of the widespread beliefs in modernity is progress. Society, it is believed, would solve its problems by science and technology, helping to bring an end to disease, poverty and inequality. Modern efficient management in business and government would create both wealth and jobs for all people, and religious movements would ally themselves to social reform, so that there would be an optimism concerning the inevitability of social progress and the advancement of humanity to a better future. This belief, stated by Bird (1999: 161, 162), seemed justified by the real improvements brought about in public health policies and the advancement of modern medicine.

A distinction is made by social scientists between post-modernity and post-modernism. Bird (1999: 162) enunciates this by saying that Post-modernism is a title used to describe a number of cultural features such as the increasing use and significance of computers, the development of virtual realities and the new genres in fiction which de-emphasise narrative and plot. Post-modernity, on the other hand, refers to structural changes, such as globalisation, the decline of class-based politics and the increasing emphasis made on environmental politics. Thus, post-modernism is the consequence of post-modernity.

Belief in progress was coupled with what are called the 'Grand Narratives'. These are over-arching belief systems which claimed universal authority and legitimacy. Religion, such as Christianity, and science in general functioned as grand narratives. They claimed a superior status over other belief systems. Each of them claimed to describe the causes of social problems and inequalities. Each of them held out the promise of a better future, whether it was the religious promise of salvation or science's promise of material ease and prosperity.

Over the last twenty years or so, post-modernists, voiced by Bird (1999: 162,163), have described what they call the collapse of the Grand Narratives: science, technology and efficient management have lost most of their prestige in a century which has witnessed two world wars accompanied by appalling devastation, the threat of nuclear and germ warfare, the widening of the inequalities between the rich and the poor, and the environmental threat which promises to permeate all life on earth. To many people, religion seems unable to account for such dreadful evils. Thus, post-modernity engenders a lack of security, a lack of order and a lack of guarantee of stability.

Bird (1999: 163) offers the view that Post modernists state that globalisation has radically affected how we live. Powerful communications, television and computers provide access to other cultures, ideas and products from the entire world, the consequence of which can be a threat to local traditions.

Information is readily obtainable. In fact, one could say that there is an over-production of information and an enormous increase in cultural artefacts such as cds, books, clip art and advertisements. The individual is left to interpret information and to assign a meaning to it. As post modernists would put it, we consume the products, symbols and signs of a globalised economy, but we assign our own meanings and significance to the act of consumption. We are what we consume and our identities are formed and changed through the acts of consumption. One can hardly dissent from this view.

A clearer aspect of this can be seen in the fact that signs and symbols can take on a life of their own, quite apart from their original meanings. Bird (1999: 163) relates that national flags, for instance, can become objects of veneration even after their original

purpose has been forgotten and where the values they once stood for are no longer accepted. In recent years, in England, some Christian churches have de-emphasised the traditional symbol of the cross. It could be said that this was done because a proliferation of signs and symbols saturated the country and drained the cross of its significance. No room was found for the cross in the Millennium Dome, and the established church played a secondary role in the celebrations at Greenwich because of the Government's insistence that an equal prominence should be given to all religions. The de-emphasis of the cross is a phenomenon of post-modernity that is termed de-traditionalisation. In this view, Bird (1999: 172) maintains that older traditions lose their significance as more and more traditions become available. Some social scientists believe that globalisation tears more deeply-rooted traditions from their ancient moorings.

Some aspects of the New Age are implicit in this process. Many new religions possess a hybridity such that it is a matter of little importance where any religion originated. What is important is whether the religion in question can work. According to this perspective, religious traditions may have become a collection of stories about how people lived their lives, giving no more sense of correctness than any other. A change of focus accompanies the de-traditionalisation process, which is simply described by Heelas (1996: 29): "Autonomy and freedom are highly valued; and authority lies with the experience of the self, or, more broadly, the natural realm. This means that New Agers attach great importance to the self-ethic, which includes emphasis on the exercise of self-responsibility. ... de-traditionalisation is also associated with the movements' perennialised outlook, namely that the same wisdom can be found at the heart of religious tradition."

De-traditionalisation is therefore not so much an acceptance of all religious traditions, whatever they are, but is associated with rejection of the underlying emphasis of religious organisation, especially where authority resides. Bird (1999: 171) states that for New Agers, authority resides neither in tradition, nor in religious organisation, but within the individual.

Hybridity seems to be an aspect not only of new religious movements but also one of the post-modern society, being linked to consumer choice and sophisticated marketing systems. Bird (1999: 169) remarks that New religious movements involve a mixing of different religious traditions on the basis that each one has something to offer.

Many religious traditions, including mainstream faiths, use mass communication systems to project their ideas... Many New Age movements have web sites and thus can disseminate their message to a diverse audience in any part of the world. Bird (1999: 173) believes that this is an aspect that is able to tear traditional religions from their original social location and lead to de-traditionalisation. Consumer choice may, by these means, be widened, and religion could exist solely on the Internet, according to Bird (1999: 173).

It may be enquired whether there is an antidote to the New Age Movement within the post-modern period. It could be argued that although there may not be an antidote as such, it has provoked a response in the form of fundamentalism. If post-modernity is a system in which areas of relative security are woven with radical doubt in the face of uncertainty, then religious fundamentalism has a special appeal, in the opinion of Bird (1999: 175). This appeal, Bird (1999: 176) thinks, stems from its promise to rescue the individual from the complexities of choice and to inculcate a certainty into life's decisions so that the element of risk is obviated.

Bird (1999: 164) maintains that in the post-modern world, the person is viewed as 'fluid'. The process of socialisation no longer moulds our identities; instead, we invent ourselves. The consumption of goods and services becomes important in this era. It is a way of changing identity. This consumption becomes seductive in many cases in which advertising acts as a prime agent.

Bird (1999: 165) reckons that there are many realities and no authority in the post-modern world. There is an emphasis on *mixing* the styles and genres that occur in society and religion. Politicians appear on *games* and comedy shows; the personal lives of politicians and religious leaders are held up for public scrutiny; religious and political systems are compared and criticised. This characteristic of post-modernity makes it

difficult or even impossible to find reliable sources of authority that can be trusted and in which people can have confidence. Concepts of moral leadership and authority are so often undermined that they seem hardly to exist. In the past, we may have believed what we were told by religious leaders because they were authority figures. This is no longer so.

In the absence of clear moral directives and political rules, individual and group decisions about what to do and how to do it increase in significance. Politics and morality, according to Bird (1999: 165), become increasingly risky and unpredictable: and also more important.

Another consequence of post-modernity, which Bird (1999: 165,166) states, is the difficulty, sometimes the impossibility, of distinguishing reality from image. This distinction between reality and image ceases to have any significance. Instead, we live in a world of media simulations that appear more real than the 'reality' we live in. The signs and symbols of post-modernity belong to hyper-reality, a term which is defined as that which refers only to itself and not to any presumed 'reality'.

Television and computers create this hyper-reality. It is therefore alleged that events that are presented on television are only real insofar as they appear as images on the television screen.

In Bird's (1999: 166,167) view, post-modernism presents grounds for both optimism and pessimism. It emphasises plurality, which erodes traditional social and religious institutions and privileged sources of authority. This can be seen in the empowering of those groups which were formerly dis-empowered such as women, gays and ethnic minorities on the one hand and voracious global consumption, which can be viewed as chaotic, on the other.

Bird (1999: 167) maintains that technical developments are crucial to theories of post-modernity. Consumption by the most affluent sections of the most affluent societies is normative. Society is characterised by the existence of many sub groups and sub cultures, the erosion of class-based politics and traditions, the growth of movements

such as environmentalism, feminism, a 'gay' culture, the rejection of cultural elitism and the diminished power of national governments to manage political and economic affairs. Bird (1999: 167) believes that there is an absence of any standard of values as to what is true or false, right or wrong, worthwhile or worthless, thus the removal of the distinction of what is real and what is not, and individual experimentation with identity of the self by means of absorption of the culture, its beliefs and its practices. It is hard to disagree with this position in today's society.

4.4.1 Summary and conclusion

Post-modernity refers to structural changes in society while post-modernism is a phrase which describes certain cultural features such as the increased use of computers.

Modernity seemed to offer a belief that society would be able to solve the problems of disease, poverty and inequality and that religious movements would ally themselves to social reform so that the inevitability of human progress would be achieved. Belief in a better future was coupled to the 'Grand Narratives', which were over-arching belief systems claiming to have universal legitimacy. Christianity and science functioned as Grand Narratives.

Post-modernists state that the Grand Narratives have collapsed. Science, technology, management and religion have lost their prestige. They also state that Globalisation radically affects the way we live. Mass communication, television and computers give access to other cultures and threaten local traditions.

In the post-modern world, there are many realities but no authority, unless it resides in the individual. The latter is regarded as 'fluid.' A mixture of styles and genres makes it difficult to find reliable sources of authority that can be trusted. Post-modernism emphasises plurality, which erodes traditional and social institutions and authority. Post-modernity brings an absence of values of what is right or wrong, worthwhile or worthless, real or unreal.

4.5 Plausibility

Secularisation has been caused by a collapse in the plausibility of religion and in its definitions of reality, according to Berger (1969: 126). This, he says, is an instance of subjective secularisation or secularisation of the consciousness. Objectively, there is a plurality of options from which one can choose, including religion, but none of which can coerce the individual to allegiance. One consequence of secularisation is that religion has been polarised between the most public and the most private sectors of life, between the institutions of the state and of the family. The state divests itself of any religious authority and does not act as an enforcement agency for the previously dominant religious institution. A privatised religiosity, if practised in the family, no matter how real, no longer fulfils the orthodox task of religion that was based on the community sharing a common religious life. The values of a private religiosity could be irrelevant to the institutional social sphere. It does not have to remain, as Berger (1969: 133) asserts that: "Religion manifests itself as public rhetoric and private virtue."

Religion has thus become a sub-culture of society causing it to become fragmented. The family can be a somewhat fragile structure upon which religion rests. This fragility can only be reduced through seeking more broadly based plausibility structures, such as other churches or wider religious groupings.

Secularisation leads to a pluralist situation, in which many religions compete with one another. It therefore leads to a demonopolisation of religion. Through most of history, religious establishments have acted as monopolies in society, legitimating both the individual and public life. These monopolies were agencies organised for thought and action. Berger (1969: 134) states that the world was defined by them, and that they exercised the instruments of social control. In the west, Christianity fulfilled the role of a monopoly. It employed military violence externally, as in the Crusades, and, internally, in the persecution of heretics and Jews. He says (1969: 135) two institutions struggled for the honour of being the main embodiment of this monopoly, namely the Church and the state, although both institutions represented the same religious world. Berger (1969: 136) concludes that when the unity of Christendom was accomplished, it led to an ever-widening toleration of religious deviance in both Catholic and Protestant camps.

An important characteristic of a pluralist situation is that allegiance can no longer be assumed.

Berger (1969: 137) thinks that religious tradition, which previously was authoritatively imposed, has now to be 'marketed'. It must be 'sold' to a clientele, which is not constrained to 'buy'. This view introduces the conception that individuals, allied to no religion, regard various religious traditions as options to be accepted or rejected. It also imposes the view that religion can be bought or sold. In the opinion of the present writer, this lays too mechanistic an outlook on society. In the monopolistic situation Berger (1969: 137) maintains there was no pressure to produce results, whereas the pressure to achieve results in a competitive situation results in the formation of a bureaucracy. However, the concept of 'marketing religion' is strange to the English mentality. One associates it with American evangelicalism rather than with the English scene.

As noted earlier, Berger (1969: 139) maintains that in the modern world, internal and external social relations are administered bureaucratically. Bureaucracies demand specific types of personnel, specific in terms of the function and the skills required. Bureaucratic institutions recruit and train the personnel they seek. Berger (1969: 139,140) says that this means that similar types of leadership emerge in different religious institutions irrespective of the traditional pattern. These types speak the same language and naturally understand each others' problems. Bureaucratisation of the religious institutions provides what Berger calls a "social psychological foundation for 'ecumenicity.'"

Such 'ecumenicity', Berger (1969: 140,141) believes, makes for friendly relations between different groups engaged in religion. This is demanded by the pluralist situation, too. Religious rivals are not regarded as an enemy but as people in the same boat. The competitive market is established when it is impossible to use political machinery to eliminate rivals.

The effect of a pluralist situation is not limited to a social-psychological aspect of religion but also to its content. When a religious institution occupied a monopolistic position in society, its content could be established according to the theological lore that seemed plausible to the leadership. This does not mean, according to Berger (1969: 144), that the religious leadership or its theological decisions were immune to forces existing in society. It means that there is a necessity to collaborate with other institutions.

As stated previously, religion cannot be imposed now, but has to be 'sold,' to use Berger's (1969: 144) terminology. If individuals do not want the product, they will not 'buy' it. Although religious institutions can still count on traditional elements within them that will stem the impulses of taking a too progressive line, a dynamic is introduced such that it becomes difficult to maintain unchanging religious tradition. This need not mean that rapid change will occur, or that the principle of unchangeability will be surrendered theologically, but that the possibility of change will be introduced into the system. At some future time, a possibility may be realised which will then have to be legitimated theologically. This would be easier to realise for some religious groups rather than others; for instance, Berger (1969: 144,145) thinks that Protestants would find it easier to change compared with Catholics. However, no group can escape this effect completely.

If the world of the 'consumers' is secularised, as Berger (1969: 145) maintains, their preference will reflect this. They will prefer religious contents which are consonant with their secularised consciousness rather than with those which are not consonant. In extreme cases, for instance liberal Protestantism, the secularised consciousness may lead to a deliberate exclusion of all, or nearly all, the supernatural elements in the religious tradition, and a legitimation of the continued existence of the institution that once embodied the tradition in secular terms. In other cases, as Berger (1969: 146) points out, it may mean that the supernatural elements are de-emphasised or pushed into the background, whilst the institution is 'sold' under a label of values which would be acceptable to its clientele.

Berger (1969: 146) says, quite correctly, that the significance of religion today is in the private sphere, and consumer preference naturally reflects its needs in this domain. Religion can easily be marketed if it can be shown to be relevant to this sphere. This entails the utilisation of the moral and therapeutic functions of religion, which means that the emphasis is on private morality, family problems, the neighbourhood and the psychological needs of the individuals. It is in this area that religion continues to be relevant, even though the area may be highly secularised. The application of religious perspectives to political or economic problems is deemed highly irrelevant (presumably by either religious authority or by the individual), according to Berger (1969: 146). This, however, is not the case in England. We cite the moral and political opposition on the subjects of euthanasia and abortion by the Roman Catholic Church, and the opposition by the Anglican bishops to the war against Iraq as examples that disprove this claim. Berger (1969: 146,147) believes that the Christian denominations have had little influence on the economic or political views of their own members, even though the latter cherish the existence of their communion as private individuals. The present writer endorses this view.

Berger (1969: 148) thinks that the pluralistic situation not only has brought back the age of 'ecumenicity' but the rediscovery of the heritage of those respective religious institutions which are contradictory.

This writer (1969: 149) also states that the objective reality of religious worlds is conducted and maintained through empirically available social processes. A religious world will present itself to an individual's consciousness as reality only to the extent that the appropriate plausibility structure exists. If the plausibility structure is sound and durable, the religious world will be sound and durable also and real to the consciousness. Optimally, the religious world will be taken for granted. But if the plausibility structure is weakened, then the subjective reality of the religious world will be in question. What was originally taken for granted would now require an act of faith. If further weakened, then the religious content can only be maintained in consciousness as opinion or feeling.

The age in which we live has often been termed an age of scepticism, implying that a process of secularisation has occurred in society. The pluralistic situation plunges religion into a crisis of credibility in Berger's (1969: 150) argument, and does so by virtue of its connection with secularisation. The pluralistic situation, in replacing religious monopoly, makes it ever more difficult to maintain or construct a viable plausibility structure. The plausibility structure loses its durability because it can no longer enlist society to serve the purpose of social confirmation. It becomes increasingly difficult for the members of a religious world to remain unified in modern or post-modern society.

Bruce (1996: 36) assumes that decline in the popularity of religion promotes the implausibility of religious ideas. He believes that mainstream churches have become secularised to some extent by reducing the supernatural, although he does not specify which churches are secularised. Bruce reckons that articles of belief, such as the miracles, the virgin birth, the bodily resurrection of Christ, the expectation of Christ's return in glory have been dropped from the teachings of some of the major churches; although, again, he does not specify which churches and leaves it as a general statement. Bruce is stating basically the same notion as Berger. Bruce (1996: 36) believes that religion has been psychologised and therefore has to be personalised.

The present writer believes that this has always been the case in order for religion to mean anything to the individual. What were previously taken as true stories about the real world have been re-orientated into propositions that come true when they have the desired effect on the mind of the believer.

Bruce (1996: 36) argues that this has led the way to the demise of competing convictions and the establishment of belief systems that are treated as equally valid. This has been extended beyond the Christian church to include all peoples. The effect of this is to obviate dividing the world into the saved and the damned, the righteous and the degenerate. Bruce (1996: 36) affirms that we are all God's people. To some extent, the present writer endorses these views.

Further, the present writer's view is that from an ecumenical standpoint, the Roman Catholic Church emerged from obscurity in the 1850s with the reinstatement of the hierarchy. At that time, the church had a 'barque of Peter' mentality; it was alleged to be the sole authorised vessel of salvation. Those who were not in the barque of Peter could be saved, but, according to this thinking, the members of the Roman church had a better opportunity of making it. Religious disputes were sometimes bitter, and the church was looked upon with suspicion by the Church of England and other churches, a stance which the Roman Catholics believed were erroneous and heretical. When Pope John XXXIII opened the Second Vatican Council, it seemed to many Catholics that the wind of change had arrived, bringing about a renewal of thinking and practice which would be suited to and relevant to a world which had changed vastly since the First Vatican Council of 1870. It must be stated that Vatican II was not the tonic that satisfied every Roman Catholic. A small minority viewed the changes, especially in the liturgy, as invalid, and that the Council had no power to impose such a change. But the vast majority of people welcomed a Mass that was celebrated by a priest facing the people in a language that they could understand. The liturgy ceased to be a one-man affair with spectators, since the latter were incorporated into it in the performance of reading, singing, ministering communion to the faithful and taking communion to the sick. It had become something of a democratic organisation in its practice.

4.5.1 Summary and conclusion

Institutional religion has become polarised between the private and public sectors of life due to the plurality of options. Instead of being enforced by the state, religion has become a sub-culture of society. It has become fragmented and demonopolised. A single religious system, having the backing of the state, legitimates public and private life. In such an instance, religion defined the world and became an instrument of social control. In a pluralist situation, not only can personal allegiance not be assumed, but also the removal of religious monopoly makes the maintenance of a plausibility structure difficult. This is because society cannot be called upon to serve the purpose of social control. A decline in the popularity of religion promotes the implausibility of religious ideas.

4. 6 Fragmentation

One obvious feature of modernization, which Bruce (1996: 39) cites, is the division of a single social institution into more specialised units. The family was once the fundamental unit of economic production as well as of cultural and biological reproduction. This is no longer the case. Production is now organised in factories. The family was once the place for all education and socialisation. Now, there are schools in which professional educators educate children.

He (1996: 39) believes that in the fragmentation process, the religious institution has been relieved of, or has withdrawn from many spheres of life: as for instance, the economy and the need to increase efficiency; and supply and demand as the fixers of price. All are powerful in our culture. Yet, at one time, the Medieval Church attempted to control such matters. The government, who claim to represent the people, no longer seek legitimacy from bishops or popes, which was once the case. The Church was also engaged in health care at that time. Many of the hospitals and infirmaries were religious foundations or adjacent to monasteries. Bruce (1996: 39) observes that modernisation saw the freeing of economic activity from religious institutions to the domain of human life, a domain driven by its own values.

The process of specific areas of social life being taken over by specialists was a slow one. At first, religious professionals dominated the new institutions, but gradually they were eclipsed as specialised lay professionals were trained and new bodies of knowledge and skill were made available. Bruce (1996: 40) believes that churches continued and still continue to supplement the working of secular institutions, but even when they are a provider of services, they operate in a secular world. Although the Roman Catholic Church retains control over appointments and promotions in its schools, the majority of staff are secular professionals and there is little about Catholic or Anglican schools, for instance, that distinguishes them from secular alternatives. Except, that is, the ambience!

This division of life into more specialised areas was accompanied by the division of people into distinct classes and social groups. Bruce (1996: 41) says that great disparity of wealth was integral to feudal societies, yet most people lived similar lives and were in close proximity. Since there was a strong social structure that was quite clear about differences concerning status, superiors did not feel threatened by the presence of their inferiors, and could inhabit the same physical space. Increasing prosperity and increasing egalitarianism brought with them differing status, but being more alike in principle, the gentry moved away from the rest of society. Economic expansion introduced occupational mobility. People no longer did the job because their forebears did it. Occupational change made it hard for people to internalise visions of themselves as having a station in a hierarchical world. Modern societies are thus egalitarian, as Bruce (1996: 41) concludes. In the absence of a shared belief system that sanctioned inequality and subjection, which a decline in religion removes, egalitarianism becomes the hallmark, in Bruce's (1996: 42) view.

Bruce (1996: 42) believes that the creation of a modern economy has brought with it the idea that equality persists among all people. In order to safeguard prerogatives and a little unsure of their superiority, the better off moved away from their inferiors. As towns and cities developed, they did so with clear class divisions.

He (1996: 42, 43) states that economic growth deepened the divisions of labour and widened the gulf between the classes. With the population moving to the cities and the growth of manufacturing industry, people spent more of their time with those who shared the same economic fortunes as themselves, and less time with their superiors and subordinates. Different social groups began to see the world in different ways. The idea of a single moral universe in which each person had a place in the grand design of things became less and less plausible. Different classes developed different worldviews that made sense to them exclusively. The belief was not that God was at the summit, who communicates with the pope, who then communicates with the archbishops and bishops, who, finally, communicate with the priests, who inform the people what to believe and do. In this post-Reformation period, there was an argument about the correct organisational form of the Church. Most of the upper classes argued for episcopacy, on the ground that the hierarchy of this divinely ordained institution

would legitimate other hierarchies. Today, the landed classes tend to remain in the Church of England because they like the model of the world as an organic community built around a stable, ordered structure of authority with people ranked in their proper stations, and with the landed gentry at the summit. The gentry keep their peasants in line. Hence we have, in England, the episcopalian church being the strongest amongst the gentry and their servants... The independent farmers and the middle classes who broke away from aristocratic control in the 18th century preferred a more democratic form of organisation, enhancing the idea of equality in the sight of God and therefore personal autonomy. The appeal was those forms of Protestantism, namely Presbyterianism, Methodism, and Congregationalism, which stressed the priesthood of all believers.

As societies grew and became more complex, they fragmented into distinct classes and regional groups. One of the great innovations of the Reformation was the idea that each person could discern the will of God from Scripture. In such a case, a professional grouping of priests was therefore not required. But an unintended consequence of this innovation, according to Bruce (1996: 43), was the possibility of schism. Where the religious culture did not allow fragmentation, as in Roman Catholic countries, there was a more abrupt division with some classes remaining faithful to the Church and others breaking off completely.

4.6.1 Summary and conclusion

Fragmentation has occurred through the processes of modernisation and post-modernisation. In this, religious institutions have been divested of many functions such as economic activity, marketing, health care and education, and this has brought about a division of people into distinct classes and occupational mobility. Through the absence of a shared belief system, modern society has become egalitarian while economic growth has deepened the divisions of labour and widened the gap between classes. A single moral universe is less plausible since different classes have established different worldviews.

4.7 The end of community

The fragmentation of social life is accompanied by the fragmentation of community, as Bruce (1996: 43,44) records, by which life is increasingly enmeshed socially rather than locally. Thus society is regarded as the nation state. Close-knit integrated societies have disappeared, undermined by the growth of large-scale industrial and commercial enterprises, co-ordinated by massive impersonal bureaucracies and the development of the anonymous city. This position in English society defies contradiction.

Religion draws its strength from the community. Since society has taken over from the community as the locus of the individual's life, religion has lost most of its *raison d'être*. According to Durkheim (cited in Bruce, 1996; 44), religion is explained by its social functions: the purpose of religion was to create a common sense of identity. Religion was the cement of social life in the past and it legitimised and internalised local life. People are no longer raised in one set of shared values and can no longer be controlled by the conscience placed on them by the community and reinforced by informal social controls. The societal order relies more on efficiency and technical control, monitoring of proper behaviour, rather than on moral order, in Bruce's (1996: 44) view.

'Societalisation', to use Wilson's concept, reduces the plausibility of a single overarching moral religious system. The single 'sacred canopy,' to use Berger's phrase, is displaced by a system which has little to do with how we perform our social roles in what is now an anonymous and impersonal public domain, and more to do with how we live our domestic lives. Religion may retain subjective plausibility but it does so at the expense of its objective givenness. Religion thus becomes privatised and has been pushed to the margins of the social order. Bruce (1996: 46,47) maintains that the primary function of religion as the expression of the relationship between God and humankind, the supernatural and the natural, remains unchanged; but that there is a shift in the secondary function, from the social to the personal, from life in the community to individual life.

Bruce (1996: 47) thinks that the fragmentation of society, the break up of religious culture and the shrinking of the social role of the churches are closely related. A church could easily exercise a wide range of social functions if everyone belonged to it, and if

parish structure would mirror the boundaries of the community. Maintaining a wide range of roles for people who are split up into various competing denominations becomes difficult for any church. The primary response of the dominant religious tradition to defections was to try to enforce conformity, to use the power of the law and the state to press people back into the church. But, as more and more broke away, the task became too great and the state gave up. Apart from having seats in the House of Lords, the state church in England has to compete with other denominations on an equal footing. In the present writer's view, this last comment may be true insofar as the competition is on the level of belief. In terms of social standing, the state church can command support in most villages in England for the upkeep and maintenance of the church building by the nature of it being a state church. No other church or denomination can command this support in terms of village life, although they may use other means for engendering support from the general public through market stalls and other public events.

Bruce (1996: 45) acknowledges that the decline of the community and its replacement by a society, that is the nation state, containing within it different cultures and religions, not only has important public policy consequences for religion, but also has serious consequences for religious beliefs.

Modern societies are culturally diverse. The integrated community possessing a shared belief, meeting to discuss at what price to sell grain or what should be legal tender given for a cow, is no longer possible. In some settings, diversity was created by the migration of people with different cultures. Cultural pluralism also came about through internal fragmentation of the dominant culture.

Bruce (1996: 46) agrees with Berger that religion is no longer a matter of necessity, but of preference.

Those who do choose a particular religion do so with intensity and enthusiasm that would be surprising to those of an earlier period who took their faith for granted. The present writer believes that there is some grain of truth in this statement, but it must not be assumed that all individuals in this earlier period were in some way brain-washed

and were unimbued with enthusiasm. Becoming religious, in Bruce's (1996: 46) view, is attended by dramatic behaviour, but fewer people do it. There are, in Bruce's words, more zealots but fewer believers. Our opinion is that the latter statement is an exaggerated viewpoint.

4.7.1 Summary and conclusion

Fragmentation of social life has broken up the community. Close-knit, integrated societies have disappeared through the growth of large-scale industrial enterprises. In the past, institutional religion drew its strength from the community. As a result of post-modernisation, institutional religion has lost most of its social cement. Religion, relegated to the boundaries of society, is often practised as a private option.

4.8 Rationalisation

Bruce (1996: 47,48) states that the term 'rationalisation' means a concern for routines and procedures, with predictability and order accompanied by a search for an ever-increasing efficiency. It is believed in the post-modern era that rationalisation is the best way of ordering things on a large scale and to establish rules and procedures that constrain decisions and actions. Bureaucratic organisation replaces personal preference. Rules and procedures are not regarded as sacred and immutable. If a more efficient procedure can be devised, then there is no obstacle to changing the method in which this procedure is carried out.

Bruce (1996: 48) believes that a world governed by rationalisation is less conducive to religion than the more traditional society would be. Everything now is seen as temporary until some change for the better can be thought of. It becomes easy to talk about means and procedures, but difficult to discuss transcendental ends. In the 'Penny Catechism' used by the Roman Catholic Church up to the time of the Second Vatican Council, the second question asked (1921: 1) of the student was "Why did God make you?" The answer, very often memorised and repeated parrot fashion was, "God made me to know him, love him and serve him in this world and to be happy with him in the next". In our society, according to Bruce (1996: 48), such a question is not asked because it is known that an answer could not be agreed.

We assume predictability in our world: what worked yesterday will work today and tomorrow. We live in a world of timetables, calendars and diaries that record our appointments ahead of time and even next year. Few of us expect an invasion by the supernatural. Some conservative Protestant churches have on their notice boards a meeting at (say) 11 am. 'D.V'. (Deo voluntas), and some Roman Catholics when writing letters expressing acceptance of a future event will add D.V. This expression is a residue from a past age. Bruce (1996: 48) states that almost no one believes that God will intervene to prevent the future meeting from taking place. Only death would do that.

Sometimes science is forwarded as a reason for the decline in religious observance. However, Bruce (1996: 48,49) replies that many of the beliefs held by earlier Christians have been shown to be incorrect. The earth is an oblate spheroid and not flat; the earth moves round the sun and not vice versa; the earth and human life are vastly older than the ages traditionally taken from the Old Testament. Many scientists recognise that although there are still huge gaps in our knowledge, there may be a consensus that an evolutionary process on the lines of Darwinism offers a better explanation of the origin of the species than does the account of divine creation in seven days given in the Old Testament Book of Genesis. Many theologians, including Teilhard de Chardin, adopt this position.

Modern science, however, has not contributed much to the secularisation thesis. It is true that the confrontation between Darwin and Bishop Samuel Wilberforce was a highly electric one for middle class Victorians, but its force hardly impinged on ordinary people. If one set of beliefs loses popularity, and is superseded by a different set, this is hardly a case of a loss of plausibility but rather about truth. There are many ways in which we can be deaf to contradictory evidence. If one wishes, one can dismiss the evidence by blackening the character of the purveyor of the bad news, and one can contradict the evidence if so desired. Science and technology have given us a notion of cause and effect, which makes one look for a natural cause for any particular event. When an aeroplane crashes, evidence of its cause is sought: whether it was engine failure, pilot error or some mistake in navigation. One does not always seek a moral cause.

Pluralism also limits plausibility according to Bruce (1996: 50). The rational basis of science and the social structure of training and examination and dissemination of the results mean that there are fewer disagreements among scientists than there are among theologians and clergy. The secular professions command the sort of respect that was enjoyed by the Medieval Church. If the crash investigators in the above example state that it was a bomb that caused the crash, then almost all will agree that such was the case. But, a search for a religious significance would not be agreed, even less the significance itself. Explanation of events in the material world brings more agreement than searching for religious reasons. Religious culture is badly fragmented and this weakens its ability to offer religious explanations for secular events.

Bruce (1996: 50,51) suggests that if technology is basically successful in the delivery of a product, it therefore reduces uncertainty and a personal need for the supernatural. There is no need to turn to God for help if one's cattle suffer from foot-and-mouth disease when immunisation can prevent it. The effect of technology is to reduce the domain over which religion offers the most compelling explanations and the most predictable outcomes. Technology and rationality replace gradually supernatural influences with expedience and practical performance. When people had no idea what caused a plague and had no means of preventing it, a shared ritual of repentance was the popular response. Now that it is visually known what causes a plague and how to deal with it, the religious occasions for coping with it has been removed.

Bruce (1996: 51) believes that in the modern world, religion is used for the dark recesses of human life: death, unhappiness and stress. When one has tried every cure for cancer, one prays. When one has revised for examinations, one prays. Prayer is not exercised without studying or without consulting the medical profession in regard to a serious illness. The notion for the scope of the divine is smaller than that of pre-industrial man.

This is not to trivialise religion in respect of the many events and problems that may be met. The unexpected death of a loved one or some act of injustice, or an act of suffering may be enormously important to us, and cause us to turn to prayer. Bruce (1996: 51)

reckons that the gaps in our intellectual understanding and our rational control would appear to be very large, these gaps becoming personal and not social problems.

In conclusion, Bruce (1996: 51) states that the clash of ideas between religion and science is far less significant than the most naturalistic ways of looking at the world. Science and technology have not made modern man an atheist. Rationality, in the sense of the material world possessing a large number of causes and effects, the reproducibility of actions, the expectation of constant change, the insistence of innovation, makes it unlikely that there will be a tendency to entertain the notion of the divine.

Industrialisation has brought with it the decline of community, fragmentation of life, the rise of bureaucracy and a technical consciousness that has made religion less plausible and arresting. It is worth noting that these are the causes of secularisation, in the present writer's view. It is believed that the notion proposed by Berger, that Christianity itself is the author of secularisation or contains the seeds of it, is spurious.

4. 8.1 Summary and conclusion

Rationalisation- which is a concern for routines, procedures, predictability and order- has inevitably occurred through the post-modernisation process. Rules and procedures are not thought of as sacred and immutable, but can be changed if a more efficient procedure can be devised. Such methods are regarded as temporary. A world ordered by rationalisation is less conducive to religion than a more traditional one. If predictability is the focus of our world, then the intervention of the supernatural is not expected. If technology is successful in the delivery of the product, uncertainty is minimised, and the personal need for the supernatural. Technology and rationality tends to replace supernatural influences with practical performance and religion in the modern world is relegated to the areas of death, unhappiness and stress.

4.9 Relationship of the causes of secularisation

Technology generated economic growth, increased wealth and occupational mobility. These terms can be grouped together and called 'modernity.' Occupational mobility adversely affected hitherto integrated communities and indeed religion itself, since the latter relied strongly on the nature of the community.

Occupational mobility meant that large numbers of people moved from a rural to an urban area. Post-modernity further accelerated the industrial and technological process by introducing mass communications, television and computers. There was a general belief and expectation that technology would extinguish poverty and collaborate with the ideals of the Grand Narratives to achieve world order. However, the Grand Narratives, which held universal sway, have collapsed due to the loss of influence of religion and science. Globalisation has now made the world into a single social unit in which new ideas and new culture systems can freely spread in the community, resulting in a pluralist society. The latter has eroded the traditional role of religion, damaging authority. This, in turn, has witnessed the decline of values.

Through plurality, there is a range of options open to the individual. This infers that religion, instead of informing the whole of society, is now relegated to its margins. In the past, there was one dominant religion that legitimated one's public and private life. Nowadays, legitimation by any religion is not possible. Also, through the absence of religious monopoly, it is difficult to maintain a plausibility structure for any one religion. This is due to the fact that religion has lost its significance in relation to society. In other words, secularisation is accompanied by implausibility and institutional religion consequently declines.

Through modernisation and post-modernisation, religious institutions have been relieved of many activities that they controlled, such as marketing, economic activity, health care and education. This has created a division of people into distinct classes as well as assisting occupational mobility. A shared belief system has been exchanged for an individual world-view appropriate to each class.

Technology and post-modernisation heralds rationalisation which necessitates a concern for routine and procedures that can be changed if they do not work, since such procedures are regarded as temporary. If technology is seen to eliminate unpredictability and uncertainty, then the role of the supernatural is limited to those areas of life such as death, unhappiness and stress. All these causes have combined to bring about an end to community, in which institutional religion has been adversely affected.

4.10 Conclusion

The advent of modern technology and new methods of production signalled the arrival of modernisation into everyday life. New production methods gradually proliferated in the western world, so that these methods were globalised. As a result, local traditions decayed. The use of computers and mass production methods accelerated the modernisation process to what is termed 'post-modernisation'. Local traditions not only declined, but also new cultures were introduced into society, thus causing some ambiguity in the mind of man about the truth and falsehood of belief.

Post-modernisation also stimulated a method of rationalisation whereby activities are controlled by planning and target setting in which the idea of the transcendental seems to have little or no place.

The processes inherent in modernisation and post-modernisation were responsible for the fragmentation of both local life and community, fathering to some extent the secularisation process. In its turn, this fragmentation introduced pluralism, which tended to apply a lack of plausibility or produce a crisis in the credibility of religion. The lack of plausibility is also responsible, to some degree, for the secularisation process. Fragmentation, through which the community breaks down, throws religion back on the individual; that is to say, it becomes subjective. The average man tends to lose confidence in mainstream religion, the basis for which was, traditionally, the community, and discovers some religious truth through either himself or through his self-acting in society. Hence, the rise of the New Age Movement. Uncertainty about religious truth, which is inculcated through the processes implied in modernisation and

post-modernisation brings about de-traditionalisation, which means that religions are often regarded as equal, and the acceptance of which depends on personal choice.

The components in the secularisation process are illustrated in Fig. 1 below.

Our view is that these components are fundamental for the process of secularisation in England.

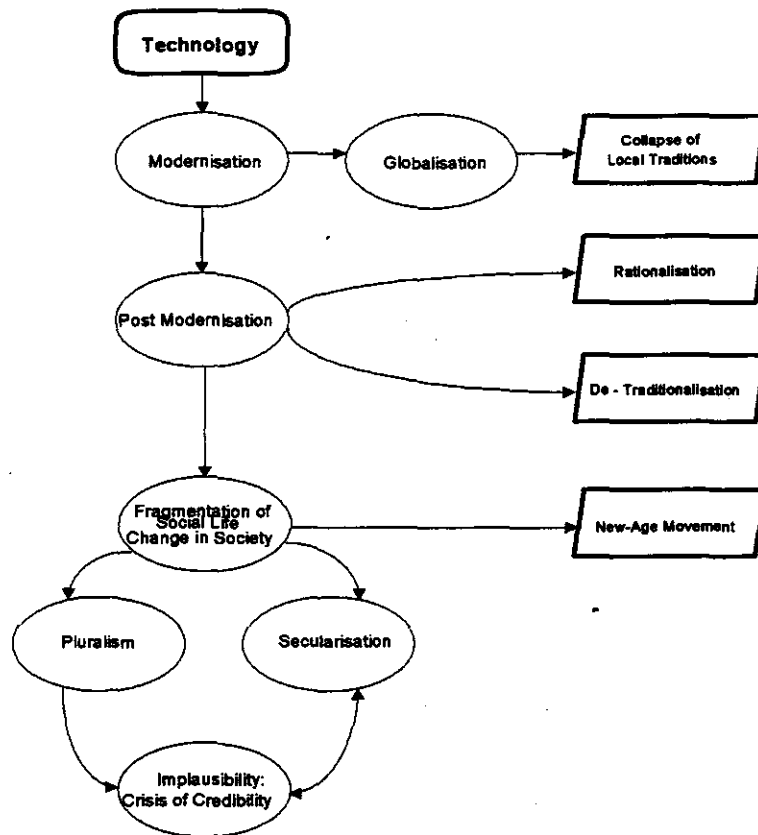


Fig. 1. Flow chart showing the relationship of the various components of secularisation

CHAPTER 5: THE EFFECTS OF SECULARISATION WITHIN CHRISTIAN DENOMINATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The primary purpose of this chapter is to investigate and analyze the quantitative effects of secularisation in England insofar as data is available, and, secondly, the qualitative effects of secularisation. This will be achieved by investigating the current data supplied by Christian Research publications and that supplied by the British Social Attitudes Survey (1992). The structure of the chapter will follow the following sequence: decline in church community; Christian membership; attendance, both general and by age group; attendance by age and denomination; the frequency of attendance; the loss of frequency; the decline in baptisms by denomination; the decline in marriage by denomination; belief and disbelief and attitudes towards the meaning of life. A summary of this data will be made, from which the present writer will draw certain conclusions.

5.2 Decline in church community

Table 1 shows how church community has declined from 1900 to 2000. Data for the UK only is available.

Year	Anglican	Roman Catholic	Presbyterian	Methodist	Baptist	Others *	Total	% of population
1900	23.1	2.5	3.2	1.7	0.7	1.6	32.8	86
1910	25.4	2.7	3.4	1.8	0.8	1.8	35.9	85
1920	26.3	2.9	3.5	1.7	0.8	1.8	37.0	84
1930	27.1	3.2	3.5	1.8	0.8	1.8	38.2	83
1940	27.6	3.5	3.5	1.7	0.8	1.8	38.9	82
1950	28.5	4.0	3.5	1.7	0.7	1.7	40.1	80
1960	27.6	4.8	3.5	1.7	0.6	1.7	39.9	77
1970	27.8	5.4	3.1	1.5	0.6	1.6	40.0	72
1980	27.7	5.7	2.8	1.4	0.6	1.6	39.8	71
1990	26.6	5.6	2.7	1.4	0.6	1.7	38.6	67
2000	25.6	5.8	2.6	1.3	0.5	1.9	37.7	64

Table 1 Christian and religious communities (in 1,000,000s) in the UK, 1900-2000

* includes Independent, Orthodox, Pentecostal, New and other churches

Source: Wraight/Brierley. 2001/2. UK Christian Handbook. Millennium Edition. page 24, adapted. Christian Research. London

The Christian community has been defined by Peter Brierley (2000b: 10) as: "All those who would positively identify with belonging to a church even if they may only attend irregularly or were baptized as a child" or "those who belong to a particular denomination however loosely".

Anglicans, Roman Catholics, Presbyterians, Lutherans and Orthodox consider that the numbers in their respective communities would correspond to those who are baptized. Methodists calculate their numbers through rolls kept in each church.

5.2.1 Measuring religious people in terms of church membership

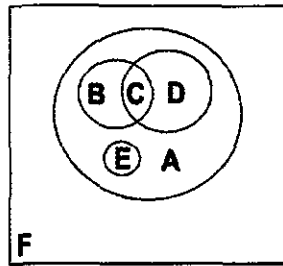
According to *The UK Christian Handbook Religious Trends* (2002/3: 2.3), there were 208 different denominations in 1992, a big increase compared to 1977 when the figure stood at 97. The three largest - the Church of England, the Roman Catholic church and the Church of Scotland - accounted for 64 per cent of the total membership in 1995. The remaining denominations are relatively small but taken cumulatively, are very important. The Roman Catholics do not have figures for membership. The figures in Table 2 below refer to Mass attendance. Again, only data for the UK is available.

Year	Anglican	Roman Catholic	Presbyterian	Methodist	Baptist	Others	Total number	% of population
1900	3,241	1,912	1,649	849	360	644	8,664	33
1905	3,336	1,965	1,739	908	417	726	9,091	33
1910	3,480	1,995	1,766	918	412	733	9,704	33
1915	3,871	2,064	1,783	900	403	761	9,782	32
1920	3,820	2,107	1,816	877	399	779	9,803	31
1925	4,120	2,176	1,852	911	404	825	10,288	31
1930	4,166	2,190	1,829	918	400	854	10,357	29
1935	4,124	2,205	1,810	894	391	838	10,292	29
1940	3,911	2,232	1,822	862	376	814	10,017	27
1945	3,670	2,247	1,790	815	352	808	9,682	26
1950	3,444	2,432	1,796	809	334	799	9,614	25
1955	3,397	2,567	1,827	798	320	809	9,773	25
1960	3,341	2,845	1,814	789	317	812	9,918	24
1965	3,174	2,793	1,791	761	290	839	9,648	23
1970	2,987	2,746	1,951	673	272	843	9,272	22
1975	2,298	2,525	1,718	602	238	679	8,060	19
1980	2,180	2,455	1,437	540	239	678	7,529	17
1985	1,896	2,281	1,322	497	242	705	6,943	15
1990	1,728	2,198	1,314	478	230	776	6,624	14
1995	1,785	1,914	1,088	434	223	841	6,285	13
2000	1,657	1,722	979	387	209	908	5,862	12

Table 2 Christian membership (in 1,000's) in the UK, 1900-2000

Source: Wraight /Brierley.2000/1. UK Christian Handbook. Millennium Edition. page 25. Christian Research. London

Christian denominations define membership in different ways. Membership in a Baptist Church relates to those who are baptized as adults, whereas in the Anglican Church membership is taken as those on the Electoral Roll. In some Pentecostal churches membership is confined to those who are born again, who speak in tongues, who are baptised or have given evidence of living an active Christian life for six months. The Roman Catholics define their membership according to those who are baptised, this being equated with church community in the table.



- A = Those who call themselves 'Christian' but are not members or attendees of any church (community)
- B = Regular church attendees but not members
- C = Regular attendees + members of their church
- D = Members but not attendees
- E = Members of other faith communities (that is, Christian faith communities)
- F = Non religious population

Fig 1. Relationship between church community, membership and attendees

Source : Brierley. 2000. Steps to the future, page 12 adapted : Christian Research, London

The drop in church membership is typical of most religious denominations. The really big falls occurred in the 'swinging sixties' and in the 1970s. The decline has continued up to the present, but at a slower pace. The growth of other churches is important, but their increase does not compensate for the large losses elsewhere. Why the decline should be so great in the 1970s is not known. It could be that many older members died; it could have arisen through disillusionment with religion, the impact of television and leisure pursuits, and the increase of sporting events. The decline in membership is parallel with the decline in other institutions. While the decline in church membership between 1980 and 2000 was 22 per cent, the decline in the trades union movement was 55 per cent.

The 'others' column conceals the fact that while some denominations have remained static, others have declined and the remainder, particularly the Orthodox, New and Pentecostal Churches, have grown. All three have witnessed the starting up of new congregations in the last thirty years. They often have an authoritative leadership yet do not possess a dominant hierarchy.

5.2.2 Measuring religiosity by attendance

Church attendance is much easier to quantify than registered membership of a community: either people are present at a Sunday service or they are not. Religious belief and conviction, as well as faith, shows itself behaviourally in attendance at religious services and worship. A mass observation study carried out in 1948/9 discovered that 15 per cent of the population attended church. In 1979 the English church census found that 12 per cent of the population attended church (11 per cent of adults, 14 per cent of children) in an average week. Ten years later the figure was 10 per cent. More recently, in 1997, the British Social Attitudes Survey found that 12 per cent of the population claimed to attend weekly, 2 per cent fortnightly, 6 per cent monthly, 12 per cent every six months, 5 per cent once a year, 4 per cent less than once a year, and 24 per cent never (though they considered themselves religious), and 35 per cent never went and did not consider themselves religious at all. This information was reported by Brierley (2000b: 18). The figures as a whole indicate a slow decline in church attendance.

Denomination	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000
Anglican	1,370,400	1,264,600	1,202,600	1,050,400	960,800
Baptist	286,900	274,000	267,800	275,800	280,000
Roman Catholic	2,064,000	1,851,500	1,738,500	1,394,100	1,240,200
Independent	239,200	252,900	258,100	198,900	150,200
Methodist	606,400	560,500	506,400	433,100	372,600
New Churches	75,000	124,700	174,600	213,100	248,400
Orthodox	10,200	11,300	12,700	20,500	25,600
Pentecostal	221,100	225,800	235,900	228,600	216,400
United Reformed Church	188,300	163,000	138,100	128,800	118,700
Other Churches	139,800	116,800	112,100	99,300	89,300
Total	5,201,300	4,845,100	4,647,000	4,042,600	3,702,200
% of population	11.1	10.2	9.6	8.2	7.4

Table 3 Total Sunday Church attendance in England, 1980 -2000

Source: Brierley. 2002/3. UK Christian Handbook, Religious Trends 3. page 2.23.

Christian Research. London

Table 3 shows a decrease of 1,499,100 over a 20- year period, which approximates to a decrease of 1,450 people per week.

5.2.2.1 Attendance by age group

From Table 7 below it can be seen that there are many older people (over 65) and fewer young adults in the 20- 29 age group and 30- 44 age group taken separately.

Age group	Under 15	15-19	20-29	30-44	45-64	65	Total
1979	1,416,000	489,700	598,200	870,300	1,087,800	979,000	5,441,000
1989	1,177,000	337,300	481,200	809,400	1,042,500	895,400	4,742,800
1998	717,100	210,600	326,600	646,700	885,800	927,900	3,714,700
% 1979	26	9	11	16	20	18	100
% 1989	25	7	10	17	22	19	100
% 1998	19	6	9	17	24	25	100

Table 4. Sunday attendance by age group, in England, 1979-1998

Source: Brierley. 2000. The Tide is running out: page 94. Christian Research. London

The table shows also that over the period 1979 to 1988 the number of young people in attendance up to 19 has halved. There is a considerable drop in attendance by those who are in the 20- 29 age group. Those in the mid-life group, 30- 44, have decreased by 25 per cent on the 1979 figure. The numbers of those over 65 have remained comparatively steady. This presents a critical situation in that there is an increasing decline in the working population and a large exodus of young people over such a short period.

Children up to the age of 15 were leaving the church in the 1980s. The number of children leaving over the period 1979 to 1998 was 700,000: about 708 per week. The decrease in attendance of men and women in their twenties is 30 per cent, as much again as was the case ten years ago; nearly two and two-third times as many aged 30 - 44 years, and three and a half times as many in their late 40s and 50s. Many of these will be parents. The only increase in attendance is in the number of older people going to church during the 1990s. This amounted to 82,500 over the same period.

5. 2. 2. 2 A description of the characteristics of the age groups

According to Brierley (2000a: 102,103), America had its population boom in the late 40s and 50s. In Britain this boom occurred ten years later with a large immigration of Irish people. The Americans apply the word 'Boomers' to those born in this boom period. Brierley uses this term and some others to describe the characteristics of the age-group categories (2000a: 102).

Thus, 'Seniors' is a term used to describe those who were born in 1926 or earlier. They probably attended Sunday school. Many formed the church and helped it to grow to its peak in 1930 with ten million members. They sent their children to Sunday school even if they stopped attending church themselves.

'Builders' are described (2000a: 103) as those who were born before the end of the Second World War and who were 55-73 in 2000. They helped in the social and economic reconstruction that was required, and established the system we have today.

'Boomers' are those aged 36-54, in 2000, and are marginally the largest generation in the UK population (2000a: 103). Brierley cites Wade Clark Roof, in his book 'A Generation of Seekers; the spiritual Journeys of the Baby Boom generation', when he says that Boomers have a diversity of spirituality which reflects both a consumer culture and a rich and empowering 'melding' of diverse traditions with an emphasis on the relatedness of all things. They value religious pluralism and emphasise tolerance and respect for others. Their interests are multifaceted, such as an interest in icons, meditation, spiritual direction and belief in reincarnation, at the same time as being churchgoers. They also find personal enhancement through self-growth, in giving to others and serving others. This is a characteristic of the New Agers, which was discussed in 4.1.

Rowland Croucher (1998: 27) describes 'Busters', that is, those who fall into the age group 17- 35 in 2000, as survivors of the most aborted generation in history. Croucher presumably means that they are ones who have been the most fruitless or lacking in achievement. They are the most educated, the most travelled and the longest living generation ever. They are the first to grow up with environmental catastrophes and AIDS. The first electronic generation, they have mastered use of Laptops, fax machines, Modems, Nintendo and Sega play stations. They have a tremendous ability to process a mass of information rapidly, such as playing video games whilst talking on the phone or listening to the radio and doing their homework! Croucher calls this 'parallel thinking allowing multiple tasking' (1998: 27). The first generation to be raised on television, they exhibit musical tastes which are passionate and angry, and are sometimes rebellious, mostly honest, and sometimes religious or spiritual. They have a longing for reality, community, healing and peace. They are anti-materialistic. They are likely to have a succession of jobs rather than a career. Relationships will be more important than work. The latter would be considered as what you do in order to have a life. They have an insatiable appetite for junk food, junk ideas and junk culture. They reject institutions. They need the Church yet want it so little. They know less about the Bible than any previous generation during the past 1,000 years. They are the first-latch key generation, coming from two-job families. Fewer than half of them will have lived with two biological parents throughout their childhood. They are the first generation to grow

up without absolute truths, believing that the highest virtue is tolerance of others. They are post-Christian and post-modern.

5.2. 2. 2.1 Religious education of the young

Children attend Sunday school less regularly than in former generations. They are not always brought by their parents, but more often by grandparents. Infrequent attendance means that they do not come to know other children well and that gaps appear in their education. From the teachers' point of view, lessons are not easy to prepare. They may not be able to teach children in the way that they were taught, and may not be trained in new methods. The infrequency of attendance may discourage them in their commitment and they may find it hard to cope with this.

For children there are more alternative activities available on a Sunday than in previous ages, such as sporting events, music festivals and shopping. Many families, even Christian ones, think of Sunday as a visiting day. For families that have a 'new dad', it can be an occasion to see the 'old dad'.

It is clear that the methods and techniques used for teaching have changed. But so have the children! In other words, social change has displaced religion from its traditional role, which in turn has had a drastic effect on commitment. Commitment to Church membership has declined, as it has with so many institutions, this appearing as a characteristic in today's society.

5.2.2.3 Attendance by age and denomination in England

Category	Year	>15	15-19	20-29	30-44	45-64	65 +	Total =100%
Total of all English Churchgoers	1979	26	9	11	16	20	18	5,441,000
	1989	25	7	10	17	22	19	4,742,800
	1998	19	6	9	17	24	25	3,714,700
Anglicans	1979	27	9	10	17	18	19	1,671,000
	1989	24	5	8	17	24	22	1,491,900
	1998	18	4	7	16	26	29	980,600
Roman Catholics	1979	24	12	12	19	20	13	1,991,000
	1989	24	8	11	18	23	16	1,715,900
	1998	18	6	10	19	25	22	1,230,100
Baptists	1979	30	8	9	16	19	18	290,000
	1989	26	7	10	18	20	19	270,900
	1998	22	6	9	18	22	23	277,600
Category	Year	>15	15-19	20-29	30-44	44-65	65+	Total=100 %
Independent and New Churches	1979	31	9	13	17	14	16	299,000
	1989	31	16	13	18	13	9	425,500
	1998	23	7	12	21	20	17	392,100
Of which: Independent	1998	19	5	8	16	23	28	161,600
New Churches	1998	26	9	15	25	18	7	230,500
Methodist	1979	28	5	5	12	25	25	621,000
	1989	23	5	7	12	23	30	512,300
	1998	19	4	4	11	24	38	379,700
Orthodox	1979	27	12	6	13	23	19	10,000
	1989	24	7	12	14	25	18	12,300
	1998	17	12	11	17	20	23	25,200
Pentecostal	1979	33	11	12	18	16	10	228,000
	1989	31	9	15	18	17	10	236,700
	1998	27	8	14	22	19	10	214,600
United Reformed Church	1979	27	5	7	14	21	26	190,000
	1989	24	4	6	13	23	30	149,300
	1998	18	3	5	12	24	38	121,700
Other denominations	1979	25	9	11	16	20	19	141,000
	1989	27	6	8	14	21	24	113,600
	1998	18	5	9	16	23	29	93,100
English population	1979	21	8	14	19	23	15	46.4 mn
	1989	19	8	16	20	22	15	47.7 mn
	1998	20	6	13	22	23	16	49.7 mn

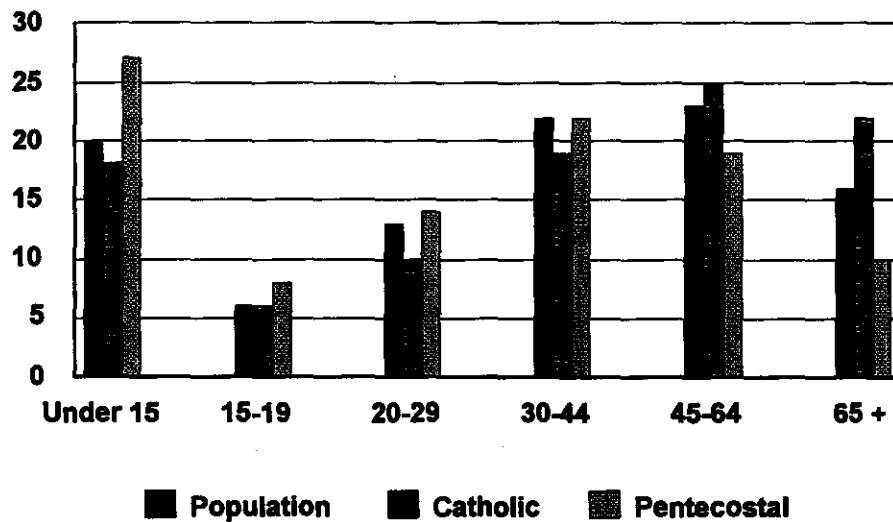
Table 5 Age distribution of English churchgoers by denomination

Source: Brierley. 2000. *The tide is running out*, page 117 adapted. Christian Research. London.

From Table 5 above, it is clear that Anglicans, Methodists, Orthodox and Independent Churches have lost most children in percentage terms. The Independents have lost the most teenagers, and the Anglicans most in their 20s.

Only 27 per cent of the Methodist population is under 30, which must be a major source of concern to them. The Roman Catholics are closer to the population profile, but have fewer children by comparison with the Pentecostals, despite their having many schools. Comparison of age groups with the population profile shown in Fig. 2 below, which relates to England, illustrates in graphical form the statistics shown in Table 6.

Fig. 2
Comparison of Sunday attendance with
the population by age, 1998



Source: Brierley. 2000. *The Tide is running out*, page 119. Christian Research. London

The Pentecostals have more children and fewer elderly members. This may be accounted for by the fact that the elderly from Black African Churches are retiring to Jamaica on a British pension in order to live a more comfortable life.

Category	year	Age group						Total = 100%
		< 15 %	15-19 %	20-29 %	30-44 %	45-64 %	65+ %	
England	1979	26	9	11	16	20	18	5,441,000
	1989	25	7	10	17	24	25	4,742,800
	1998	19	6	9	17	24	25	3,714,700

Table 6 Church attendance in England

Source: Brierley. 2000. The Tide is running out, page 125 adapted. Christian Research.
London

Table 7 below shows how membership has decreased in most denominations, except for the Orthodox and Free Churches, over a five-year period.

	Total Roman Catholic Churches					Total Protestant Churches			
	1995	1996	1997	1998		1995	1996	1997	1998
1995	1,914,396	4,734	6,743	380	1995	196,995	250	167	-
1996	1,890,549	4,702	6,658	411	1996	199,597	251	176	-
1997	1,857,595	4,655	6,725	441	1997	201,019	258	185	-
1998	1,824,224	4,634	6,500	478	1998	203,436	260	188	-
1999	1,800,624	4,589	6,426	497	1999	222,055	264	202	-
2000	1,768,036	4,554	6,367	532	2000	234,690	267	204	-

	Total Eastern Orthodox Churches					Total Free Churches			
	1995	1996	1997	1998		1995	1996	1997	1998
1995	1,088,098	5,284	2,746	267	1995	1,299,916	20,570	14,053	2,022
1996	1,073,422	5,250	2,696	270	1996	1,299,177	20,594	14,158	1,771
1997	1,048,487	5,185	2,686	279	1997	1,289,870	20,614	14,320	1,809
1998	1,030,700	5,152	2,633	313	1998	1,293,717	20,596	14,344	1,827
1999	1,002,923	5,116	2,589	348	1999	1,291,922	20,445	14,295	1,879
2000	988,812	5,112	2,592	350	2000	1,277,927	20,390	14,459	1,922

Total Baptist Churches					Total Independent Churches				
Year	Members	Congregations	Ministry		Year	Members	Congregations	Ministry	
			Total	Female				Total	Female
1995	223,151	3,446	2,860	126	1995	203,487	3,906	1,221	27
1996	220,977	3,438	2,817	126	1996	199,138	3,898	1,202	24
1997	217,053	3,430	2,816	126	1997	193,680	3,898	1,211	22
1998	214,566	3,418	2,778	128	1998	191,184	3,877	1,233	23
1999	216,635	3,414	2,792	129	1999	181,708	3,708	1,216	28
2000	215,243	3,405	2,753	126	2000	170,308	3,586	1,159	26

Total Methodist Churches					Total Free Churches				
Year	Members	Congregations	Ministry		Year	Members	Congregations	Ministry	
			Total	Female				Total	Female
1995	434,410	7,156	2,441	419	1995	106,206	1,428	1,443	38
1996	424,531	7,086	2,437	427	1996	111,024	1,513	1,545	46
1997	414,394	6,998	2,428	432	1997	116,795	1,594	1,594	57
1998	405,039	6,918	2,411	437	1998	125,412	1,680	Total	76
1999	397,853	6,840	2,458	446	1999	132,427	1,754	1,809	134
2000	384,527	6,621	2,456	454	2000	139,852	1,833	2,028	165

Total Evangelical Churches					Total Pentecostal Churches				
Year	Members	Congregations	Ministry		Year	Members	Congregations	Ministry	
			Total	Female				Total	Female
1995	4,984,522	28,942	21,239	1,165	1995	1,785,033	18,673	11,582	898
1996	4,768,609	28,751	20,859	1,211	1996	1,605,041	18,547	11,328	941
1997	4,729,775	28,716	20,722	1,295	1997	1,622,674	18,617	11,124	1,016
1998	4,701,283	28,700	20,409	1,329	1998	1,642,923	18,653	11,087	1,016
1999	4,674,899	28,604	20,185	1,540	1999	1,649,295	18,635	10,958	1,192
2000	4,639,532	28,559	19,891	1,655	2000	1,653,980	18,627	10,750	1,305

Table 7. Church membership by denomination in the UK

Source: Brierley. 2000. UK Christian Handbook. Religious Trends 3, page 2.22

adapted. Christian Research. London

5.2.3 Frequency of attendance

We shall look first at the number of visitors to the Sunday attendance figures, as shown in **Table 8** below.

Denomination	% visitors	Denomination	% visitors
Anglican	8	New Church	4
Baptist	4	Orthodox	1
Roman Catholic	1	Pentecostal	4
Independent	4	United Reformed Church	6
Methodist	8	Others	3

Table 8. Visitors to the churches in England by denomination in percentages

Source: Brierley. 2000. *The Tide is running out*, page 76 adapted Christian Research. London

Anglicans and Methodists had the most visitors for a normal Sunday service, Roman Catholics and Orthodox the least. It would seem that those who are mainstream or liberal had the most visitors.

According to Brierley (2000a: 77), the percentages of people going to church are:

- twice a week: 12 per cent;
- weekly: 46 per cent;
- fortnightly: 11 per cent;
- monthly: 9 per cent;
- quarterly: 5 per cent;
- twice a year: 17 per cent.

This makes no allowance for those who do not go to church at all. It differs from the statistics quoted from the British Social Attitude Survey in 5.2.2 except for the number of people attending weekly.

According to these figures, 58 per cent of the people attend church on a regular basis, at least once a fortnight. Brierley reckons that the percentage of the population who attend once a year is 16.2 per cent (2000a: 77).

5.2.3.1 Frequency of attendance by denomination

Denomination	% Twice a Week	% Weekly	% Fortnightly	% Monthly	% Quarterly	% Twice a Year	Total (=100%)
Anglican	7	39	14	12	6	22	980,500
Baptist	22	51	10	6	3	7	277,600
Roman Catholic	7	57	6	5	3	22	1,230,100
Independent	31	43	9	6	3	8	161,600
Methodist	14	47	13	10	5	11	379,700
New Churches	26	53	10	5	3	3	230,500
Orthodox	5	10	9	11	4	61	25,200
Pentecostal	33	39	8	9	3	8	214,600
United Reformed Church	7	52	14	11	7	9	121,700
Others	25	41	9	10	5	10	93,100
Overall	12	46	11	9	5	17	3,714,700

Table 9 Frequency of Sunday attendance in England by denomination in percentage

Source: Brierley. 2000. *The Tide is Running Out*, page 82. Christian Research. London

The Orthodox Church is unique in that two-thirds of their congregations attend twice a year, at the traditional times of Christmas and Easter. If commitment is measured by church-going then the Anglicans have a smaller proportion of committed people. The strongest in commitment are the newer churches where around four-fifths attend every week. The Independent, Baptist and Pentecostals are the next strongest in commitment.

5.2.4 Causes of decreased church attendance

Brierley maintains (2000a: 84): "... of the 40 per cent who leave the church, half of them are 'recycling'". By this he means that they are in the process of moving, but have not established themselves yet in a new parish. Many of these may call themselves visitors. Sometimes this process of recycling may entail a change of denomination as much as a change in location. Of the remaining 20 per cent, about one-fifth will come back again after about eight to ten years' absence; the remaining 16 per cent will not. Expectations that were not realised or a loss of faith or a feeling of not belonging may

have caused this drift away. Using the above percentage figures, Brierley calculates a type of balance sheet of gains and losses in overall church-going in England (2000a: 86) in the 1990s.

Gains		Losses	
Outside people joining the church (conversions)	60,000	Church-goers leaving temporarily	60,000
Ex church-goers rejoining	60,000	People changing churches	355,000
People changing churches	355,000	Church-goers leaving permanently	250,000
		Deaths	310,000
		People changing their frequency of attendance	530,000
Total	475,000	Total	1,505,000

Table 10: Balance sheet of gains and losses in England

Source: Brierley. 2000. *The tide is running out*, page 76 adapted. Christian Research. London

There are therefore 475,000 joining and 1,505,000 leaving the church, which gives a net loss of 1,030,000.

Brierley concludes that infrequency of attendance appears to be the major cause of declining church attendance.

5.2.4.1 Loss of frequency

Assuming that a major cause of falling attendance figures is the decrease in frequency of attendance, it may be inquired as to why this is so. Referring to a study carried out by the Anglican Diocese of Oxford, Brierley cites several causes.

These are as follows.

- The major reason people do not come to church on Sunday mornings is that they are too busy. This has been brought about through social change. For instance,

Sunday shopping, sporting activities and various organized activities on Sundays compete with religious observance, and are obviously getting the upper hand.

- Some people believe that church services are uninviting, boring and old fashioned. The services themselves are hard to follow and have hymns that not everyone recognises. People probably want shorter services. The sermons do not teach enough basic Christianity (perhaps sermons are not supposed to do this). The ALPHA course, which is widespread across all denominations in England, attempts to do this.
- There does not appear to be much scope for involvement in the community by the individual. Relationships are especially important in this post-modern era, and helping others through service in the local church community encourages people to come and to stay in the church. Otherwise, they are not wanted or valued. On the other hand, it can be that they only go to church because they have a function to perform. Non-churchgoers rarely attend church now to see what it is like. Because of the wide-ranging options that are available in society, many do not associate church-going with spirituality.

5.2.5 The number of baptisms by denomination

The number of baptisms within a church may be taken as a measure of its religiosity. The total number of baptisms as a percentage of the population has decreased from 73 per cent in 1900 to half that figure in 1999. The largest decrease occurred in the Anglican Church from 564,000 in 1900 to 125,000 in 1999. Up to 1960 three-quarters of infants were baptised, a figure that slipped to 42 per cent by 1960. Even at this level, it may be upheld as supporting a culture of Christian belief.

Year	Anglican		Methodist	Presbyterian		Roman Catholic		Total (000s)	% of births
	Church of England	Other churches		Church of Scotland	Other churches	England & Wales	Scotland & Northern Ireland		
1900	564	14	48	60	20	55	32	793	73
1910	673	14	52	51	20	60	34	804	78
1920	604	15	50	54	18	101	54	896	91
1930	424	10	53	38	14	83	40	662	91
1940	365	8	51	35	12	87	39	597	90
1950	441	10	47	43	13	92	40	686	88
1960	412	9	46	51	13	123	43	687	74
1970	347	7	39	25	10	108	34	580	64
1980	226	5	30	23	7	76	23	390	53
1990	186	4	29	15	5	69	24	332	42
1995	148	4	23	14	4	75	22	290	40
1996	141	4	23	13	4	67	22	274	37
1997	139	4	22	12	4	67	21	269	37
1998	129	3	22	11	4	67	20	256	36
1999	125	3	21	10	4	66	20	249	36
2000	122	3	21	9	4	65	19	243	35

Table 11 Baptisms by denomination in the UK, 1900 -2000

Source: Brierley. 2002/3. UK Christian Handbook. Religious Trends 3, page 2.2. Christian Research.

London

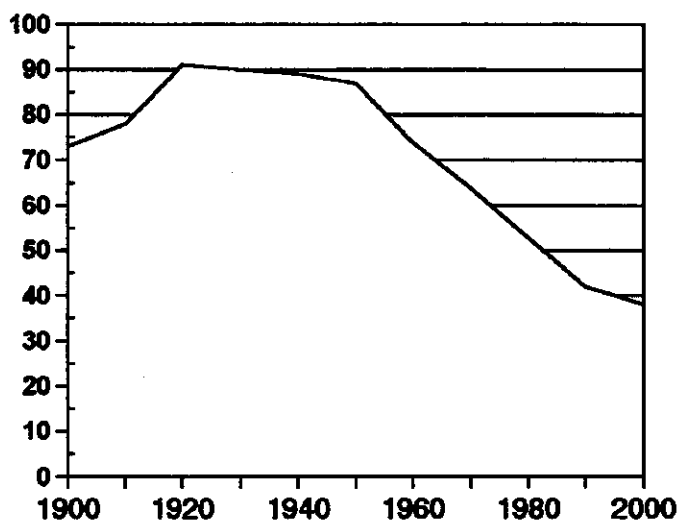


Fig. 3 Babies baptized in the UK as a percentage of all births

Source: Brierley. 2002/3. UK Christian Handbook. Religious Trends 3. Page 2.2. Christian Research. London

5.2.6 The number of marriages by denomination

The number of church marriages has been declining steadily since 1970. Subsequent to 1995 it has been possible to conduct marriages on approved premises, such as hotels. Such marriages have grown in popularity, as can be seen in Table 12. As a result, the frequency of church weddings has decreased.

Year	Percentage all marriages held in			Percentage of religious marriages of denomination					
	Registry Office %	Approved premises %	Church %	Anglican %	Roman Catholic %	Methodist %	URC %	Baptist %	All Others %
1985	48.8		51.2	65.6	14.2	9.2	3.8	2.2	4.9
1986	48.4		51.6	65.6	13.7	9.6	3.8	2.4	4.9
1987	47.8		52.2	66.1	13.6	9.3	3.8	2.3	4.9
1988	48.5		51.5	65.9	13.6	9.4	3.7	2.3	5.1
1989	48.1		51.9	66.1	13.2	9.6	3.8	2.2	5.1
1990	47.4		52.6	66.2	12.9	9.7	3.8	2.1	5.3
1991	49.3		50.7	66.2	12.6	9.7	3.8	2.1	5.6
1992	50.4		49.6	65.9	12.2	10.0	4.0	2.2	5.7
1993	51.1		48.9	65.7	11.9	10.2	4.0	2.2	6.0
1994	52.3		47.7	65.3	11.8	10.3	3.9	2.3	6.4
1995	54.1	0.9	45.0	65.6	11.9	10.1	3.8	2.2	6.4
1996	53.4	5.4	41.2	65.4	12.2	9.5	3.6	2.2	7.1
1997	52.6	8.1	39.3	65.7	12.3	9.0	3.3	2.2	7.5
1998	50.2	10.8	39.0	66.7	12.1	8.5	2.1	2.2	7.4
1999	47.5	14.2	38.3	66.7	12.3	8.5	2.9	2.2	7.4
2000	44.9	17.3	37.8	67.1	12.4	8.2	2.7	2.1	7.5

Table 12 Proportion of marriages by location and religious marriages by denomination, England and Wales, 1985 -2000

Source: Brierley. 2002/3. UK Christian Handbook. Religious Trends. 3, page 4.5
Christian Research. London.

Year	Total religious marriages	Anglican	Roman Catholic	Methodist	United Reformed	Baptist	Congregational	Jews	Others
1985	177,364	116,378	25,207	16,362	6,717	4,152	998	1,005	6,545
1986	179,669	117,804	24,578	17,173	6,847	4,238	1,091	989	6,949
1988	183,571	121,293	25,020	17,118	6,929	4,176	1,080	916	7,039
1988	179,595	118,423	24,372	16,894	6,682	4,056	1,050	1,014	7,104
1989	180,046	118,956	23,737	17,231	6,908	4,013	1,021	935	7,245
1990	174,275	115,328	22,455	16,867	6,656	3,698	965	960	7,346
1991	155,423	102,840	19,551	15,063	5,901	3,275	829	969	6,995
1992	154,597	101,883	18,795	15,446	6,116	3,433	876	933	7,115
1993	146,267	96,060	17,465	14,927	5,783	3,197	805	903	7,127
1994	138,956	90,703	16,429	14,347	5,449	3,178	782	813	7,255
1995	127,522	83,685	15,181	12,846	4,783	2,771	717	784	6,755
1996	114,817	75,147	13,989	10,919	4,141	2,564	677	815	6,565
1997	107,020	70,310	13,125	9,676	3,581	2,319	585	910	6,514
1998	104,231	69,494	12,615	8,863	3,220	2,262	600	870	6,307
1999	100,836	67,219	12,400	8,517	2,900	2,200	600	830	6,170
2000	97,700	65,600	12,100	8,000	2,600	2,100	580	800	5,920

Table 13. Religious marriages by denomination in England and Wales, 1985 -2000.

Source: Brierley. 2002/3. UK Christian Handbook. Religious Trends 3, page 4.5. Christian Research. London.

5.3 Belief and disbelief in the UK

5.3.1 Changes in belief and disbelief

Religion is notoriously difficult to define, but it may be described as a system of belief and practice in response to God or gods. The subject of what people believe is a relative late comer to be analysed. The first survey was carried out by market research after the Second World War. The tables below illustrate the nature of belief and disbelief.

Year	Belief in %						
	God	God as Spirit	Jesus as Son of God	Life after death	Devil	Exchange messages with dead	Ghosts
1940	81	38	68	49	24	15	15
1960	78	39	62	49	28	n/a	n/a
1970	70	38	n/a	37	20	11	19
1980	71	39	49	43	24	14	28
1990	71	40	n/a	44	26	14	32

Table 14. Belief in Britain 1940-1990.

Source: Wraight / Brierley. 2000/1. UK Christian Handbook. Millennium Edition, page 26. Christian Research. London.

Year	Do not believe in %					
	God	Jesus as man	Life after death	Devil	Exchange messages with dead	Ghosts
1940	n/a	18	21	54	59	64
1960	10	22	23	52	n/a	n/a
1970	15	n/a	42	70	79	73
1980	18	38	40	64	77	65
1990	27	n/a	42	67	80	58

Table 15 Disbelief in Britain, 1940 –1990

Source: Wright /Brierley 2000/1. UK Christian Handbook. Millennium Edition. page 26. Christian Research: London.

These figures suggest a small decrease in the numbers of those who believe in God, but a comparatively large increase in the numbers of unbelievers. They also suggest that belief in God and Christ is relatively widespread in the population, and that the cleavage between Christians and non-Christians is becoming sharper.

It could be argued that belief is reflected in the number of marriages, baptisms and confirmations.

According to a footnote in the UK Christian Handbook Religious Trends 3 (2002/3: 5.7), the Easter headline in the Daily Telegraph (26 April 2001) was that 'half of Britain still believes in the resurrection'. But five years later at Easter (12 April 2001), the Daily Telegraph said that a third of Britons believe that Jesus rose from the dead. Belief in this regard has therefore contracted considerably in five years. Life after death is not uniformly believed across the UK. Belief in Britain stood at 55 per cent in 1992. Belief in Northern Ireland was 78 per cent. Seventy Church of England ministers admitted that they no longer believed in God, according to a 1997 report by the Sea of Faith that appeared in the Times (Sunday Times, 30 November 1997).

From **Figure 4** below, it can be seen that belief has declined and disbelief in God has increased over the twenty-year period.

Belief in heaven has remained steady although disbelief has risen. Belief and disbelief in life after death have increased by around 5 per cent.

A survey conducted in 1992 by British Social Attitudes compared belief in Britain, Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic. It produced the following statistics for Britain:

Belief in God %	Britain	Irish Republic	Northern Ireland
	69	95	95
Belief that God is concerned personally %	37	77	80
% believing in **			
Life after death	55	80	78
Heaven	54	87	90
Religious miracles	45	73	77
Hell	28	53	74
The Bible is the 'actual' or inspired word of God	44	78	81

Table 16: Religious beliefs in percentages in Britain, Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic

Source: Greeley. 1992. Religion in Britain, Ireland and USA in British Social attitudes 9th Report. Ed. Roger Jowell et al, page 55 adapted. Aldershot. Dartmouth

** The percentages combine 'definitely' and 'probably' believing in.

In Britain nearly seven out of ten believe in God as opposed to more than nine out of ten in the Irish Republic and Northern Ireland. Further, the God in whom Britons believe is less likely to be personally involved in people's lives. There are marked differences in other aspects, too: the number of Britons believing in life after death, heaven, religious miracles, Hell and the Devil are in marked contrast to the other two countries. On this showing about one-quarter to one-third of the people of Britain are not religious at all. It is quite likely that values and beliefs are shaped by the frequency of church-going as the following table suggests. Separate data for England does not exist.

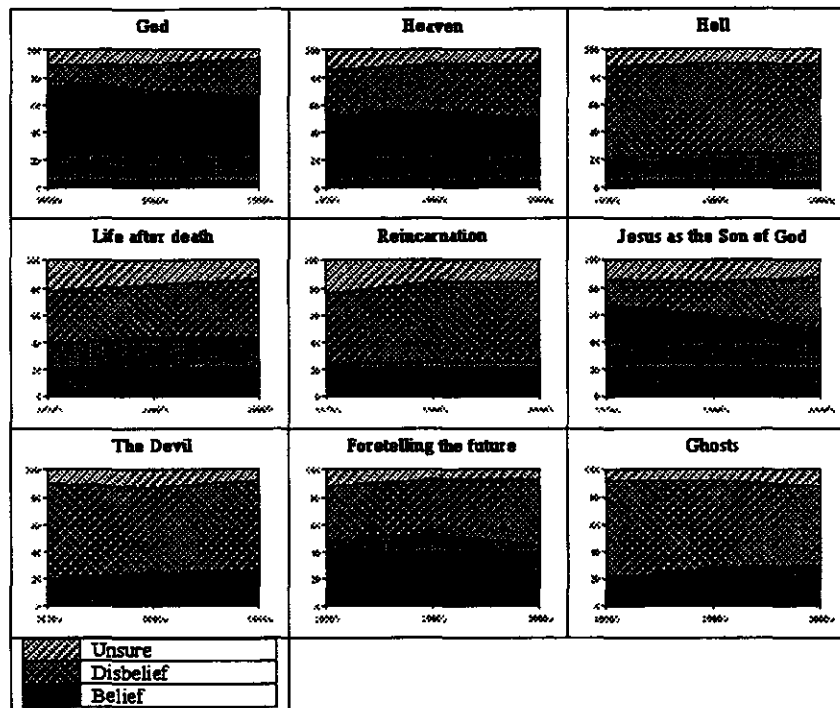


Figure 4: Belief and disbelief in UK Society

(data for England does not exist)

Source: Brierley. 2002/3. UK Christian Handbook. Religious Trends 3, page 5.7. Christian Research. London

Period	Name of theory	Description	Summary
Pre 1970s	Secularisation	In the modern world religious beliefs become increasingly implausible, and decline	I believe, therefore I go to church
1970s	Persistence	In the modern world religious beliefs and practices remain an abiding feature	I believe in going to church though I may not do so
1980s	Separation	Religious beliefs and practices are quite independent of each other	I believe but do not need to belong to a church
1990s	Cultural	Church going fosters a distinctive culture of beliefs and values	I go to church, therefore I believe

Table 17: Four theories of churchgoing.

Source: Brierley. 2002/3. UK Christian Handbook. Religious Trends 3, page 5.5. Christian Research. London.

In the 70s, after secularisation there emerged persistence. This latter term means that religious beliefs and practices remain abiding features. The 70s did not see a return to church membership or a revival of attendance. People accepted that going to church was a good thing although they did not actually do it themselves. It may be that such are not secular, only hypocrites! In the 80s it was realised that religious belief and practice were quite independent of each other, which brings us to the separation theory. This meant that it was rational to believe in God but there was no need to belong to or attend a church: indifference rather than hypocrisy. The proportion of those who believed in God remained high though it drifted downwards, whilst the proportion who attended church was only one-fifth as great. In the 90s there were two discoveries: those who said they were religious and those who said that they were spiritual were not necessarily the same set. In fact, there exists spirituality apart from the Church, as Brierley (2000b: 21) maintains. On the other hand, he (2000b: 21) believes, using information from an American researcher, that faith, which used to revolve around God, revolves nowadays around the individual. The present writer agrees that this may be the situation in some instances, where objective truth may be ignored, but is not exclusively the case.

The second discovery concerned the fact that church-going fosters a distinctive culture of beliefs and values. Those who go to church most frequently are likely to assent to traditional beliefs and values.

According to Brierley (2002/2003: 5.5), beliefs and values are held more strongly by those who most frequently attend church. This scenario appears quite convincing. The cultural theory in **Table 17** indicates that people belong first, and then believe rather than the other way round. Conversely, a loss of Christian belief seems to follow and not precede a decline in church-going. Since church-going is currently declining, Christian belief may be expected to decline also. However, this refers to traditional Christian belief that may decline, and not belief per se.

% believing in	Age at school leaving			
	All	15 or less	16-18	19 +
God	69	75	66	43**
Life after death	55	55	58	48*
Religious miracles	45	51	43	41**
Affiliated with a denomination	64	72	57	36**
Pray weekly	27	31	24	26*
Attend services two or three times a month	16	14	13	26*

Table 18: Belief according to age in Britain

(** Correlation with school leaving becomes statistically significant when age is taken into account

Correlation with age is not statistically significant)

Source: Greeley. 1992. Religion in Britain, Ireland and USA in British Social Attitudes.

9th Report. ed. Roger Jowell et al, page 64 adapted.

Aldershot. Dartmouth.

Table 18 shows that belief in God and life after death decreases with age.

% Believing in	All	Church of England	Roman Catholic	Presbyterian	Free Churches	Other Protestants	No religion
God	69	84	92	88	91	89	28
Life after death	55	57	78	67	77	66	35
Religious miracles	45	49	80	46	78	61	22
Pray weekly	27	30	52	30	38	52	8
Attend services two or three times a month	16	14	36	25	31	49	1

Table 19: Religious beliefs and observance in Britain

Source: Greeley. 1992. Religion in Britain, Ireland and USA in British Social

Attitudes. 9th Report. ed. Roger Jowell et al, page 60 adapted. Aldershot: Dartmouth.

According to this survey, Roman Catholics are seen to be consistently more devout and have a higher level of belief than those in other denominations; the Anglicans being generally the least devout. Those who profess no religion are by no means irreligious. Twenty-eight per cent believe in God, 35 per cent in life after death, and about one-fifth say they believe in miracles. Sizeable minorities of non-religious people are ambivalent about religion. It is likely that their rejection of religion is due to a more liberal morality and a suspicion of churches.

The British stand out as considerably less devout than the Southern or Northern Irish, whether in attendance, frequency of prayer or participating in church activities other than attending services, as **Table 20** below shows.

Observance or experience	Britain	Irish Republic	Northern Ireland
Affiliated with a denomination	64	98	92
Attend services two or three times a month	16	78	58
Pray weekly	27	75	65
Attend church activity monthly	11	17	28

Table 20. Religious observance (in percentages) in Britain, Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic (data for England not available).

Source: Greeley. 1992. Religion in Britain, Ireland and USA in British Social Attitudes. 9th Report. ed Roger Jowell et al, page 56 adapted Aldershot. Dartmouth.

5. 3. 2 Attitudes towards the meaning of life

Comparing the British with the Northern and Southern Irish, the former are more likely to think that life has no purpose. As many as one in five believe that life is decided by God, who makes it meaningful. Only one in seven believe that life has no purpose.

% saying	Britain	Irish Republic	Northern Ireland
There is little that people can do to change the course of their lives (strongly agree/agree)	22	24	27
Life is meaningful only because God exists (strongly agree/agree)	21	50	54
Life does not serve any purpose (strongly agree/agree/neither agree nor disagree)	14	9	11
The course of our lives is decided by God (strongly agree/ agree)	20	58	54
We each make our own fate (strongly agree/ agree)	61	66	51
'Very happy these days'	33	41	37

Table 21: Attitudes towards the meaning of life in Britain

Source: Greeley. 1992. Religion in Britain, Ireland and USA in British Social Attitudes 9th Report. ed. Roger Jowell et al, Page 57 adapted. Aldershot: Dartmouth.

5.4 Summary

The church community in the UK decreased from 86 per cent of the population in 1900 to 64 per cent in 2000. Regarding the two largest groups, the Anglican numbers actually rose from 23.1 per cent to 25.6 per cent in the same period, and the Roman Catholics from 2.5 per cent to 5.8 per cent, the latter rise probably due to the influx of Irish people in the 60s. The remaining denominations remained constant, indicating that the growth of the Christian church has not kept in step with the growth of population.

Over the same period, total church membership has decreased from 33 per cent to 14 per cent of the population. All the major denominations have declined with the exception of the Roman Catholic Church, which increased from 1,912,000 in 1900 to 2,198,000 in 2000, again the result of Irish immigration.

If we look at Sunday attendance over the 20-year period, 1980 to 2000 in England, it can be seen that total attendance as a percentage of the population in 1980 was 11.4, but in 2000 it dropped to 7.4 per cent. All the mainstream churches suffered a decline, with the exception of the new churches.

Viewing this scenario in terms of age group, the higher age group, 65+, remains fairly constant numerically, although it represents 25 per cent of the total attendees in 1998, this showing an increase of 7 per cent on 1979. All other age groups suffered a loss, the most significant being the under 15s and the 15-19s, whose numbers declined by half. The cause of this appears to be the increase of alternative Sunday activities, such as sporting events, shopping and visiting the extended family.

Surveying age categories in terms of denomination, it appears that the total number of English church-goers in 1979 in the under-15s was 26 per cent; in 1998 it was 19 per cent. All religious denominations followed this trend. The age groups 15-19 and 20-29 decreased from 9 per cent to 6 per cent and 11 per cent to 9 per cent respectively, but the higher age groups increased, so that the 30-44 age group increased from 16 per cent in 1979 to 17 per cent in 1998. More significantly, the 45-64 age group increased from 20 per cent in 1979 to 24 per cent in 1998, and the 65 + age group increased from 18 per cent in 1979 to 25 per cent in 1998. Thus, as a percentage of church attendance, those in the 30-65 band are increasing and those in the 30 and below band are decreasing. This shows that the members of the church overall are increasing in average age, losing young people.

In numerical terms, Mass attendance in the Roman Catholic Church in the UK decreased from 1,914,396 in 1995 to 1,768,036 in 2000. There were 190 fewer churches, and the number of priests decreased from 6,743 to 6,367, although there were 152 more deacons. However, deacons can only perform some functions in the church, such as baptisms and marriages.

The Orthodox Church has increased its membership from 196,995 in 1995 to 234,690; its churches by 17 and its ministers by 37. However, this is not viewed as indigenous growth, but growth arising from immigration.

The Presbyterian membership has decreased from 1,088,098 to 988,812, but has 172 fewer churches and 71 fewer clergy, including females.

The free churches' membership has remained fairly constant. They have only lost 21,989 members out of 1,299,916, which represents 1.96 per cent of their membership. Although they have 180 fewer churches over a five-year scale, they have 306 more male and female clergy. Their popularity is probably due to a fundamentalist approach.

The Baptist church has neither gained nor lost over the same time scale. It possessed 223,151 members in 1995, which only decreased to 215,243 in 2000. There has been a reduction in the number of its churches by 41, and it has 7 less clergy, male and female.

The Independent churches have declined from 203,487 to 170,308, whilst the number of churches has reduced by 320 and its ministers by 63.

The Methodist Church's membership has also declined. It decreased from 434,410 to 384,527 over a five-year period. The number of its churches has also decreased from 7,156 to 6,621. There has been a slight increase in the number of its male and female ministers.

The Anglican Church has a slightly lower membership in 2000 compared with 1995. In 2000 it stood at 1,653,980, whereas in 1995 it was 1,785,033. The number of its churches has been reduced by 46 and the number of male clergy reduced from 11,582 to 10,750: that is 832. Female ministers have risen in numbers from 898 to 1,305, reflecting the importance attached to women in this denomination. Nevertheless, the number of ministers overall has decreased by 425, which is a substantial amount considering the extent to which this church extends over the UK.

Comparing all the institutional churches with the newer ones, it is apparent that whereas the latter have increased their membership, the former have experienced a decline. However, the scale of such differences is not the same. The institutional churches experienced a reduction of 4,984,522 to 4,639,532, whereas the new churches achieved membership of 106,206 in 1995, which became 139,852 in 2000. The latter is some 46 times smaller than institutional churches.

The Anglican and Methodists have the largest number of visitors in Sunday services: the Orthodox and Roman Catholic the least.

Commitment to church-going can be measured by the frequency with which their respective members attend Sunday worship. The weekly attendance in the Roman Catholic Church is highest at 57 per cent; the new churches achieve 53 per cent; Baptists 51 per cent, and Anglicans 39 per cent. The lowest frequency is in the Orthodox Church with 10 per cent weekly worshippers. This suggests that each church possesses a core group of regular Sunday attendees.

Brierley formulates a balance sheet of gains and losses in which the gains comprise:

- those joining the church;
- ex-church-goers rejoining;
- and people changing churches.

The losses are made up of: church-goers leaving temporarily; people changing churches; church-goers leaving permanently; deaths; and those changing their frequency of attendance. A substantial net loss of 1,030,000 to the church is estimated.

The reasons given for change in frequency of attendance on Sunday is: the introduction of Sunday shopping; sporting activities; and visiting the extended family. The services are reputed to be uninviting, too lengthy, and there is a feeling of not being wanted. Many see no connection between spirituality and church-going.

The degree of religiosity may be gauged from the number of baptisms performed in the UK. The total number of baptisms celebrated has fallen. Expressed as a percentage of

the population, 73 per cent were performed in 1900, but in 2000 it was 35 per cent. All the mainstream churches have been severely affected, most spectacularly the Anglican, which had 564,000 in 1900 but which reduced to 122,000 in 2000.

The Roman Catholics had 55,000 baptisms in 1900 and 65,000 in 2000. This increase is due to immigration that occurred in the 60s and 70s. Overall, the total number of baptisms declined from 793,000 at the turn of the twentieth century to 243,000 one hundred years later.

The level of religiosity may also be assessed from the number of religious marriages performed. In England and Wales during the last twenty years 51.2 per cent of all marriages occurred in church in 1985, but by 2000 this had dropped to 37.8 per cent. Registry-office marriages varied from 48 to 54 per cent in the early 90s, but by 1995 other approved premises, such as hotels, were licensed to conduct these ceremonies. The latter have increased their custom from 0.9 per cent in 1995 to 17.3 per cent in 2000. This factor may be partly responsible for the decline in church celebrations.

In numerical terms, the total number of religious marriages was 177,364 in 1985, but it became 97,700 in England and Wales by 2000: all denominations suffering a reduction over the same period of around 50 per cent. The worst affected, numerically, was the Anglican Church. It performed 116,378 marriages in 1985 but by 2000 this decreased to 65,600.

Perhaps the most potent assessment of religiosity is obtained by posing questions about belief. Belief in God in Britain decreased from 81 per cent of the population holding this view in 1940 to 71 per cent in 1990, whereas disbelief in God increased from 10 per cent in 1960 to 27 per cent in 1990. 44 per cent believed in life after death in 1990, compared with 49 per cent in 1940. This has been accompanied by a larger number of people declaring disbelief in the devil. Sixty-seven per cent disbelieved in 1990, compared with 54 per cent in 1940.

Further data supplied by the British Social Attitudes Survey, 1992, reports that 69 per cent confirmed belief in God in that year. The corresponding figure for both the Irish

Republic and Northern Ireland was 95 per cent. Britain therefore falls behind these countries. In Britain, 55 per cent believe in life after death. However, in the Irish Republic it is 80 percent, and in Northern Ireland 78 per cent. In terms of denominations, it has been shown that 92 per cent of Roman Catholics believe in God, but in the Church of England, 84 per cent. There is a greater disparity between the two in belief in life after death: 78 per cent of Roman Catholic believe compared with 57 per cent in the Church of England.

Generally, Britain lags behind the Irish Republic and Northern Ireland in terms of attendance at services and praying, again confirming the view that secularisation has a greater hold on Britain, and England in particular. Opinions expressed that life is meaningful because God exists and life does not serve any purpose show that Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic have a higher level of belief and disbelief respectively compared with Britain.

5. 5 Conclusion

The data presented does not give a comprehensive picture of church-going and belief in England. But there can be little doubt that the mainstream Christian church in the UK, and particularly in England, has suffered a decline in religious attendance, and that the number of marriages and baptisms performed as a religious activity has also declined. Further, belief has decreased and disbelief increased. Attitudes towards the meaning of life have shifted also.

Our detailed conclusions from this analysis are as follows:

- Overall church membership and attendance have declined over the last hundred years. The age groups up to 15, 15-19 and 20-29 have declined, the former more so than the two latter groups over the period 1979 to 1998, whereas the age groups 30-44, 45-64 and 65 + have all increased as percentages of membership over the same period, the latter group more than the other two. This represents an aging church with fewer younger people available to take part in the various functions and ministries of the church.

- The frequency of weekly attendance suggests the presence of a significant and stable core group, constant throughout the year.
- The infrequency of Sunday attendance is due to sporting and leisure activities. Services are sometimes seen as uninviting and too long; because of little involvement there is a feeling of being unwanted. There is also a disconnection between people's views of spirituality and churchgoing.

In this chapter it was stated that Brierley held that the major cause of declining church attendance was the infrequency with which individuals went to church. This is, in part, due to the fact that belonging to an organisation has been losing its popularity in recent years. This loss of adherence is not peculiar to the Church but applies to most voluntary associations.

'This-worldly' and 'other-worldly' may be losing their distinction, as stated above, through the process of globalisation. If, therefore, everything is related to everything else, the separation of the sacred and the profane tends to lose its plausibility.

- Infrequency of attendance affects in some sense the ongoing life of a community. Catechetical programmes, for instance can be severely disrupted.
- Baptisms have seriously declined from 793,000 in 1900 to 243,000 in 2000, a slump which runs parallel with church attendance. There are some who believe that their children should be baptised, even if they do not attend church; the child needs to be 'named'. It is suggested that many parents do not choose to have their children baptised because the action means little to them.
- The number of religious marriages has declined. Alternative venues, apart from the registry office, are now available. It is sometimes thought romantic to marry on a ship or in a garden. Such forms of service may encourage a type of ceremony, which is not Christian, and where the accompanying readings and music have little in common with a Christian approach. The numbers of Registry office marriages have remained stable over the last twenty years, but there has been a significant increase of marriages performed at approved premises, while

those celebrated in church have decreased from 51.2 per cent in 1985 to 37.8 per cent of all marriages in England.

- Seventy-one per cent of the population in Britain believed in God in 1990 compared with 81 per cent in 1940. There were more who disbelieved in the devil and life after death over the same time scale. Recent figures which compare belief in God and life after death in Britain with the Irish Republic and Northern Ireland show the former to be well behind the other two, indicating that Britain is more secularised.
- As age increases belief in God decreases. 75 per cent of those up to 15 years believe, but only 43 per cent believe in the group 19 +.
- Belonging precedes belief and not vice versa.
- Britain has a lower percentage of individuals who believe in God and life after death compared with Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic. Roman Catholics appear to be more devout than Anglicans, and there is a greater divergence of percentage belief in life after death between them. Britain falls behind both countries in terms of devotion, and questions of belief addressed to them show again that Britain lags behind the others in belief in the meaning of life and is ahead in holding that life does not serve any purpose. The conclusion that can be drawn from this information is that Britain has a higher level of secularisation by comparison with the others, and a lower level of religiosity.

It has not always been possible to extract information that pertains only to England. Surveys need to be interpreted carefully, and are preferably accompanied by some background information.

Generally, more complex questions yield answers that may not relate to what is in the mind of the questioner. There exists more variability of comprehension in the mind of the respondent when the question is complex. However, it is believed that the data presented provides a picture of a broad trend in England and the UK.

It was suggested in chapter 4 that secularisation appeared to be a link in the chain that connects scientific discovery with new ways of thinking and working, which the present writer terms 'technology'. In that analysis, implausibility and a crisis of the credibility of religion were threatened by secularisation, from which it would seem that these elements bring about a decline in religious belief and practice. How quantifiable these elements may be is impossible to calculate.

Some social scientists believe that religion is mutating and not under a death threat. On the other hand, the proponents of secularisation may well believe that religion is mutating, although change is not easily quantifiable. They also believe that there is a swing away from institutional religion towards a more privatised form, a process which can be laid at the door of secularisation and ultimately the elements mentioned above which activate this social phenomenon. If religion is mutating, then it seems to veer from a Christian to a quasi-Christian or even non-Christian aspect. In other words, it drifts towards a New Religious Movement or New Age Movement. Such changes may be quite small. But, even if such is the case, it is not good news for the Christian Church.

It is clear that as society becomes more complex, as communities decline and as choices in belief systems widen, religion suffers in social-significance. Quite apart from the quantitative decline in religious observance, resulting from secularisation, the present writer cites the decline in belief outlined above. Secularisation brings with it a confusion of the meaning of religious symbols, and a consequent loss in the prestige of religion. In such a milieu, there is greater stress on the 'here and now' rather than on the hereafter... In other words, things are regarded as 'this worldly' rather than as supernatural. Assuming this to be the case, there is greater emphasis on rational ways of doing things, superseding religious way of doing things. In such a situation, religious beliefs can assume quasi-religious or non-religious form, such as is evidenced in the New Age Movement or the New Religious Movement. Secularisation does not invite religion to speak to society about the morality of current events, should the latter contain a moral aspect. Religion becomes less engaged with society and brings to it a smaller contribution. As such, its influence as a defender of moral issues weakens.

CHAPTER 6: STRATEGIES THE CHURCH COULD UTILISE TO COMBAT THE NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF SECULARISATION

6.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to suggest possible strategies that can be developed both by the individual and the church community in order to counter the negative aspects of secularisation, so that the church may be a more effective instrument in proclaiming the Good News. The methodology used will first be to describe the state of the Roman Catholic Church before and after the Second Vatican Council. This Council is regarded by many as a fundamental turning point in the Church's history, through which a thorough review of its practices, and its attitudes to the outside community, entailed a re-working of its relationships both within and outside its domain. After this brief analysis, we will state our faith position as a foundational principle. The negative aspects of secularisation will be described and contrasted, together with a review of the positive aspects of religion found in this secular age.

These positive aspects will be presented in such a way that they can be used as a strategy for combating this phenomenon. Finally, a number of associated approaches – personal, parish and structural— will be suggested. The structure of this chapter will be in the form of a sequence of ideas and proposals, mainly originating from the present writer but complemented by the writings of contemporary Baptist and Anglican sources: notably, Philip Clements-Jewery (2001); Simon Reynolds (2001); Peter Brierley (2000b); Martyn Percy (2002); Bob Jackson (2002); and Kevin Ward (2002).

This work will be concluded by formulating proposals aimed at specific negative effects, where possible, and by assessing the practicality of implementing these in the Roman Catholic communion.

6.2 The Roman Catholic Church before and after Vatican II

The Second Vatican Council of 1960-4 re-thought the focus of the Roman Catholic Church. Prior to this period, the focus was on the institution and one's loyalty to it. This has now changed to that of the person of Christ, and one's faith in redemption, freely offered to all. Rather than having a sectarian, hierarchically-controlled closed world, the bishops of the Council wanted the laity to witness their reception of the Good News by setting out on pilgrimage through a world in which support would be given to one another in faith and works.

This position pre-supposes that individual members can, without much difficulty, change their attitude from an institutionalised form of Christianity to a pre-dominantly Christ-centred one. Not that one can say that the institutional form displayed the absence of a Christ-centred focus entirely, but rather that it tended to place a heavy emphasis on its self-importance, operations, sacraments, laws and regulations to which the individual must adhere if salvation is to be obtained.

This fresh perception would incorporate Christ and his salvific mission, but the latter's distinctness could be set in relief. For an individual to change from an institutional focus to that of a personal relationship with Christ as Saviour, and yet retain the institutional aspect as an important element, would seem to vary according to the individual's spirituality.

Perhaps an important consideration that is not always recognised is that the change cannot be swept away. No matter how the past is seen, it cannot return. In previous times, one did not think for oneself: obedience was the watchword. There were rules for everything, and penalties applied if they were broken. Everything about the Church — the liturgy, the discipline, the rules and duties — were clear-cut. If one managed to achieve total adherence, one gained a certain amount of self-assurance.

In the wake of the Vatican Council, Roman Catholics were told that it was time to grow up. The obedience of the child was transformed into the turmoil of adolescence accompanied by its growing pains, confusion and insecurity. At one extreme, there were those who had little regard for laws and regulations, and at the other, those who wanted the retention of these, such as those connected with fasting and abstinence. It

resulted in a cleavage between conservative and liberal, between those who welcomed the revolution and those who wished to preserve the customs of the past. The middle ground of opinion, which was the largest, thought that the church needed rules, as any institution does; some are important, others less so. But the most important aspect of all was faith and one's belief in Christ's salvific power.

Prior to the Council, Roman Catholics had a fortress mentality. They comprised mostly working class people. Since then, the Roman Catholic Church has embraced many from the middle classes, a process that has altered considerably the identity of the church in that now it reflects some of the values, attitudes and behaviour of society as a whole. When the majority of the adherents of this religion were working class, uneducated, poor, mainly immigrant and not part of the mainstream of society, the sense of identity was profound.

However, when they became an educated, mostly affluent, and acceptable part of the cultural mainstream, a consequent loss of identity ensued. This identity nowadays is subsumed in the liturgy, belief and faith.

6.3 Statement of belief

The promise that Jesus made before his Ascension, that he would be present in his Church until the end of time, is fundamental. Hence religion and faith in God will not die. The Church is founded on rock and cannot be destroyed by the negative effects of secularisation. At the same time, we cannot fall into the trap of complacency insisting that the continuance of the Church is assured, if nothing is done. Christians have been called and chosen. They have been gifted with the Holy Spirit of Pentecost. They have been invited to the wedding feast of the Lamb. They have a duty to promote the Christian message of salvation. A compact, a covenant, a contract, has been made between God and his people. The People of God, the Church, have been charged to be a light shining in a dark place, so that the world may be enlightened. In order that this light may shine on our country and world, we need to enquire how we may counteract the negative effects of secularisation so that the proclamation of the gospel and the kerygma of Christ can be made available to all.

6.4 A Summary of the negative effects of secularisation

6.4.1. Personal problems connected with secularisation

In our study of the social forces that have activated secularisation, we have seen that mankind has been removed from his roots; he is removed from nature and enters the world of technology, and through this his life has changed. He tends to become detached from God and more secular. He then tends to become more self-contained, being the source of his own authority and power. If he continues to act accordingly, his moral and religious outlook will probably verge into a home-made synthesis partially influenced by external truths. This could progress into a more 'this-worldly' attitude even though it may be other-oriented at times. In turn, this might be a basis towards promoting his own progress, development and self-worth. If this occurs, he departs from the realm of the Spirit and embraces isolation. This is the personal problem effected by secularisation. The scenario guarantees and is expressed in the form of individualism. From this perspective, church-going is regarded as optional: it is no longer necessary to sustain faith or personal spirituality, or to be a good Christian.

Personal spirituality is viewed positively, and organised religion, negatively. Individuals are free to create their own religious faith and consecrate their own religious space. In this view, formal institutions are neither required nor wanted. The ethic has shifted from self-denial to self-fulfilment.

This constitutes the problem of secularisation affecting the individual in his relationship with the church community.

6.4.2 Privatism

Another aspect of this problem is that of privatism. Moving from one institution to another, individuals never become part of an integrated whole. Each has its own values and beliefs. As a result, instead of religion being an integrating force unifying the various groups to which one belongs, it is relegated to the private sphere of life. Berger refers to these groups as 'life-worlds' in which religion becomes primarily internal rather than external, private rather than public, individual rather than institutional.

Individuals therefore only belong to a church insofar as it benefits their own private lives.

6.4.3 Pluralism

A further aspect is that of pluralism, which was discussed earlier. This does not necessarily mean the arrival of a large number of religions, but, through globalisation, introduces many different cultures, peoples and life-styles into communities. Rather than living in small communities where the majority of people held similar beliefs, the latter now live in close proximity with others who hold a wide diversity of views. Kevin Ward (2002: 24) states that the more diverse, varied or plural the beliefs held in a community, the weaker is the legitimation of any one set of beliefs. The present writer thinks that this view is unassailable. Indeed, as Berger (1969: 155) says in an earlier work, a fundamental problem for religious institutions is how to keep going in a milieu that no longer takes for granted their definitions of reality. He (1969: 155) sees that there are only two options available: one of accommodation, the other of resistance.

If the first option is accepted, the religious authority has to answer the question: 'How far should we go?' If, on the other hand, the second option is adopted, then the question 'How strong are our defences?' has to be answered. There are problems with both, but whichever is chosen, it has to be legitimated. Whether the church should be open or closed to society is addressed in 6.5.1 and 6.6.3.

Despite the vast difference in non-theological content, secularisation and pluralism are worldwide phenomena. For instance, the Protestant development could be seen as prototypical. At its beginnings, it was not willing to make concessions to secularisation: the Anglican Communion sought to reproduce a facsimile of Christendom in England. It could be argued that it lacked plausibility by comparison with its medieval model through its diminished size and its confrontation with internal and contradictory definitions of the situation. The Anglican Church became as repressive as the Roman Catholic Church had been in order to maintain its plausibility.

Prior to the Second Vatican Council, Roman Catholicism, by reason of its tradition tried hard to maintain a resistance to secularisation and pluralism by trying to establish something like 'Christendom' within limited territories. In an age of mass literacy, mass communications and mass mobility, this has proved very difficult to achieve. But as long as the posture was maintained, Catholicism could not afford to make concessions to secular thought. This policy was deeply held, since the Syllabus of Errors of 1864 condemned the notion that the Roman Pontiff ought to reconcile himself with, and agree to the progress, liberalism and civilisation that were being introduced. This was emphasised by the doctrine of papal infallibility in 1870. However, after several decades of political intransigence, the papacy was modified. Theological thought was expressed at that time by the modernists, who were condemned at the beginning of the twentieth century. Since the Vatican Council of the 60s, there has been a strong movement of liberalisation in Roman Catholic theology but whether it will get far in modifying the deep conservatism within the institution is a contentious issue (Berger: 1969: 156).

Religious pluralism nowadays offers the individual more choice in what religion he will adopt, or whether he will adopt none. He can choose an institutional denomination or one in which he selects what to believe. Secularisation has to some extent made the choice of religion both free and, if necessary, private. The latter effect can be seen eminently in the emergence of the New Religious and New Age Movements.

6.4.4 Liberalism

Liberalism, which is born of privatism and individualism, makes religion subjective in two senses: first, if religion has lost its objective definitions, then religious definitions become a matter of choice; second, religious realities are translated from an objective framework, which is external to the individual, to a framework which is located within the individual's consciousness. Thus, for instance, the resurrection of Christ could no longer be thought of as an event in the external world of physical nature, but translated into a psychological phenomenon in the consciousness of the believer.

Liberalism, according to Berger (1969: 166), is the root of New Religious Movements and New Age Movements that have sprung up in the latter part of the twentieth century. It is hard to counter this statement. Beliefs can take on a quasi-religious form, blending with magical ideas (not necessarily the occult), and superstition.

6.4.5 Rational attitudes

One other major negative effect of secularisation, to which an allusion was made at the beginning of this section, is that people generally regard things as 'this-worldly' rather than supernatural. This occurs because modern life expects the individual to perform actions in a rational way rather than in a religious one. For instance, the intervention of the supernatural is not considered likely in post-modern times. This is because there is, endemic in life-styles, a rational attitude to the performance of our daily work and routines. Its manifestation may also be due to increasing affluence and comfort experienced as a result of wealth creation, thus tending to blunt supernatural expectations.

6.4.6 Quantitative and Qualitative decrease

Perhaps the most cogent and visible appearance of the negative effect of secularisation is the decrease since 1900 in church membership and church attendance. Accompanying this has been the decline both in the number of baptisms and marriages in real terms as well as the number of baptisms and marriages expressed as a percentage of the population. This takes on a more serious note when we discover that belief in God has decreased since 1940, and disbelief has increased.

6.4.7 Disengagement with society

Secularisation also brings with it disengagement from society. Because there is no common mind and purpose between institutional religion and the state, the former loses its prestige as a voice in moral concerns and takes on a more privatised form. Today, the Church is often regarded as interfering when it speaks on moral matters.

In our later discussion of the methods to be employed in counteracting these negative effects, we shall indicate which might be highlighted.

6.5 Positive aspects of religion in a secular age

6.5.1 Engagement with society

There is no reason why religion, even mainstream religion, should not be public-oriented and enter the public realm when it has anything to say of moral or ethical moment. Religion mutates and lives on, and there are thousands of private spiritualities and beliefs that flourish in this age. It is clear, then, that the Church must take advantage and capitalise on this. It must be open to the world and not closed to it. Religion appears to be resilient, as can be seen in the celebration of Christmas, which reveals a nation that still enjoys carols and nativity plays as part of its cultural heritage.

6.5.2 Signs of religious life

Religion is still in demand; when it is absent it is, more often than not, either created or the gap filled with a new form of spirituality, usually by New Age religion. If people tend to believe in something rather than nothing, then the task of the Church would seem to engage with society and culture. In the words of Martyn Percy (2002: 9): "the task of the Church offers articulation to the voices of innate and implicit religion. The Church can respond to the challenge of a faithless age with confidence in a society which refuses to leave religion alone, even though it does not wish to belong to it." In Percy's view (2002: 10), it can provide an open arena in the community for tears, grief and celebration. The present writer concurs with this opinion.

The signs of religious life do not appear to be in competition with organised religion, but are indications of the hunger for spiritual illumination that is endemic in the human personality. Hence ministry and evangelism need to be directed towards this objective. Percy (2002: 10) remarks that the Church has many more supporters than members, and calls for a ministry that engages with contemporary society in an interrogative, empathic and critical-friendly manner. Believing and belonging should not be confused.

6.6 Proposals to combat the negative effects of secularisation

6.6.1 Introduction

In order to determine how the Christian Church can be more effective in proclaiming the Gospel, we need to state what our vision is; our aim must be enunciated before we plan to achieve it.

Brierley (2000b: 83) also suggests a vision and strategy, so that we need to envisage what the Church would be like in, say, twenty years' time, and then think laterally as to how to bring this vision about.

What will emerge from this are the values in which one believes. Our view is that these may not be the right ones. In that the difficulty foreseen by this approach is that it is intensely subjective, we, therefore, although accepting the concept of vision and strategy as appropriate to present needs, need to be cautious.

It would be ideal if we could retain our values. But popular television in which a Kilroy Silk or Jerry Springer assumes the role of moral mentor on an equivalent level with a church leader can be very disturbing. Brierley (2000b: 83) believes that if we are to bring people to God, we require a distinctive prophetic witness which engages with our culture. Our view is that this could take the form of a healing ministry, since many are broken and hurt in the course of their lives.

Our calling as Christians is to discover what the Spirit of God wants us to do, and then embrace it.

6.6.2 Leadership

Peter Brierley, who has investigated the state of the Christian Church in recent years, relates the views of an American researcher, George Barna, who gives several suggestions as to what action should be taken by the Christian Church. He (2000b: 83) says that people must be motivated to pursue and embrace life according to a biblical worldview.

People whom God has called and anointed for this task of leadership must lead the Church.

Many religious denominations would say that their leaders are anointed by God and that they have been chosen by him, though they may appear to be weak or incompetent. It can also be claimed by many church leaders that the Bible is the centrepiece of their teaching. He (2000b: 83) goes on to suggest that new forms and formats must be available in which people will experience, understand and serve God. From this allusion, it would appear that the author does not believe that the Christian Church has striven to make God present or make him understood, and that one can only serve him imperfectly at present. Our view is that this opinion is too vague and does not make his views explicit. One must have the confidence that if one prays with good intention, God will choose a leader who will be right for the situation. We may be disappointed with the choice and find difficulty in working with it, but we have to accept it as God's choice.

From a Roman Catholic perspective leaders, such as bishops, who are seen as area superintendents, are chosen by the pope on the advice of the national hierarchies. There is no procedure by which either the laity or the clergy can nominate individuals. Similarly, the choice of a local leader, the pastor, is made by the bishop. Whether this choice is undertaken as a response to prayer, is not known but may be assumed.

Area leaders (bishops) and local ones (pastors) spend much of their time at meetings, and in many instances the area leaders are unaware of the conditions of the local community. The religious organisation has, in the opinion of this writer, become heavily saturated with bureaucracy, which does not augur well for the local church. Area leaders (bishops) visit parishes annually, but their visits hardly equip them with a profile of the local community. The area leader (and the local one), in our view, must have knowledge of what and whom he is leading. One cannot lead without knowledge of local conditions. Our view is that bishops should delegate suitably qualified individuals to represent them at such meetings and report their content so that they can make the correct decisions. They would thereby be free to visit the areas falling under their jurisdiction and would be more suitably placed to make decisions affecting the local

community. In our view, the increasing degree of bureaucratisation has offered the local leader little time for visiting his flock, except for the sick and housebound. In the pre-Vatican Council age, visitation would have been regarded as essential for the people to know their pastor, and vice versa. In large parishes, the pastor has little opportunity for knowing whom he is leading, and therefore a certain amount of anonymity is built into the community. Clearly, the pastor must make time for this necessary part of his ministry as shepherd.

At the same time, both the local pastor and the bishop will be able to recover the position that their predecessors experienced in larger measure than today, namely, the office of shepherd for which they were chosen. The present writer sees this as a fundamental change counteracting the onslaught of bureaucratisation and to some extent, rationalisation.

Although the present writer can only speak for his own communion, the observations that have been outlined might find an application to other church groupings. This is because secularisation affects every mainline denomination and therefore our remarks concerning the Roman Catholic communion are representative.

6.6.3 Dialogue and Communication

Dialogue within the Roman Catholic communion has somewhat deteriorated over the last few years, a view which is validated by Philip Daniel, who has worked on lay commissions in the Church for many years. The Church remains conservative in its higher levels of authority. However, at local level, communications and dialogue can be quite good. This sometimes breaks down where it extends over a number of pastoral areas or parishes. However, pastors offer different strategies to counter secularisation, initiatives which would be more successful if a common strategy were to be employed over a particular area. This requires more effective communication over an area or deanery, in which individual pastors can submit to a plan that helps the whole church in that location, instead of partially.

Although the Church has had a tradition of downward communication, there is no corresponding upward communication. Despite a clear mandate from the Second Vatican Council, it appears to be largely ignored by area church leaders, that is, bishops upwards, according to Daniel (1999: 92-93).

He (1999: 92-93) suggests that dialogue is almost dead, with the effect that no significant increase in the sense of community has developed within the Church. As Daniel (1999: 94) reminds us, there is no opposition between the hierarchical character of the Church and the adoption of democratic structures representing church communities. Dialogue is expressed at grass-roots level, from which an understanding of the contemporary church can be gained. The whole people of God should take part in this through appropriate structures, not only working out ideas, but also sharing in pastoral activity.

The whole people of God, says Daniel (1999: 95), at all levels should have a share in choosing their leaders, including bishops. Local churches should be trusted to decide on the structures that need to be set up. In this way, local traditions will be taken into account and the total church will be able to gather up the experiences of local congregations. To some extent this is possible, but that the 'gathering up' will be effected is improbable. Our view is that although a local church can implement strategies quite easily, it becomes increasingly difficult to introduce them to other local churches.

Dialogue between local and area churches at the moment seems to be switched on and off at the will of the area church, that is, the seat of the bishop. But dialogue is a dynamism that can generate churches that are engaged not only in evangelism but also in their need for renewal. Necessary structures that act as channels of communication must be created, if they are not already in existence, so that the laity can be integrated into the church as adults who have responsibilities to it.

Therefore, communication, on which many pride themselves, will have to be an essential link in the future church. Not only will listening and communicating at a local level be essential, but also it will be necessary to establish and maintain communication between local and higher levels through deaneries and dioceses.

As far as the area church is involved, this means that communication from the bishop or superintendent minister is directed to the local level. The popularity of radio, television shows and Internet feed back and talkback shows has an implication for the top-down style of communications: namely, it does not work. Area leaders must therefore listen and respond to what is happening at the local level. To some extent, this already occurs. The future church will be quite small and scattered, and the strength of the organisation will depend on the depth of communications throughout a much wider web of contact.

6.6.4 Engagement with society

Simon Reynolds (2001: 9) states that national church life has witnessed a growing shift away from an opening, questioning engagement with society and a propensity to define the internal ecclesial agenda more tightly. The language of the church is less pastoral, and does not include praise, wonder or an emphasis on the mystery of God. Outwardly, the national church is perceived less as a community at prayer and more as a public limited company. The present writer believes that the Church of England has become a closed church, concerned more with its internal operation than its outreach to society. It is hard to believe that many Christian bodies have an engagement with society, although the Roman Catholic Church engages with society and government on the issues of abortion, euthanasia and opposition to the provision of morning-after pills to teenagers without the permission of their parents. At the same time, a rapprochement between the values society has and that of the average Christian is hard to visualise.

There can be no doubt that the Church must engage in dialogue with society, and society with the Church, otherwise the Church which orientates itself away from the world merely dispenses 'cheap grace', as Reynolds (2001: 11) puts it. If the Church is closed to society, it becomes not only artificial, but also obsolete, because it was commissioned by Christ to go out and preach the gospel. Society needs the Church, and

the Church needs society, no matter how it may otherwise appear. It would also seem that the average follower of Christ needs to be radically different from what he is today.

In this context, it could be said that in many instances Christ has been eliminated from Christian lives. Churches are built, but its members live in their own houses. Christ has become a matter of the 'churchiness' of a group, and not a matter of life. Indeed, the Church can only be called such if it is deeply committed to the lives of others, rather than to a few committed loyal members. We should be ready to share in the pain and suffering of others as well as sharing in their happiness, hopes and dreams.

When the Church withdraws from the world, when it becomes closed, then it is a distortion of the revelation that is Christ. Equally, when society wishes to live in isolation from God, it is a distortion of what it means to be fully human.

6.6.5 Engagement with contemporary spirituality

Clements-Jewry (2001: 31) addresses the issue of engagement with contemporary spirituality external to institutional Christianity. That more people believe in God or pray, or report religious experiences than enter a church, is undeniable. He states (2001:31) that this does not arise from something they have been taught, but something they know. Such experiences are eclectic and draw on sources other than from the Christian tradition. They are private and individualistic. If this is so, is this spirituality a help or hindrance to the Christian mission?

A response to this is that the present writer believes God is already present in these experiences. The Holy Spirit is omnipresent and communicates with those who are open to him. Perhaps, the first step of the Christian is to listen: he must try to pick up what God is saying to these people. Such a scenario may be reminiscent of Paul speaking to the Athenians in Acts 17: 23. Perhaps individual sin and guilt are seen to be no longer important issues in the present world, although corporate sin may be. Our view is that in order to tackle corporate sin, one has to be conscious of one's own, and then repent.

There is no point in looking at the splinter in our neighbour's eye (even if he is a corporate institution) and ignoring the log that is in our own. If the way to evangelism, suggested by Clements-Jewry (2001:32), is to work alongside others who campaign for the abolition of the third world debt, or global warming, however admirable, then taken to its logical conclusion, Christians would merely turn into social activists.

It is possible that mainstream religions provide recruits for the New Age Movement. It is even claimed that many have become New Agers within Christianity, in Heelas's (1996: 163) view. One who is so influenced would internalise authority, producing profound repercussions for religion in such a way that the person's stance becomes more individualistic. It could be said that authority passed from a theistic position to one dominated by the self; from an Augustinian mode to a Pelagian view of human nature. A belief in the inherent sinfulness of human nature is less common nowadays, and a significant feature is that few Christians are content to remain faithful to religious teaching; and, in some cases, to remain faithful to a single religious organisation. They are content to exercise their own authority and decide what to believe either from a base of religious doctrine or from the Bible. A combination of Christian teaching with teachings drawn from other sources is often assumed.

It could be argued that those who engage in manufacturing a personal faith to suit their own requirements, without heeding external revelation or the history of salvation, are indulging their own whims, probably unwilling to accept unpalatable traditional beliefs. Also, it may be that there is an element of selfishness in a pick and mix faith, but this aspect is beyond the scope of the present study.

On the other hand, it would appear that Christianity has moved away from an exclusivistic traditionality. Beliefs that served to distinguish the saved from the damned, the true and the false, have disintegrated. Now, people are less likely to define their belief in Christianity as the one solution that caters for everyone. A trend has been established towards a convergence, signified inter alia by inter-faith marriages and a movement of individuals among denominations. It must be emphasised, however, that this convergence does not imply a forging of a union among the denominations,

although there is a willingness to work together and appreciate their separate traditions. There is a strong feeling among many traditional denominations that they are basically the same, an opinion that would be rejected by official leaders and many of the more conservative elements within those traditions. It is undoubtedly easier today for individuals to draw on a range of religious beliefs and practices than it was in the tradition-differentiated past.

6.6.6 Structural changes of parishes

In today's world, the institutional approach is still dominant although various ecumenical projects have blunted it to some extent. These projects have contributed to people's appreciation of a spirituality that shares a common tradition, and can awaken them to new ways of thinking about one's relationship with Christ. The institutions survive. Indeed, it is hard to visualise their disappearance for they enshrine traditions by which their adherents are loyally bound. Loyalty to an institution is very commendable. Loyalty to a church is commendable, too. However, the present writer believes that one's primary loyalty is to Christ.

As Bryan Wilson (1982) observes, there is a certain degree of competition among churches claiming the loyalty of the customer who buys the brand of Christianity he likes best. However, this writer believes that to introduce the concept of the market into the religious arena is artificial. There are some who alternate between one communion and another, but our view is that their numbers are insignificant. The vast majority of Christians remain loyal to the tradition in which they were nurtured. Even those who disaffect from one tradition to another permanently would be numerically low. This does not include those who attend a different church for a specific event, such as a wedding, funeral or baptism. Belonging to a particular faith community is voluntary. In previous ages, there may have existed a compulsion to remain in a particular group, and this compulsion was psychological and real. If one did not attend Sunday Mass, one inherited the opprobrium of the community.

There will be an absence of such compulsion in the church of the future. Even now, a considerable section of a parish congregation would not attach great importance to Sunday attendance... Frequently, the most trifling reasons are offered for not attending.

Fifty years ago, a baptism would have been performed within two or three weeks of the birth, being due partly to the fear of infant mortality and the desire to register the child as a member of the church. At present, baptisms are performed any time after nine months or a year, or even longer, after the birth.

In the light of the absence of compulsion and the choices of available communions, it might be worthwhile to challenge those who seek to join the community. The presumption is that they are motivated by a desire both to give and receive from it. To join a community is to enter into a deep relationship, a bond in which one freely gives and receives from a common life. The individual's relationship is to Christ and also the community. He is therefore entering into a covenant, a contract of mutuality, in a shared responsibility. All that is required is a promise to be faithful; one is not required to be sinless and perfect. This covenant could state a promise to walk faithfully with one's fellow members, to worship with them regularly and to make some commitment to Christian service, however temporary this may be.

It has already been pointed out that the social significance of religion is diminished: the power and influence of the Church has gone. This means that the Church will have to preach the good news from a position of weakness rather than from a position of power. Christ's strength arose from his vulnerability, his willingness to enter into the pain and struggle of human existence. Accordingly, the present writer believes that the Church will have to accept vulnerability, ready to enter broken real-life situations, although certain of its foundations and the victory of Christ on the cross. This does not mean that it should dilute its message, but must stand alongside those, both inside and outside the Church, who are grappling with the issues of the meaning and purpose of life, and walk with them. It is therefore seen as an essential mark that the Church proclaims its message from a position of weakness. When we state that the good news will be so proclaimed, it implies not only a lack of prestige in the community, but also some material factors which have come into play.

First, since the number of vocations to the priesthood in the Roman Catholic Church in the west is declining, the laity will have to assume a greater role in the proclamation of the gospel. This can take the form of the spoken word or by demonstrating faith by

personal conduct and example. There would seem to be a case for training and formation leading to a deeper understanding and fuller appreciation of the nature of Christian vocation and ministry. Second, since the number of clergy is declining, some form of collaborative ministry will be required. This would not be a stopgap measure. Even if there were a greater number of vocations than at present, there would still be a need for the laity to assume a greater role in the proclamation of the gospel, since they, by their baptism, have become members of the priesthood of believers. The whole church should be engaged in this process, for that is its primary purpose. In the institutional model, it was believed that this was the function of the clergy.

In regard to training and formation mentioned above, it must be pointed out that there is, in Roman Catholic thought, a huge stake in denominational schools, the building of which a previous generation laboured to make a reality. The Anglican Church has a similar stake, although not so large. In advertising for teachers, the Roman Catholic Church stipulates that candidates should be baptised and attend church; the Anglican Church seeks communicants. It may be that in future these conditions will be regarded as discriminatory, though they are essential conditions for the good working of the respective institutions. The 'essential conditions' could be outlawed in future.

However, in the future church the insistence of religious education will have to be translated into a programme more devoted to the education and formation of those who fall in the 19-30 category, who can eventually act as catechists working in a teaching capacity, not necessarily schools, but in parishes or pastoral areas. Little of this occurs at the moment. Indeed, many adults do not feel obliged to inform themselves scripturally or theologically, though knowledge is strength and power.

Roman Catholic Christians will have to possess much more knowledge of the faith they profess — and be able to defend and explain it. The retention of this age group is thought to be essential for the future life of the Church.

On the other hand, the over-sixties are the fastest growing section of society. They possess wisdom and enormous resources that can be used in a future scenario. The last thing they want is to be patronised, and their service to the church, if inspired, would be

invaluable, especially in an overseeing and advisory capacity.

From the present perspective, the presence of a priest in a parish has always defined that parish. He has been considered essential for the focal prayer life by virtue of the Eucharist, considered as the Church's central act of worship. If the number of priests continues to decline, then parishes will have to be re-defined, not according to population or financial status, but their viability in terms of the establishment of trained individuals who can conduct worship and administer the parish. In this configuration many smaller parishes would have to be amalgamated.

A future church will have to cluster or amalgamate several parishes. The numerical decline of its members accompanies a corresponding decline in the numerical strength of its clergy. Consequently, although the number of parishes will be small, the administrative areas will be much larger. Hence the work of the laity in proclaiming the good news will be crucial. The priest will continue to act as a celebrant of the Eucharist and as a co-ordinator and facilitator in his pastoral area.

6.6.7 Pastoral care

In trying to combat the effects of secularisation, one must include a procedure at parish level of prevention. That is, creating a spiritually attractive environment that will hold the membership intact, as far as one can facilitate this. Although the effects of this orientation influence small and large parishes alike, it is more significant in large urban communities.

According to Bob Jackson (2002: 6), who has worked as a pastor for twenty years in the north of England, large churches (that is those having congregations in excess of 200) have experienced a greater probability of suffering a larger decrease in membership over the period 1989 to 1998, than smaller churches having a membership of 200 or less.

The causes of decline discovered by Jackson's (2002: 8-9) study can be summarised as follows.

- The members of small churches, that is, two hundred or less, are more regular and frequent in their attendance. They belong to a tightly knit community with a strong sense of obligation to one another. Members are more likely to be integrated into a small group and have a role in their church that matches their gifts.
- On the other hand, members of large churches hold a more consumerist attitude to their church by comparison with those who belong to a smaller one. Churchgoers like to belong to a fellowship rather than attend a service. It is easier to belong to a small fellowship rather than a larger one. Small groups are more appropriate nowadays, anyway. What people desire from their church has changed. Once it was teaching and inspiration; now it is belonging. But there is no doubt that belonging to a community also featured in earlier times.
- Stress and business have increased considerably in recent years, so people are coming to church more worn out and stressed than before. They feel the need to receive, and fewer have the capacity to give. Large churches experience the difficulty of finding leaders with time and capacity for major tasks.
- In larger churches, newcomers are hard to spot and harder to integrate into the community. It is possible that if they are not welcomed or have not made a few friends within a month or two, they will cease coming to church. Newcomers do not attend every week, which compounds the problem of keeping in touch or integrating them. Newcomers often feel that the church not only does not notice them, but does not need them or care about them. If this is the prevailing situation, it is not hard to see them drifting away. In smaller churches, nearly everyone knows who was not in church on Sunday. A friend will know where the absentee is.
- Larger churches have a higher proportion of children and young adults, and they are likely to run children's groups, although this happens in smaller churches

also. Children and young adults are being lost more rapidly than older people in the larger churches, which are declining more rapidly.

- Also, larger churches are likely to have a faster turnover of members than in rural areas, due to easier mobility of society. Therefore, new members need to develop a relationship with the church leaders and the membership generally. The fast turnover can have a de-stabilising effect on the parish community. From a pastoral point of view, a welcoming team could be formed to watch for newcomers and fringe members, helping them to integrate into the community. When this has been achieved, the welcome team can consider that its task is completed. Some churches have welcome teams, but the work of integration is reserved to the pastor. Different 'welcomers' could be given different age groups or different rows or seats, but it would be essential for them to be on duty every week. In a similar way, a pastoral care team could be given the job of noting which members are absent and following them up, at least to find out whether they are ill. Members of the welcoming and pastoral care teams need to be well trained and supported in their ministry.

- Leadership styles in large churches are quite different from those in smaller ones. The minister of a large church needs a wide range of skills, which are not always catered for in his training period. Many clergy feel unprepared and unsupported for their tasks. Also, members of large churches may feel less happy with their clergy than members of rural ones. Some ministers are tempted to leave early, and some churches find it hard to find a suitable replacement willing and able to accept responsibility.

6.6.8 The Cell-church

The concept of cell-church is interesting and useful in this age. People experience church at a number of different levels: cell, congregation and cathedral. The third is where vision and wider belonging are experienced. The 'cell' version occurs where most people will experience worship, care, teaching, development in their faith and provision of opportunities for witness and service through the exercise of their spiritual gifts.

The cell-church comprises a number of individuals who are motivated by a common interest or concern. For instance:

- it can include members who have a desire to assist the poor and deprived in the Third World;
- it can be those who are unemployed and who seek a common brotherhood for mutual support and prayer;
- it can be a group who are concerned about injustices to Christians, and wish to help them by prayer and personal contact;
- it can be people who wish to study the books of the Bible, using this as a basis for prayer;
- it can comprise young families offering mutual support and encouragement, establishing a table fellowship and helping one another in the development of their faith.

They can consist of any group of people who wish to deepen their faith, through exploring its meaning in their individual lives and the moral issues that present themselves. The scope is endless.

The cell-church could include those who are most likely to stray, such as the under 15s, the 15-19 and the 19-29 age groups. For the 15-19s, groups could be formed to cater for their needs and interests, with a prayerful input. For the under 15s, a concentration of teaching Christian doctrine and catechesis could predominate, a feature of many parishes at present. This age group is involved in sacramental programmes in the Roman Catholic communion. There is no reason why individuals could not progress from one group to another one containing a more advanced aspect of formation and service to the community.

The cell-church is attractive, but could become inward looking, and thus fail to provide pastoral care. Yet it provides a link with the wider church. But as Clements-Jewry rightly admits (2001: 33), it tends to make the congregation type of lesser importance, although it is this that provides the link with the wider church. The cell-church has had small success in the Roman Catholic communion, notably in rapidly changing, urban congregations. But its general importance and application have been neither admitted

nor applied by either the clergy or people. We have seen how community is at low ebb. The cell-church could be a response to this, providing a new orientation of community. The present author strongly believes that there will have to be a change of mind and heart in this direction.

Jackson (2002: 11) believes that the large church has to imitate the small one in some way. The present writer agrees strongly with this view. The idea that the small rural parish might be on the point of extinction is incorrect. The large church needs to have small group structures so that it can replicate the relational features of a small church. It needs to provide a place for each member who will be immediately missed if absent, who will have a role and who will be known; and who has friends and is needed. The provision of house groups, interest groups, working groups such as choirs, and cell groups is necessary for sustaining the life of a large church. Such provision requires organisational ability and an increased commitment to build up and oversee small groups giving a good quality 'glue' to the large congregation. The minister may not be the right person to be directly responsible for such an activity.

The larger structure, the congregation, can also be divided up into a coalition of small interlocking, worshipping communities, each with its own identity, but finding unity through a shared vision, ethos and leadership can combine the advantages of large and small... This means that groups of people who favour worshipping in a particular manner with a unique format can do so without having to compromise with another group that wants to worship in a totally different way. The combined small groups can assemble together on important occasions. This appears to be a very attractive idea, but there is a danger, with each group deciding to 'go it alone', that fragmentation of the entire congregation will follow. This prospective situation will have to be carefully guarded against by the pastor, if he wishes to pursue this idea.

6.6.9 An approach to personal spirituality

It can be argued that the business of our lives causes us to be more secular. We have meetings to attend, many visits to make, and for ministers of religion, many services to conduct. Our calendars and diaries are filled with engagements and appointments. Henri Nouwen (1996: 13) says: "... that we move through life in a distracted way that we do

not even the take the time to rest and wonder if any of the things we think, say and do are worth thinking, saying and doing". He concludes that our lives are terribly secular. Secularity is a way of being dependent on the responses to our milieu. The secular or false self is fabricated by social compulsions. Nouwen (1996: 13) suggests that we harken to the desert monks, who renounced the social pressures of their age and lived in silence and solitude. This may well be acceptable in the life of a celibate, but is hardly appropriate in the twenty-first century.

What he proposes is that the individual needs silence and solitude somewhere in his life, even if it is only for one hour each day. We need to escape to the desert where we will be alone, escape from the plethora of words that are flung at us, and face our inner anxieties, fears and compulsions in the presence of Christ. By doing this, we will be liberated from them. They will no longer exercise dominance over us. We shall be able to see people instead of the problems they have. We will be able to encounter the Christ in others, rather than seeing them as sinful and weakened individuals.

Silence is the keynote, the companion to solitude. Because of the multiplicity of words we encounter, they have been debased and cheapened. Silence enables us to encounter the Word, a first step into the future world, a world in which we are filled with the power of God's silence. If, as Nouwen suggests, silence and solitude are necessary, not only for the spiritual life, but also to cleave us from the secular self, then we can easily see that secularity has a grip on modern man since society does not encourage either silence or solitude, but quite the reverse.

Nouwen's thesis is addressed to the individual. The secular self has reproduced itself throughout society in England and shows no respect for boundaries, religious or otherwise. Secularisation is not a virus; it is an irreversible orientation.

6.6.10 Summary

Counteracting the negative effects of secularisation can be approached on two levels: the personal and the communal.

On the personal front, a discipline of silence and solitude needs to be introduced, even if

only for an hour each day. The individual needs refreshment and peace to enable liberation from inner anxieties, fears and compulsions and a coming into the presence of Christ who will, as he promised, shoulder our burdens and infuse us with his rest. This will enable us, not to escape the reality of our human situation, but enable us to see Christ in others, rather than viewing them as weak and sinful individuals. This approach will also help us to be detached from the age of post-modernity by rendering our focus on Christ.

It is necessary for the individual and church community to engage more with society. A closed church is a repudiation of its founder's intention, for Christ commanded his followers to go and preach the good news to all nations. Further, a closed church cannot and is not a living organism; it is condemned to death. An open church, on the other hand, is available to those outside its visible confines, willing to suffer alongside them, at the same time not prejudicing its belief and faith. It can empathise with others in their struggles, hopes and happiness, but remain rooted in its beliefs, and show its actions as a consequence of its faith in the Lord Jesus. Also, the church must be open to society because it is evangelistic in nature. Its members are called and chosen by God for a particular place in it, and are gifted accordingly. They must use these gifts, not only for the church, but also for humanity in general. God, the Creator, created all humanity. To insist on a closed church is to ratify, in part, the concept that the church is for the chosen and saved, for whom God provides; those who are outside it are of no consequence to God. Therefore, it is fundamental that the church engages with society so that it be true to its calling. Society, in its turn, needs the church as a guide and as leaven.

There is another sense in which the church should engage with society. It is assumed that religion mutates, and that there are many, ostensibly outside the church, who profess a personal belief in God or a higher power who directs their lives, and who maintain a corresponding spirituality. Most believe in something, rather than nothing, suggesting a hunger for religion. We have seen that religion can so easily assume a privatised form. Why this occurs instead of a search for a suitable belief system among the organised religions is not known. It would appear that many adopt a private approach and hold on to beliefs that are not necessarily the result of a culture. If we believe that the Spirit of God communicates with all, then it could be that he is speaking

to such people. Hence, there is a necessity to establish a dialogue between Christians and such individuals, for both may learn something important. This dialogue would be personally uncritical, friendly and open.

Dialogue and communication, in the present writer's opinion, will be crucial in the future church. They are necessary actions in regard to leadership. At the moment, communication seems to be one-way, namely from top to bottom. A change in the focus of communication, which was proposed at the Second Vatican Council, for a more prominent bottom to top style, has to a great extent been ignored. In a future church - which will be smaller and more scattered- greater emphasis will have to be placed on the latter style than is the case at present, otherwise area leadership (bishops) will have no proper conception of that which it is directing.

The leadership will have to be more pastorally orientated and dispense with, or at any rate make less focal, those bureaucratic operations such as business meetings which appear to be overly concerned with future provision. It would be much better to conduct a prayer meeting, asking God's guidance for the future. The business meetings could be consigned to professionals who would report on the outcome, so that the leader can take the necessary action, if any. To lead a body of people without knowledge of their concerns and hopes is to lead from the top. If a leader is a pastor, then he should fulfil this task.

Within the local community, it is suggested that there be developed cell-like structures. These small groups of people possessing a common interest or need would identify with one another and feel part of the church, contributing to it in some way. Such a structure would tend to strengthen loyalty to the larger, congregational group by forging ties.

The future church, by virtue of its smallness, will have to preach its message from a position of weakness and vulnerability. Since it does not possess the power and influence it once had, it will need to adopt the mien of a suffering servant to society. In the writer's opinion, this would not be devaluing the message of Christ, but rather imbuing it with a power that is made perfect in weakness. It is possible that the message, because it is delivered from a lowly position, will gain more credibility to

a nation and a society which is highly secularised. This is believed to be essential to engagement with all communities, in our view.

At the same time, a strategy in the parishes must be adopted that will prevent secularisation from gaining ground. The cell-church outlined above is one such approach, attempting to replicate a small church scenario in a large urban church.

A technique that could be employed, particularly in the large church scene, is that of the welcome group. Such a group would be on duty every week, establishing contact with newcomers so that they can be integrated into the community. The minister could undertake the task of integration.

A pastoral care team could be set up which would monitor individuals who fall sick. In the Roman Catholic communion, they would receive a home visit by either the priest or a Eucharistic minister giving Holy Communion.

In view of the large numbers of senior citizens, it would be appropriate to invite them to fulfil an advisory role in the church according to their gifts.

6.7 Conclusion

The negative aspects of secularisation are:

- liberalism and individualism;
- pluralism: the emergence of different cultures, life styles and belief systems;
- disengagement from society;
- privatised religion: a pick-and-mix style in which the individual has freedom of choice;
- a 'this-worldly' attitude rather than an 'other-worldly' attitude, engendered mainly by rationalism and bureaucracy;
- a decrease in church membership, attendance and associated religious activities such as baptisms and marriages;
- decrease in belief in God and an increase in disbelief in him.

Expressing our strategy in tabular form, we have:

Negative effects	Proposed strategy	By whom
Disengagement from society	Engagement with society	The individual and the community
Privatised attitude to religion	Engagement with contemporary spirituality	
'This-worldly' attitude	Proclamation of good news from a position of weakness	
Decrease in church membership (belonging)	Dialogue and communication with bottom-top style more pronounced Change in the style of leadership Provision of cell-churches Introduction of welcome and pastoral care teams	
Decrease in belief in God and increase in disbelief in him (believing)	The same strategy for decrease in church membership, shown above	
Religious pluralism	Possibly, engagement & dialogue	The individual
Liberalism. Co-exists with privatism & religious pluralism	Engagement & dialogue	The individual

Table 1: Diagram showing Negative Effects of Secularisation and proposed strategies

A change occurs if each local church activates a plan that will make that church more vibrant and re-introduce the concept of community. This cannot be achieved unless its church leader can inspire this through his communication skills. It is also important that communication and dialogue become a reality among the churches in the locality, and that the whole project does not fall on stony ground because a particular leader refuses to co-operate. It must be a project in which all the local churches are involved in its planning and implementation, and where genuine problems and objections are discussed and an agreed course of action undertaken.

Communication and dialogue must also feature between the local churches and the area (diocesan) church, and between the local pastor and the bishop so that the latter's backing may be certain. Indeed, it would be preferable if the area leader (the bishop) were to validate such a project by inviting the local clergy to plan the strategy with him. The concept of the church comprising bishop and clergy working together to produce a method of pastoral action would be very powerful.

It can also be seen from Table 1 above that the ideas of believing and belonging are brought together by a combination of features such as a change in the style of leadership, better communication and dialogue both between parishes and the area church, the provision of welcome and pastoral care teams and cell-churches, and indeed an inter-linking network of groups. A type of personal spirituality has been suggested which could help to neutralise the secular influence. In the present age, belonging appears to be more important than believing. Presumably, if belonging can be inculcated, beliefs may well be unified, but there is no certainty in this.

This plan must include engagement with the local community, with both those who belong to other communions, and with those who are unchurched. This often manifests itself locally in ecumenical groups, which sometimes engage with the unchurched through schemes such as ALPHA and the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA). It seems to be a rare occurrence for individuals or groups to engage with spirituality other than their own.

From the foregoing strategy, it would appear that the Christian Church, and in particular the Roman Catholic communion, possesses the capacity to counter the negative effects of secularisation. Some fundamentalist Christian churches appear to have had some success by being uninfluenced by this phenomenon. But it is open to question whether they live in the real world and are not fabricating a closed society, which is what the Roman Catholic Church succeeded in doing following the restoration of the hierarchy in 1850. Although uninfluenced by the outside world, the latter viewed it as possessing some mystique.

The present writer believes strongly that the Church should engage with society, and be open to contemporary spirituality, whether this resides in the church or outside it.

In the present writer's church, openness to society operates on the personal as well as a corporate level. On the personal level, some individuals will comment upon or object to an issue which is believed to be morally degrading both to society and the individual.

On a corporate basis, groups can and do take political action over an issue that they believe is contrary to the will of God. This happens through the agencies of Right to Life, which opposes euthanasia, and the provision of abortifacients to children under sixteen without prior parental consent. Openness also occurs through the agency of the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child (SPUC), which opposes abortion.

However, it must be said that relatively few individuals make the necessary political overtures when a piece of dubious legislation is proposed. In fact, it seems in our view that Roman Catholics are thin on the ground in their engagement in the political arena. It may be that the existence of organisations like those mentioned above is seen as taking necessary action, thus making any further contribution unnecessary.

On the national level, although there is a low representation of Roman Catholic MPs, they do contest issues that are believed to be immoral, such as the morning after pill. On the other hand, the general mass of Roman Catholics kept a notoriously low profile over the conflict in Northern Ireland. Some are involved in campaigning and non-governmental groups, for instance Child Action on Poverty, the Catholic Institute for International Relations (CIIR), which has achieved international and government recognition for the quality of its research in third world countries, and the Churches' National Housing Coalition (CNHC).

Regarding the local church engaging with the community, this varies from parish to parish. Ecumenical activity that was rife in the 60s and 70s has declined since then. It would seem that with the destruction of the defensive walls surrounding Roman Catholics, the social change in the last forty years and the fundamental religious changes brought about by the Second Vatican Council, have produced a substantial degree of convergence between Roman Catholics and the rest of the population in

England.

A much more delicate problem is engagement with contemporary spirituality, in the sense of its being exterior to mainline Christian communions and possibly non-Christian. It must be remarked that many Roman Catholics do not engage with their own traditional spirituality. They appear not to inform themselves or develop their existing spirituality within the context of their own tradition; for instance, by reading spiritual writers, contemporary and historical.

It seems a tall order to suggest and hope for the implementation of a more pronounced bottom-top style of communication, when the Church has been petrified into a top-bottom system that has existed for centuries. For the purpose of allaying secularisation, it would only be necessary for the former style of communication to permeate the local and area (diocesan) churches. The pastoral commissions are the only vehicles to promote this change as being essential for the health of the Church.

There can be no doubt that the success of this strategy would be more easily achieved in the local church with or without explicit diocesan sanction. Cell-churches could be created, particularly in large churches where anonymity prevails over a large section of its adherents. Welcome groups and pastoral care teams are necessary to produce and enhance the feeling of belonging. A few parishes do operate these systems. Cell-churches (house groups) were promoted by Family and Social Action in the 60s, and can now be thought of as a substitute for the organised fraternities and sodalities which flourished in the Church prior to the Second Vatican Council. Nowadays, most people are unwilling to attend a church-led group, but would be more inclined to attend house groups. If this is true, cell-churches could be instrumental in promoting the educational and spiritual formation of its members as well as equipping them with ability for outreach to other groups and society in general, by instilling in them the virtue of Christian witness and service. In fact, the cell-church could provide answers to many problems of today, such as leadership, entailing a power base of prayer, which will sustain the whole community. It is possible that it could remedy privatism and a 'this-worldly' orientation which some in the church subconsciously hold. An 'other-worldly' orientation appears weak, unrealistic or unobtainable, even fanciful, since heaven, in a sense, is experienced here. However, the good news proclaimed from a position of

weakness, and through the church's smallness — its apparent powerlessness — could offer a powerful antidote to this malady.

The present approach to area (diocesan) leadership and local (parish) leadership leaves much to be desired, it being assumed that the pastor or bishop is a leader. But although he is certainly the designated spiritual leader, it does not follow that he is a manager of people or would necessarily be mentor to the projected enterprise.

It is believed that by instituting the proposed reforms and procedures locally, the decline in church membership might, at the most, cease, or at least the rate of decline would be significantly smaller, particularly in those age groups in which the hope of the future is vested: the age groups targeted being up to 15 years, 15-19, 20-29 and 30-44, the critical nature of each descending with an increase in age. Cell-churches aimed at these groups could stem the tide of fall-out, in the present writer's opinion. Cell-churches for the under-15s already exist in most churches, and to a less extent for the 15-19s. They are not always successful in preventing fall-out, but then the latter might increase if there were no cell-church. They can be envisaged as an example of believing and belonging to the congregation.

The results would obviously be more outstanding if all the churches in the area possessed a common mind and application of this procedure, consolidated by approval from the area (diocesan) church. The achievements would otherwise be patchy.

There is no automatic strategy that will stem the tide of decline of church membership and the associated effects of secularisation. Each local church is unique and may require a slightly different approach from that of an adjacent parish. Even so, the mutual support and co-operation of all parishes, and the diocese especially, is needed if the venture is to succeed. It might be that only a modest improvement is obtained. But then it is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness.

CHAPTER 7: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

7.1 Summary of problem statement

This study is concerned with the quantitative effects that secularisation has had on the Christian Church in England.

An analysis of these effects has been conducted and could, in the writer's opinion, be a useful source of guidance to the Church in regard to decision making in the areas of church administration and in increased knowledge of the weaknesses of secularisation, so that a minimising of its influences can be effected.

To this end, our study has been directed to finding a consensual definition of secularisation, and how this manifests itself: what are its causes, and how the quantitative effects of secularisation can be evaluated.

7.2 The Aim of the study

The aim of the study is to evaluate the effects of secularisation in the Church in England as a contemporary issue.

7.3 Methodology

A survey of contemporary literature was undertaken to determine a consensual definition of secularisation. The patterns of secularisation were reviewed and an analysis of the thinking of contemporary sociological writers undertaken to ascertain the causes of secularisation. To assess the effects of this phenomenon on Church attendance, and the number of Church baptisms and marriages, tabular and graphical data as well as written descriptions were employed.

7.4 Chapter conclusions

7.4.1. Definition of secularisation

We hold that secularisation occurs when religious institutions, religious actions and religious consciousness lose their hold on society. This has occurred and is still occurring in English society.

In the past, religion was based on the community. It is now divided between the public and the private sectors of society. That is, it occupies a formal public aspect and a private sphere. In previous times, the state was the secular arm of the Church. It does not retain that position today. Institutional religion no longer serves the purpose of providing a common world-view conveying the ultimate meaning of reality to everyone. Secularisation is not a change in society, but a change of society, a change that is irreversible.

7.4.2 Patterns of secularization

Secularisation exists as a social reality in political, intellectual and personal form: a relationship exists among these, since each one is a mode of operation in society by an individual or a group of individuals. The progress of secularisation is mediated by social conditions such as globalisation, fragmentation and modernisation.

7.4.3 Causes of secularization

Modern technology and new production methods, which have proliferated throughout the western world, have been introduced into everyday life. Use of computers and mass production methods accelerated modernisation and globalisation processes and, as a result, local traditions and local communities have decayed. Globalisation has also brought about the appearance of new cultures and this causes confusion in the mind of man as to what is true or false. Detraditionalisation results from an uncertainty towards religious truth, which, in turn, has emerged through modernisation and post-modernisation. Fragmentation of local life and the introduction of new cultures have brought about pluralism, so that the plausibility of any one religion cannot be validated. Both fragmentation and lack of plausibility are to some extent responsible for secularisation. Fragmentation throws religion back on the individual, so that it becomes subjective. Through post-modernisation, activities have become rationalised through the setting of targets and planning.

7.4.4 The Effects of secularization

Mainstream churches in England have suffered a decline in church attendance and the number of baptisms and marriages performed as a religious activity. The major cause of declining church numbers is thought to be infrequency of church attendance. Belonging to an organisation, religious or otherwise, has lost its popularity. Implausibility and a crisis of credibility of religious truth have also effected a decline in religious belief and practice.

Opinion varies as to whether secularisation has occurred. Some believe that religion is mutating. But the proponents of secularisation believe that there is a swing from institutional religions to a more privatised form. If this is the case (and it is), then secularisation is responsible for it.

As society becomes more complex and communities decline, the social significance of religion also declines. Not only is this decline observable in numerical terms, it also adversely affects belief.

Secularisation brings with it a confusion of the meaning of religious symbols and also a loss of prestige. The 'here and now' is stressed more than the hereafter. 'This-worldly' and 'other-worldly' attitudes are losing their distinctions; the sacred and the profane are losing their plausibility. Religion does not speak to society, nor does it comment upon or defend moral issues.

7.4.5 Strategies to be employed

We propose the following strategies to counteract the negative effects of secularisation:

- engagement to society and community should be assumed both by the individual and the church community;
- 'this-worldly' attitude should be challenged by the proclamation of the gospel from the position of weakness both by the individual and the community;

- to counter the decrease in church membership, several measures will be needed:
 - bottom/top dialogue should be improved
 - change in the style of leadership at parish level
 - establishment of cell-churches, welcome and pastoral care teams to minimize the decrease in the belief in God

- personal engagement and dialogue should be used to mollify religious pluralism and liberalism.

This project is something in which all local churches should participate, from its planning stage onwards. This procedure should also exist between local churches and the area (diocesan) church, from which support and encouragement should be guaranteed.

In the present writer's communion, there is openness to society on moral issues both on the personal and corporate level. In fact, there appears to have been a convergence between the Roman Catholic communion and society since the Second Vatican Council. On the other hand, there does not appear to have been an engagement with contemporary spiritualities.

Bottom/top communications and dialogue in the Roman Catholic communion are somewhat stagnant at the present time.

Cell-churches, welcome and pastoral care teams can be formed easily in parishes, thus promoting spiritual and educational needs and equipping them with the ability to outreach into the community.

Possibly, privatism and a 'this-worldly' attitude, which many subconsciously hold, could be alleviated by the use of these measures.

The writer sees the proclamation of the gospel from a position of weakness as a powerful tool in combating the negative effects of secularisation.

If these measures are applied, the rate of decline in church membership might well fall, particularly if they are aimed at those age groups which have shown the greatest decline, namely, up to 15s, 15-19, 19-29 and 30-44. The rate of decline is a maximum in the up to 15s, and a minimum in the 30-44 category.

It is assumed that each local church is different from its neighbour and may require a different approach.

7.5 Final Conclusion

In the present writer's opinion, there is no doubt that secularisation has taken place in England. We defined it as a change of society, which is irreversible. It can be seen that a dislocation of society and religion has occurred, and when this happens, religion disengages from society, has less to say about society as to how it should operate. Religion becomes a private matter. Because of the rational methods employed in doing things, the significance of the transcendent nature of reality is lessened, and a 'this-worldly attitude' is more prevalent than an 'other-worldly' one. Religious symbols lose their importance and prestige. Religious beliefs can take on a quasi-religious or a non-religious form. That this has happened in England and is continuing to do so is indisputable. Assuming this is to be the case, then the very heart of man's consciousness influences his decisions, personal views and actions.

The Church has not been unaffected by a change in society which has resulted in a numerical decline of her members and a qualitative decline in their beliefs.

There is no doubt that post-modernity has accelerated secularisation. Perhaps if there had been no industrial expansion, and ancient communities had remained intact, religion would have remained strong and secularisation limited. But the Christian Church is faced with a crisis that must be challenged. The present writer believes that no matter what the prevailing social conditions might be, religion can never be destroyed, even though a lack of credibility permeates mainstream Christian communions.

Whether such a strategy will combat the negative effects depends on whether the communion is open to society or not. If it is closed to society, in the sense that its members are called and chosen, and that they are the elect of God, then the negative effects will not worry them. Although such communions are small in comparison with those that are mainstream, they appear to remain numerically stable.

However, the present writer does not believe that the Christian Church should adopt this approach, but should be open to society, not in the sense that it should adopt its mores, but open in the sense of being available and present to people in their need; it should be open to spirituality, often expressed and practised privately. In the latter instance, a dialogue could emerge so that, at the least, a better mutual understanding might prevail, and in the best scenario a reformation of theological opinion pertain. The diverse strands of religious thought could be engaged and enlightened and a serious and sustainable rapprochement delivered. Of course, from the Christian's standpoint, the best scenario would be the conversion of the non-Christian. But there are other ways in which the Christian believer can inform and help; he can show his commitment to Christ by consoling and comforting one who is suffering bereavement, and who finds it hard to come to terms with it; he can pour oil on troubled waters when disagreements or arguments break out; he can be a companion to the lonely and elderly.

There are many ways in which he can show his devotion to God and man. Most important of all, he can pray for those who have lost their way or become confused with the meaning of life. To those who follow a pick and mix religion, he can be a friend. If the door is closed in these instances, an opportunity will be lost. But although we do not know the outcome if we do all these things, we have to put the matter in God's hands. A closed church is not a Christian option; Christ desires the salvation of everyone. We, therefore, as his instruments, need to have a missionary spirit. The Roman Catholic communion only emerged from its long period of isolation some forty years ago, and consequently finds it difficult to engage with other spiritualities through lack of self confidence or through the fallacious belief that it is unnecessary to relate to contemporary spirituality outside its own tradition.

The foregoing analysis suggests to the writer two possibilities: first, that a return to the practice of apostolic times whereby believers met in their houses for prayer, the breaking of bread and reading of the scriptures would be a desirable option for the Christian community. The need for the individual to belong to a small community is a paramount one, and a network of cell-churches has been suggested to this end. This has become an urgent need, and will become more so in the future. The present writer believes that now it should be seriously acted upon. Second, that the missionary Christian church should be open to itself, that is, ecumenical, to some extent. Even though there may be theological divisions, Christian communions at least believe and share one fundamental belief in the triune God and the salvific sacrifice of Christ on the cross. There is much to be said for mutual support of the various communions.

Our study of secularisation has been conducted with reference to the Roman Catholic communion. But the strategies suggested, such as bottom/top style of communication or cell-churches may not be relevant or appropriate in non-episcopal communions. Our view in terms of the Roman Catholic communion, which possesses an authority structure, is that it relies too heavily on a top/bottom style of communication, probably because it sees itself as authoritarian in the conveyance of belief as well as in its mode of operation. But, the present writer thinks that these two aspects need not be delivered in the same way.

The teaching of the Roman Catholic communion may well be authoritarian, but this does not mean that its structure should be similarly organised; it would be better if it were managed democratically. Even though it is authoritarian, its area leadership (the diocesan bishop) will have to be relieved of its bureaucratisation. Its operation will have to become more clearly pastoral than it is at the moment. In other words, it will have to be more closely knit to the people it serves — for otherwise it will be regarded as an office having little or no contact with its members. In this scenario, there may arise a 'two tiered' church.

Associated with its mode of operation is the authoritarian manner by which it communicates with its members. The present writer does not object to this, but maintains that if the church is a listener, as it frequently describes itself, the hierarchy should listen to its members on a continuing basis rather than at those moments when it wants to know something. Only by this procedure can the church move forward.

Topics for further research

- **Lapsation in the Church: its causes and the possible methods to be employed for personal re-engagement**
- **The use of the computer in proclaiming the gospel**
- **Theology in a rapidly changing society**
- **The psychology of post-modernism in Christian belief**
- **Berger's claim that the Reformation is the seed-ground of secularisation**

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