

## **Chapter 30**

### **The Church Moves Out to the Whole World**

The Jesuit missionaries in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had introduced Christianity into Japan, China, North America, India, Malaysia and Indonesia. It was their peculiar genius to adapt themselves, their message and rituals to the local cultures - Ricci in China, Nobili in India and Xavier in Japan. As early Christianity had made the transition from a Jewish culture to the Hellenized (Greek) culture of the Roman empire, in like manner these Jesuit missionaries attempted the same process in these non-European cultures. In China this included inclusion of certain forms of Confucianism, ancient names for God and ancestor worship.

This innovative process has come to be called “inculturation”. It is a process that calls for the missionary to learn a foreign culture through experience, observation and instruction. It is also a process by which the gospel is adapted to a particular culture. This includes an effort to reformulate Christian life and doctrine within the thought-patterns of each people.

As Roger Haight explains:

Inculturation does not mean that the gospel message is accommodated to human culture, but rather that the substance of the gospel is allowed to take on the form of a local culture. ‘Inculturating the Gospel means allowing the Word of God to exercise a power within the lives of the people, without at the same time imposing alien cultural factors which would make it difficult for them truly to receive that Word’. (Jesus Symbol of God p. xi)

Early in the seventeenth century, Pope Paul V (1605-21), of Galileo fame, promoted Church reform and encouraged missions. He approved the Jesuit’s use of the vernacular in Chinese liturgy. However, by the middle of the century, Pope Innocent X (1644-55) opposed the use of the Chinese ritual in the liturgy of that country.

In somewhat of an about face, the next pontiff, Pope Alexander VII (1655-67) again permitted the Jesuits in China to use Chinese rites and even dispensed Chinese priests from praying the Divine Office in Latin. The rest of the century saw a mixture of weak and strong popes. In 1700, Clement XI (1700-21) was elected pope. Clement was a relatively ineffective pope who was preoccupied with political troubles in Spain. It was he who finally settled the long running argument between the Jesuits and the Dominicans by siding with the Dominicans and again forbade the use of Chinese rites. A prohibition not to be lifted until 1939 by Pius XII.

The same thing happened in India where Robert de Nobili (1577-1656) had made innovative missionary advances by adapting Catholicism to the native customs. His methods were approved by Pope Gregory XV (1621-23) and gave rise to the so-called Malabar rites. These rites were also suppressed in 1744 by Pope Benedict XIV. Thus,

foreign missionary efforts were severely crippled by Rome's insistence on European forms of worship and theology. Many missions simply closed.

A new age of missionary endeavor is usually marked by the election of Pope Gregory XVI (1831-46). In many ways a conservative, Gregory banned railways in his territory, opposed Italian nationalism and elicited the help of Austria to crush an uprising in the Papal States. On the one hand, he condemned freedom of conscience, freedom of the press and the separation of Church and state, on the other hand, he denounced slavery and the slave trade and promoted a native clergy, including native bishops in the missions.

While the Jesuit order had been suppressed and dissolved by Pope Clement XIV in 1773, in 1801 Pope Pius VII restored the order in Russia and throughout the world in 1814. The Jesuits continued to be a strong force in the renewed missionary activity of the nineteenth century.

During this same time, the Franciscans, Benedictines and Vincentians also renewed their missionary efforts. In 1817, Pius VII re-established the Congregation of Propaganda which coordinate missionary work throughout the world. The College of the Propaganda was also reopened to supply priests for missionary work.

## **India**

Christians has lived on the southwest Malabar coast of India since the fourth century. They trace their roots, according to legend, to the Apostle Thomas, whose tomb is venerated near Madras. They existed self-contained until the advent of the Portuguese at the end of the fifteenth century. The Portuguese tried to compel these Christians to give up their native traditions and rites. The result was a schism with those accepting European ideas forming the Syro-Malabar Catholic Church and the others formed the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church. The suppression of the Malabar rites (noted above) would also retard missionary success in India.

In his missionary renewal, Gregory XVI (1831-46) promoted the missions of India. Growth continued slowly, and by 1962 there were some six million Indian Catholics. These included many native priests and bishops. A variety of religious orders founded schools, hospitals and homes for the aged. It was here, of course, that Mother Teresa founded her Missionaries of Charity to serve the sick and dying of Calcutta. In 1993 there were 150 dioceses and over 14,000 priests serving some 14 million Indian Catholics.

## **China**

The Chinese missions of the early Jesuits had nearly faded away during the eighteenth century. Their revival in the nineteenth century saw nearly 500,000 Catholics as the century ended.

Ancient Chinese religions has suffered greatly in the political turmoil which encompassed China - the Boxer Rebellion, Japanese invasions, and the economic

presence of Western nations. It provided an opportunity for effective missionary activity and by 1922 there were some two million Chinese Catholics.

The strong Chinese reaction to Western influences included an anti-Christian movement. Christian missionaries were identified with Western powers. However, there was a successful attempt to transform the Chinese missions by Pere Lebbe. He reacted to the treatment of native clergy as inferior to western missionaries. His reform ideas were incorporated into Benedict XV's encyclical *Maximum Illud*. The encyclical called for more native clergy, renunciation of all nationalistic attitudes and respect for the civilization of the particular mission country

With the advent of Communist rule in the mid-twentieth century Chinese Christians began a time of persecution. Missionaries were expelled or imprisoned. A renegade church was set up by the Communists - the Catholic Patriotic Church. However, for all practical purposes the Roman Catholic Church ceased to exist under Communism.

## **Japan**

The Japanese missions started by Francis Xavier in the sixteenth century had grown for nearly one hundred years. Political opposition to Christians began in the latter part of the sixteenth century. In 1614 Christians were banned and in 1638 the Shogun decided to exterminate Christians. And for all practical purposes he did, for nearly two hundred years. Some Christians remained underground, but there were no priests.

After the arrival of Commodore Perry in 1853, missionaries again appeared in China. They discovered some twenty thousand underground Christians. There were still persecutions, but later edicts against Christianity were abolished. Growth was slow, however, and at the beginning of the twentieth century Chinese Christians numbered only 55,000. By 1941 there were some 120,000 Catholics, half of whom lived in Nagasaki until the atomic bomb exploded in 1945.

In 1952 the Vatican established diplomatic relations with Japan and by 1990 there were 428,830 Catholics out of a population of 123,642,000.

## **The Rest of Asia**

While there have been some missionary successes in Korea, Indonesia and Vietnam, but bulk of Asian Catholics are in the Philippines.

## **Africa**

The Catholic Church has a long and distinguished history in Africa, especially North Africa. Little is known of its origins, but during the first seven Christian centuries, the great cities of Carthage, Hippo and Alexandria were the home to great theologians such as Cyprian of Carthage and Augustine of Hippo. And the school of Alexandria was the center of more than one heresy. In the fifth century Northern Africa was overrun by the

Vandals and in the seventh century the conquering Arabs brought Islam to the continent.

In the fifteenth century, missionaries accompanied Portuguese explorers who sailed down the West African coast looking for a trade route to India. These explorers were operating under royal and papal orders. Interestingly enough, Pope Nicholas V (1447-55) in 1455 issued a papal bull giving all Africa forever to the Portuguese king Alfonso and his successors “out of the plenitude of Apostolic power”. This document also gave the king permission to enslave all Saracens and “pagans”.

On the East African coast the Portuguese encountered Islam and a conflict for power - religious and economic - between Christians and Muslims continued for two centuries.

Between 1500 and 1700 Catholicism failed on both coasts, mainly because the missionaries were identified with the colonial powers who were resented by their conquered peoples. Also the slave trade went on with the permission of the Church in Rome and some missionaries themselves became slave holders.

However, since the middle of the nineteenth century, Africa has been a missionary success story for both Catholic and Protestants. Population growth has been phenomenal. The estimated population in 1900 was 108 million, that grew to 460 million by 1980 and at the turn of the century growth had reached some 800 million.

In 1900 about 10 million Africans (11%) were Christian. By 1980 the number had risen to 203 million or 44% of the population. Currently there are approximately 393 million Christian, or 48% of the population. Of this number there are about 152 million Catholics.

Again, supported by colonial powers, missionaries - especially the White Fathers - made giant gains in Uganda, the Belgian Congo (Zaire) and Rwanda. By 1959 some of these areas reported 36% Catholic converts. Catholic missionaries had a more difficult time in South Africa due to political reasons, but the results were better in West Africa.

The presence of Islam has made missionary work difficult in some areas, but at present Africa is over 50% Christian, equally divided between Protestants and Catholics.

It has been well noted that the center of gravity for Christianity will shift from Europe and North America to Africa and South America.

## **Chapter 31**

### **The American Church**

Before the Revolution, both Protestants and Catholics had come to the American colonies to escape persecution. In Maryland Catholics and Protestants had originally coexisted peacefully, until Protestants dominated the colony. Pennsylvania, under the Quakers, also provided a safe home for Catholics. In many other places Catholics were looked at with suspicion and often their religious liberty was restricted. It was not until the Revolution and the subsequent adoption of the Constitution and Bill of Rights that religious liberty was established in the new nation.

In the eighteenth century, missionaries - Jesuits, Franciscans, Capuchins - had arrived in North America to convert the "Indians". Of course, the history of the Church in America was not dependent on the conversion of native peoples. The Catholic Church in America was the Church of the immigrant. The nineteenth century history of the North American Catholic Church - like North America itself - is defined largely by the history of immigration. While England sent mainly Protestant immigrants, Catholics streamed in from Ireland, Germany, Italy, Poland and elsewhere bringing their Catholicism with them.

Prior to the Revolution, America Catholics were under the rule of a "vicar apostolic" who lived in London. After the Revolution, Rome decided that America needed a bishop of their own. That man was to be John Carroll.

### **Bishop John Carroll (1736-1815)**

Carroll was born in Maryland of an important family which included his cousin, Charles, the only Catholic to sign the Declaration of Independence. John was educated in Jesuit schools in Maryland and France. He joined the Jesuits in 1753 and was ordained in 1761. When the Jesuits were suppressed in 1773, he returned to Maryland as a missionary. He was a leader in organizing the American clergy and in 1784, partly through the influence of his friend Benjamin Franklin, he was appointed by Rome as "superior of the American Mission". Through his friendship with Franklin he became an ardent supporter of the cause of American independence.

Then, in a somewhat unusual move, Rome decided to let the American clergy elect their first bishop and the winner was Carroll. Baltimore was designated as the first Catholic see in the U.S.. Carroll went on to negotiate the restoration of the Jesuits in the U.S.. He played a leading role in establishing Georgetown college and St. Mary's Seminary - the first of either of these in the U.S. During his lifetime the Church grew from 35,000 to 200,000 by the time of his death in 1815.

Carroll wrote extensively and tried to present Catholicism in the best possible light to Protestant Americans. He also worked to adjust the Church to the new political order - the separation of Church and State. While respecting the Pope, he worked for a degree of independence for the American Catholic Church. He also encouraged lay trustees to build churches. This created somewhat of a problem as laymen attempted to control the property of the Church and elect their own pastors.

### **Bishop John England (1786-1842)**

He was born in Ireland and became the Bishop of Charleston, S.C. in 1820. Like Carroll he was dedicated to make Catholicism “at home” in the democratic milieu of the United States. He saw the success of Catholicism dependent upon the Church’s ability to adapt to the unique social and political realities of the new nation. He was eager to get the Catholic message to Protestants and to break down the walls of prejudice against Catholics. Also like Carroll, he promoted a type of Church government that involved the clergy and the laity in formulating Church policy.

Through his influence, the bishops of the United States gathered in Baltimore for the councils that were to shape the organization of the Church in the U. S. for years to come. England also started a Catholic newspaper - *The United States Miscellany* - , founded a seminary, addressed the U.S. Congress, organized a new order of women religious and created a diocesan constitution that called for lay participation in annual diocesan conventions.

### **Thomas Isaac Hecker (1819-88)**

Hecker was born of German immigrants, left school at an early age, joined a utopian community and became a Catholic in 1844. He later entered a European seminary and became a Redemptorist priest. He preached in parish missions and wrote apologetical works aimed at the conversion of Americans to the Church.

He was expelled from the order for coming to Rome without permission. He appealed to the pope and won permission to found a new religious order - the Paulists. This order is dedicated to serving English-speaking Catholics and winning American converts to the Church. The Paulists began a magazine - *The Catholic World* - an a publishing house - the Paulist Press - that remains today. They focused on the evangelization of Catholics and non-Catholics alike.

His unique spirituality led to conflicts with Rome and after his death Leo XIII condemned “Americanism” defined as a body of ideas associated with Hecker and others including famous Archbishops, Cardinals, and influential clergy. These “ideas” included evangelization, freedom, reason, separation of Church and State, democracy, defense of the Knights of Labor, and other “liberal ideas”, all in an attempt to accommodate Catholicism with the American experience.

### **Bishop John Ireland (1838-1918)**

He was born in Ireland, settled in the Minnesota Territory, attended seminary in France and was ordained in 1861. He spend a brief time as a chaplain in the Union Army and then worked in a parish in St. Paul. There he was a civic leader and a sponsor of agricultural colonies of poor immigrants.

He was a central leader in the rather ill-defined movement known as “Americanism” which attempted to adapt Catholicism to American culture. The movement, if we can

call it that, was condemned as noted above in 1899.

### **Immigrant Problems**

The immigration flood began with the Irish immigrations in the 1820's. At that time American Catholics numbered about 500,000 in a country of 12 million. By 1860 the Catholic population had soared to 3,103,000 while the U.S. population had risen to 31.5 million. Roman Catholics were now the largest U.S. religious denomination. In the following thirty years Germans and Italians swelled the Catholic ranks to 8,909,000, with Germans now nearly equaling the number of Irish.

These massive immigrations of Catholics stirred a good deal of anti-Catholic rhetoric and action, which included anti-Catholic pamphlets, church burnings and lynchings. The American Protective Association (1877) members swore never to vote for a Catholic, hire one or go on strike with one. Such sentiments helped to pass the Immigration Restriction Laws of the 1920's.

Part of the Catholic reaction was to withdraw somewhat from American life into Catholic cultural ghettos. This included the building up of the Catholic parish school system as an alternative to public schools which were dominated by Protestant thought. A Catholic press was also instituted (see England above) and diocesan newspapers were developed.

There were also internal conflicts within the Catholic immigrant community, especially between the Germans and the Irish. Irish Catholics dominated the American hierarchy and the hierarchy - Bishops England and Ireland - was dedicated to getting American Catholics into the mainstream of American life. This was part of what was called Americanization.

German Catholics resisted such "liberal" policies and wanted to retain their native language and customs. They wanted more German clergy and bishops and separate German parishes. They appealed to Rome, but Bishop Ireland argued that such measures would divide the American Church into nationalist blocks and ghettos. Ireland won his argument, but galvanized the opposition of the Germans to the Americanization of Catholic immigrants. The German element opposed the Knights of Labor and the entire Catholic Social Movement. Conservative set up their own press to counter the work of the Paulists. The victory of the conservative finally came when Leo XIII condemned Americanism in 1899.

### **Catholic Social Action**

Liberal Catholic hopes did not die out and interestingly they got new life from Leo XIII in his social encyclical *Rerum Novarum*. This inspired such men as Msgr. John Ryan to work for social reform. His monumental work *A Living Wage* appeared in 1906. From that time on the American bishops continued to work and write on the subject of social

justice. A long list of popes encouraged them to enter the social and economic life of the nation and work for justice. They supported collective bargaining, a living wage, social security and health and unemployment insurance. They strongly supported the New Deal and all government efforts to promote a humane social order.

Laymen and women also became involved. Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin began the Catholic Worker Movement. This movement identified with the poor and opened a House of Hospitality in New York in 1933 to feed the poor. Their paper *The Catholic Worker* was devoted to the poor, the oppressed laborers and to the cause of pacifism.

There was also the advent of labor priests, who helped form Catholic labor unions in an effort to bring social justice to workers. They also fought to keep the unions from Communist infiltration, racketeering and unscrupulous union officials.

### **A Final Note**

By the 1950's the dream of Carroll, Ireland and England had finally come true. American Catholics were now fully American. No event proved this more than the election of John F. Kennedy to the presidency. The Second Vatican Council was also moved to accept the new realities of Catholic political and social life by the work of an American, John Courtney Murray. The Church now claims no desire for earthly rule, but sees its role as a critic and collaborator in developing a just society.