Buddhism, Christianity and the 'Saeculum'

Frank Livesey

*Reflections on **The End of Ancient Christianity** by R. A. Markus (Cambridge University Press, 1990) and **Bouddhisme, Christianisme et Société, Chinoise** by E. Zücher (Julliard, Paris 1990).*

Frank Livesey is a Church Historian who has taught in England (Downside Abbey) and Australia (Sydney School of Divinity). He read History at Oxford and Asian Studies at the University of New South Wales. His main interest is the comparative study of religion and mission in Asia.

It may strike the reader as odd that two books, seemingly so divergent in content, should be brought together for comment; one, the work of a distinguished scholar of Buddhism in China, the other by a historian of Late Antiquity noted for his studies of the passage of the Roman world from paganism to Christianity from the 4th. to the 6th. centuries. I hope to show, however, that they bear on the same issues, and invite reflection on the manner in which religious movements interact with the societies in which they aspire to embed themselves, and, in particular with the 'saeculum',[1] those features of a society untouched by and perhaps distrustful of the transcendental claims of religion.

An interesting study, not yet undertaken to my knowledge, could be made comparing the responses of two major Empires, the Roman and Chinese, to the intrusions of two major religions, Christianity and Buddhism, each with its claims to a universality which would eclipse all lesser allegiances. The two Empires had much in common: a civic religion designed to celebrate and uphold the social order; the high status of a class of 'literati', the custodians of a rational and pragmatic philosophical tradition; moral values which exalted the 'this-worldly' virtues of loyalty to family and state above 'other-worldly' virtues; a generous if condescending tolerance of religious belief and practices provided they harboured no challenge to the political and social order. Any such study would have to take note of the work of Zürcher and Markus.

Christianity and Buddhism in 16-17th. Century China

Many readers will be familiar with Zürcher's magisterial study of Buddhism in China.[2] His recent work, based on lectures given at the College de France and available only in French, may not be easily come by. I will

summarize his argument. He is intrigued by a paradox: How was it that obscure monks, arriving from central Asia and India, often illiterate and without any training, were able to win over vast numbers of Chinese, while the 'expeditio christiana', superbly planned and manned by hand-picked Jesuits, had only a modest success and finally met with failure?[3]

Zürcher surveys, and finds deficient, a variety of explanations: the 'Jesuit' view—a conspiracy theory which attributes failure to the hostility of Mandarins, Buddhist monks, other Religious Orders and finally, the Vatican—he considers 'superficial and simplistic'; nor is he persuaded that it was the 'sinocentrism and xenophobia' of the Ming that thwarted the Jesuits, as he sees the virulent xenophobia developing only in the Qing. Moreover, Buddhism had also been portrayed as a product of barbarians and unsuited to Chinese, but it survived. The 'Gernet thesis'[4] which holds that the Jesuits could not bridge the chasm that separates Western concepts and categories of thought from those of East Asia, overlooks, in Zürcher's view, Buddhist experience: "It is difficult to imagine a more radical opposition than that between Buddhism and the indigenous tradition of China."[5] Concepts such as 'nirvana', 'karma' and 'emptiness' were just as alien to China as Christian notions of creation, incarnation and redemption.

Zürcher offers us an alternative explanation: the crucial factor, he maintains, is the part played by institutions and by organization. Christianity failed, paradoxically, because of the very strength of its organization, coupled with the weakness of the institutions it created; Buddhism survived because of the robustness of its institutions and the frailty of its organization. The Jesuit mission was superbly organized: it was manned by an intellectual elite and was well-backed financially. These very strengths were its undoing. The tightness of the organization prevented it from shaking off control from Macau, Goa and Rome. Reports went out from China, directives came back; the mission was never allowed the autonomy it need-ed if the well-conceived Ricci-Valignano policy of 'accommodation' was to succeed. The constant supervision from Macau and Rome constrained the Jesuits in the mission to remain within the framework of a rigorous post-Tridentine dogmatism. By contrast, Buddhist expansion was shapeless: no 'mission', no central authority, no reporting back to headquarters, no further contact with the homeland. Zürcher calls it 'expansion par contact', an organic growth like that of the roots of a tree. The very frailty of its organization left it free to adapt to local circumstance.

Institutionally Buddhism was strong: its representatives were monks, and, initially, they propagated monasteries more than a faith. For the first 300 years Buddhism rested on a network of small monasteries, attracting local support by their way of life rather than by preaching. Moreover, the

monastery was necessarily self-propagating: as the monks were mendicants there was always a limit to the number of monks a locality could support, so the surplus monks went off along the great commercial highways to establish their settlements in favourable areas; in a prosperous agricultural region, at a commercial crossroads, near a large city, near holy places frequented by pilgrims.[6] The network expanded, gradually attracting patrons of more ample means which led to the establishment of the greater monasteries, centres of Buddhist scholarship. "Chinese Buddhism in this way became a powerful religious force which drew its strength from that remarkable institution, the monastery." And "that is the reason for its resilience and its longevity, as the monastery-temple is the only Chinese institution which has survived the last 2000 years despite periodic persecution."[7]

By contrast the Catholic mission was built on the shallow foundation of the 'mission-post'—the little church and residence which housed a priest or two and their Chinese assistants. It was immobile, expensive to maintain, and often stood at a tangent to local reality. It was, I would suggest, a strait-jacket, but one in which the Catholic Church felt very comfortable; it too endured down the centuries. The attachment to the mission-post is clearly, and sadly, demonstrated by the fate of the Catholics of Shanghai-Nanjiang, who had kept their faith semi-clandestinely in the 18th. and 19th. centuries, evolving, in the absence of mission-posts, their own institutions: government by 'elders', managing practical affairs, and by women, especially the 'virgins' who dedicated themselves to a variety of pastoral ministries. The Jesuits, returning in 1842, dismantled these institutions and replaced them with centralized control based on Jesuit residences.[8]

Zürcher also maintains that another reason for the failure of the Catholic missions was clerical intrusion into the domestic lives of converts, exercising a surveillance of those aspects of their lives which, traditionally in China, were looked upon as entirely domestic responsibilities not subject to religious rubrics. By contrast, the Buddhist layman "enjoyed complete liberty in his family, social, and even religious life without any clerical intervention."[9] The Buddhist layman was never a parishioner, and no monk would have presumed to upbraid him or meddle in domestic affairs. In this respect "the activity of the Christian missionaries stood in contrast to the customary practice of Chinese religious life."[10] A type of 'priest-laity' relationship, quite normal in Europe, was unknown and resented in China.

Zürcher concludes that cultures have, in fact, a great flexibility in assimilating alien ideas, but they are less supple when disturbed by a perceived threat to the right order of social relations. In fact, one might say, the preference of missionaries for superimposing essentially European

institutions on Asian societies rather than allowing the emergence of institutions more congruent with local tradition has greatly damaged the mission. In those areas where converts were more numerous, as in parts of India and Vietnam, they were usually gathered together in Christian ghettos. In Korea where, in this century, Christianity has made impressive advances, it is precisely the institutional weakness of Korean Buddhism which opened the door. Buddhist monasticism, disestablished during the Yi dynasty (1392-1911) and quarantined in mountainous areas by its Confucian opponents, left behind an institutional vacuum in the urban areas which was taken advantage of by Christian missions. Only recently have Korean Buddhists been able to contest the lost ground—by duplicating the Christian network of institutions.[11]

Christianity and Culture in the Roman World

We now turn to examine why 16th. cent. Catholicism was so unpersuasive in Asia. Why so inflexible, so set upon 'cloning' itself, not only in Asia but also in America and Africa? Markus may supply some of the clues. His theme is a grand one: the transformation of the 'Ancient Christianity' of the first five centuries into the 'Christendom' of the middle Ages. Ancient Christianity grew up as a minority cult, and even after the Constantinian establishment of the Church it still had to live in a pluralistic world; a condition of its survival was its Hellenisation, its accommodation to Greco-Roman culture, its embrace of ancient tradition.

By contrast, the Latin Church by the 16th. century had become monocultural, introverted and intolerant, I would suggest, and not well-equipped to cope with cultural diversity. "Inculturation is a matter for historians as well as missiologists" Markus reminds us. He introduces us to a Fr. Duran, a 16th. century Spanish friar, perplexed by the vagaries of American Indian life, trying to figure out exactly what in their culture should be deemed 'religious', and what could be safely thought of as 'just their way of doing things'. Where was the line to be drawn? Just how much of a pagan past could a convert carry into his Christian future? How much disturbance to a convert's way of life had to be insisted on? To trace this line between what is 'sacred' and what is 'secular' is no easy task, but its demarcation is an essential element of missionary strategy. For 'Ancient' Christians, the secular had a prominent and honoured place in public life; the sacred was what men turned to in their more introspective moments, and some would turn to Mithra, others to Christ, Yahweh and other deities.

Markus believes that the 'new' Christianity of the 6th. century onwards 'sacralised' the world by draining the secular from it. Thus the sacred became co-terminous with the entire culture of the medieval West.

The implication for mission is clear; if everything is deemed sacred, then everything must be changed when conversion takes place.

From the 2nd. century onwards Christians had been moving towards assimilation of the secular culture around them. Justin Martyr, Irenaeus of Lyons, Origen and Clement of Alexandria sought to weave Stoic and Platonic ideas into the Judaeo-Christian fabric, and to present the new religion to their educated contemporaries as a natural progression from the pagan past, its claims being supported by reference to current philosophical speculation. The works of Greek writers were not the works of the devil, and there was salvation outside the church. By the end of the 3rd. century many Christians found that very little, except their religious practice, separated them from their pagan neighbors. They shared a common culture, the Roman festivals, the baths, the theatre, and above all, a common education.

Between 400 and 600 a dramatic change took place which Markus identifies as the 'desecularisation' of the Ancient world. This was not a collapse of Roman culture but "a contraction in the scope that Christianity, or its educated representatives, allowed to the secular." He attributes this contraction to 'the ascetical takeover' of the Church by the monastic movement. St. Jerome claimed that the conversion of an educated Roman demanded a complete revolution in life-style; this would have astonished previous generations of Christians. The ascetics wanted to redraw the boundaries of the secular and sacred, and, ultimately, to extinguish the former. The new men, the enthusiasts of 'the desert', had as their target 'the city', that focus of urbane life and pluralistic values where Christians and non-Christians rubbed shoulders. Their intention was that the exclusivism of the desert should triumph in the cities.

Markus brilliantly charts the advance of the new mentality. 'Christian time' must replace 'pagan time ', so the secular Roman Festivals were suppressed to make way for an exclusively Christian calendar. 'Christian space' had to replace 'pagan space'. The topography of a Roman city was radically remodelled so as to throw into relief the new 'holy places': the churches, martyrs' shrines and places of pilgrimage. Pagan temples and sites were often vandalised. The secular city gave way to the holy city.

Not only beleaguered pagans raised their voices in protest against the ambitions of the ascetical movement with its hostility to learning, high culture and easy-going tolerance; some Christians too objected. Defeated, however, they suffered the fate of all losers—who now has heard of Jovinian and Helvidius? One timeless celebrity did share their anxieties, St. Augustine of Hippo. He distrusted the spirit of the desert; asceticism was not a universal Christian ideal. It would divide the church into a spiritual

elite and the rest. His own monastic community was based on values quite different to those of the desert. A shrewd and compassionate man, bishop of an unruly flock in a pluralist society, he was acutely sensitive to the need for an autonomous secular sphere. Society, he held, was necessarily mixed, comprising people of divergent loyalties and differing values. In order for them all to meet and mingle, a space, a neutral ground was needed. Here the secular had its rightful sphere of action, its own limited purposes. It was a kind of demilitarised zone designed to defuse tensions and preserve the fragile peace of any society. Augustine was sceptical that Society could ever be radically Christian, still less modelled on ascetical ideals.

Augustine, for once, was on the side of the losers. The desert encroached on the city; the stage was set for the invasion of the Church by the ascetical temperament, with its bold simplicities and its hostility to all customs which were not explicitly Christian. This is not the only reason for lamenting the passing of Ancient Christianity; what passed too was "a fruitful heterogeneity of thought and culture." The symbiosis of Christian and pagan had "furnished the conditions for a sustained debate an unceasing need to take the measure of the forms of thought and expression, of ways of feeling, of a culture older than their religion."[12] This impoverishment was the price paid for the sacralisation of society, and, I believe, it casts a long shadow over the missionary movement.

From Middle Ages to Mission

Throughout the Middle Ages the Western Church was isolated and did not have to take the measure of any other world-view; it had no dialogue partner. This, I believe, may be attributed to three developments: the advances made by the See of Rome, the Christianisation of the Barbarians, and the confrontation with Islam.

Rome, formerly one amongst five Patriarchal Sees, emerged as a 'Papacy'. The Sees of Antioch, Jerusalem and Alexandria fell to the Muslims; the estrangement from Constantinople ended in divorce. Consequently Greek and Oriental modes of Christian experience no longer needed to be taken into account. What one historian has called the 'Latin Captivity' of the church began.[13]

The eclipse of its rivals in the East raised Rome to a lofty eminence in the West. Its stature was also heightened by the conversion of the barbarians, the Franks, Goths and Saxons, unlettered tribesmen tutored by Rome in the higher culture of Christianity. Accommodation with barbarian culture was inevitable, but it was not at the level of intellectual exchange as they had nothing to barter. Accommodation took the form of a partial assimilation of the values and mores of warrior-societies which

initially accepted Christ, on approval, as another god of war, and his priests as superior magicians.[14] This contributed to the feudalisation of the Church, and to the belief that the sword was an acceptable instrument of mission. The dismal history of the use of violence in the mission in Central Europe and the Baltic testifies to this.

In Islam, by contrast, the Church encountered a complex religion. But little exchange could take place (except fitfully, in Norman Sicily and the Caliphate of Cordoba) as Islam was also the political foe to be resisted. Although there was some intellectual commerce, there was little serious attempt to understand Islam; it was simply an aberration. Hence the difficulty of coping with the Muslim and Jewish communities it found under its control as a result of the planting of the Crusader States and the Reconquest of Spain. It seems that, having perfected its own mechanism for the suppression of internal heterodoxy, the Church could imagine few means other than war and forcible conversion for dealing with Muslims and Jews. Nothing can illustrate this more clearly than the final stages of the conquest of Spain, when the Spanish Inquisition was set up explicitly to deal with converted Jews ('conversos') suspected of clinging to any vestige of their cultural tradition. A doctrine of 'limpieza de sangre' (purity of blood) was worked out to uphold the view that the only 'true Christians' were those whose blood had never been contaminated by any Jewish admixture.[15] This almost amounted to a conviction that the faith was transmitted not only culturally but also genetically.

Many Muslims fled Spain in 1492 at the fall of Granada. Those who remained were forcibly converted. The enlightened bishop of Granada, de Talavera, originally intended to allow them the use of the Arabic language, to train an Arabic-speaking clergy, to permit them, temporarily at least, to maintain their identity. He was dismissed by Cardinal Cisneros and barely escaped trial for heresy. The 16th. century saw a prolonged campaign against the customs of the Moriscos, their baths, dress, diet and language. (In 1538 a Morisco was brought before the Inquisition in Toledo on a charge of heterodoxy, the evidence being 'dancing the zamba and eating couscous!)[16]

The expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492, the harassment of both Conversos and Moriscos, culminating in the forcible expulsion of the Moriscos in 1609, turning them into the first 'boat-people' of our time, indicate the inadequacy of society's response to cultural diversity.

The belief that the eradication of their culture was a corollary of the conversion of barbarians, a belief in the uniformity of human nature and the normative status of western culture, had shaped attitudes towards Muslims and later influenced the missionary mind. Moreover, the military

and commercial successes of the Portuguese and Spanish forces, and the 16th. century victories over Islam, all ministered to the vanity of the Western mind.

As Professor Elliott has shown, Europe was unable to come to terms with the shockingly 'aberrant' societies of Central and South America.[17] "To comprehend a new society one is forced into a reappraisal of one's own", he observes. Europe was not in the mood for reappraisal. Because of the abnormality of their customs the Indians were soon assigned to the category of 'natural slaves', deaf to the appeal of reason and responsive only to the crackle of gunfire. Even their apologists, the Mexican Franciscans and Dominicans such as Las Casas, defended their essential 'humanity', but found little to recommend in their way of life. It was only at the end of the 16th. century that the remarkable Jesuit, de Acosta, developed an appreciative interest in Pre-Columban society, in the cultural diversity of America. In trying to give rational explanations of cultural diversity, he laid the foundations of anthropology.[18]

Across the other side of the world, his fellow-Jesuit, Matteo Ricci, was similarly struggling to come to terms with the bewildering singularities of Chinese thought and life. His bold initiative in moulding Christianity to the realities of Chinese custom left him pondering, as had Fr. Duran, just where to draw the line between what in Chinese culture was 'sacred', and what could be safely left undisturbed as being 'secular'. Robinson has point-ed out that "in its cultural isolation in the period of Christendom, when it had largely 'had it to itself', Christian theology had not had to give a thought-out answer, on equal terms, for the uniqueness of its claims."[19] Ricci and the Jesuits were almost alone in taking up the challenge but their policy of accommodation failed to carry their fellow-Catholics with them. Zürcher has offered an account of why the Jesuit policy of accommodation failed in China. I have tried to explain why the whole 'expeditio christiana' of the 16th. century was slow to adapt to diversity. A handful of Jesuits were trying to wriggle free of a long tradition of fusing together the secular and the sacred so that there was no acceptable 'way of doing things' other than the European one.

Buddhism as a Missionary Religion

But what of Buddhism as a missionary force? Zürcher may be right in arguing that cultures show a great flexibility in assimilating alien ideas and concepts, but jealously protect themselves against alien institutions and values which may threaten the social order. If so, the expansion of Buddhism in China becomes problematic since key Buddhist institutions, namely mendicant monasticism, celibacy and the autonomy of the Sangha

(the monastic Order) were at odds with some primary Chinese values: the need for descendants, filial piety, the value of productive labour, and the absolutism of state power. Professor de Bary is surely right in saying that "it soon adapted itself to the Chinese family and political institutions because it had so little to say specifically about the organization and conduct of family life or the state."[20] This is because "in contrast to the concern of Hinduism with caste and class, and Confucianism with kinship and community, Buddhism was from the beginning a homeless wisdom, a mendicant and missionary religion."[21] Unlike Catholicism, it had no fixed centre of authority and power, and so "it was free on reaching East Asia, to shed any of its Indian garments in which it had been clothed, while its hands were free to pick up any cultural baggage and carry it forward."

Why was Buddhism, then, so empty-handed; why had it so little to say about social organisation? Gombrich draws a distinction between two kinds of religion. On the one hand, religion as soteriology, centered on liberation, individualistic and usually without a clerisy; on the other hand, communal religion, concerned with the patterning of social order, with ritual, etiquette, even hygiene, of which Hinduism is an excellent example. Buddhism, Gombrich maintains, especially before the flowering of Mahayana, was a soteriology 'tout court'. It was about 'liberation' and not much else. "Gods have nothing to do with religion", he was informed by a Sri Lankan Buddhist; that is, the gods grant and withhold worldly favours and busy themselves with the affairs of the world. They may, therefore, be approached, cajoled, even rebuked; but they have nothing to do with the serious matter of 'religion', the attainment of liberation.[22]

If this is so then Buddhism passing beyond the frontiers of India was not obliged to make war on local deities and customs. In South-East Asia Buddhism was able to look benignly on the 'nat' cults of Burma, the 'phii' cults of Thailand, and many forms of spirit possession as they 'had nothing to do with religion'. Buddhism drew the boundary around the sacred very tightly, leaving everything else in the domain of the secular. On entering China Buddhism could co-exist alongside Taoism: the layman was not presented with a stark choice between Taoism or Buddhism. Nor was Buddhism impelled to mount a challenge to the Confucian moral vision and its social and political organization.

This is not to say that Buddhism was unambitious; rather was patient, and hoped for a slow transformation. Central to Buddhist teaching was the notion of 'upaya'(skillful means), the belief that Buddha taught different things to different people based on their interests, capacities and dispositions. Men cannot grasp the entire truth at once; they have to be led along by skillful adaptations of the 'dharma' to local circumstance. Practices

which are very imperfect can, with time, be turned to advantage. (Ricci was groping his way to a Christian version of 'upaya' in his view that the Chinese could not be brusquely introduced to the story of the Cross and resurrection.)

In China Buddhism was faced with a not always friendly millenarian civilization. Initially it was tolerated. Confined to the lower ranks of society it constituted no threat. That Buddhism continued to be tolerated when both numbers and influence grew, was due to the inculturation of Buddhism in China, its sinification, the complex process of convergence in which Buddhist ideas were grafted onto Chinese ideas with which they had some affinity. Common ground was found between the monastic ideal and Chinese eremitism,[23] Buddhist meditation and Taoist mystical union with nature, Tantric rites and Taoist magic. By the 4th. century Hui Yuan and Chi Tun were explaining Mahayana doctrine in terms of traditional Chinese thought in much the same way the Church Fathers explained Christian doctrine in terms of Greek philosophy. Both strove to graft the alien onto native roots.

It was in the Sui-Tang period (581-907) that "the fully acculturated form of Chinese Buddhism assumed its mature state, one that was at once both authentically Buddhist and uniquely Chinese."[24] The Chinese schools of Pure Land, Hua-Yen and Chan (Zen) were able to assume their forms because there was no outside agency to uphold a foreign orthodoxy, no headquarters to cast a suspicious eye on local developments. Indeed, the dynamism of these schools arose from the very disorganisation of Buddhism: the voluminous scriptures of Indian Buddhism were transmitted to China in a random, fragmentary way, and out of sequence. To make sense of the muddle, Chinese Buddhists had to reconstruct Buddhism for themselves, and out of this process emerged the Chinese schools. "The history of Chinese Buddhism can be represented in terms of the development of the increasingly sophisticated hermeneutical frameworks that were devised to understand a religion that, in its origins, was as foreign conceptually as it was distant geographically."[25] This hermeneutical process constituted 'sinification'.[26]

It is usually assumed that Chinese Buddhism reached its apogee in the Tang, but Gimello invites us to consider the view that the Northern Sung (11th. to early 12th. centuries) was the period in which Buddhism, in full vigour, was able to engage the Neo-Confucian literati in debate, to enter fully the world of higher Chinese learning, and "without capitulating to secular culture to bring to it the values of Buddhism."[28] He sees Sung Buddhism as "the culmination of the process of sinification by which Buddhism wove itself into the fabric of Chinese civilisation while simultaneously altering the pattern of that fabric."[29]

Conclusion

This is not the place to examine whether the conditions facing Christians in 10th. century China were far more adverse than those encountered by their Buddhist counterparts in the first centuries A.D.; nor to assess the degree of adaptation to China achieved by the Nestorian Christians in the Tang.[29] Some would argue that all religions of Semitic stock were even remoter from East Asian concerns than Indic religions. They might cite, as an example, Islam in China. Chinese Muslims, and I refer to those not of Turkic ancestry but to the ethnically Han Chinese, have always seen themselves as set apart from their fellow-Chinese, and have discouraged all exchange.[30] Another Semitic religion, however, did succeed in acclimatising itself in China. Manichaeism, which in the West had held the young Augustine in thrall for 9 years, spread east along the Silk Road, took root in China, particularly in the south, and survived persecution.[31] In gaining a foothold it made good use of Buddhist and Taoist concepts and ritual forms. Interestingly, Mani was born in Mesopotamia which, in the 3rd. century was a religious melting-pot where Zoroastrians, Jews, Christians, Gnostics and Indians mingled. Mani sought to dissolve the particularities of these faiths in a cosmic drama which would transcend all cultural forms. Like Buddhism it was empty-handed and free to engage fruitfully with other beliefs.

When Islam itself did take root in Asia, in the Malay peninsula and notably in Indonesia, it is significant that it was through the agency of the Sufi Orders, whose cosmic mysticism enabled Islam to rise above the limitations of canonical Islam which was tied, by the Sharia, to the cultural particularity of the middle East. In Java Islam had to take account of not only the indigenous mystical tradition of Java, but also the overlay of Buddhism and Hinduism which had preceded Islam.[32] The result was an inculturated Islam, which only came under stress early in the 20th. century when the winds of Islamic reformism began to blow, summoning Javanese Muslims back to a more 'orthodox', that is Middle Eastern, form of Islam. Many Javanese resisted the call; hence, then tensions within modern Indonesian Islam.[33]

It is not surprising that one of the targets of fundamentalist movements, of whatever religious persuasion, is the 'secular state'. The theocratic state would abolish the secular in the name of the indissoluble unity of religion and culture (and sometimes tribe). There can only be 'one way of doing things'. Markus had drawn our attention to how that process of the elision of religion and culture began in Western Europe; I have indicated how it adversely affected the missionary movement. In our age of migration and intermingling of peoples, hankerings after a 'desecularised

state' will only be realised at great cost in strife and bloodshed, whether in the Middle East (Islam), India (Hinduism), Sri Lanka (Buddhism), or where Christians feel nostalgia for a pre-lapsarian 'Christian state'. Augustine observed that societies are inevitably mixed and cannot be radically religious. Perhaps we should give at least two cheers for the secular state. Is it not fortuitous that the first truly secular state in the modern world, the United States, has not only been prominent in its contribution to Christian life and thought, but has been the only country in which the Jews, repeatedly the victims of cultural particularism elsewhere, have flourished and embellished American life with their own particular qualities. Is it fortuitous too that the United States is a lively centre of inter-faith dialogue?

NOTES

1. 'Saeculum' has several meanings: century; epoch or age; spirit of the age; or paganism for some Early Christian writers.
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5. Zürcher, E. op.cit. 1990, p.23.
6. Zürcher, E. op.cit. 1990, p.25.
7. Zürcher, E. op.cit. 1990, p.27.
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12. Markus, R.A. op.cit., p.223. Many of Markus' observations are set down in shorter form in his "From Rome to the Barbarian Kingdoms (300–700)", chapter 2 in McManners, J. (ed.) *Oxford Illustrated History of Christianity* (Oxford, 1990)
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15. For Spain, see Kamen, H. *Inquisition and Society in Spain* (London, 1984); Lynch, J. *Spain under the Hapsburgs* Vol. I c.vii. (Oxford, 1981); Chejne, A. *The Moriscos* (New York, 1982).
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19. Robinson, J. *Truth is Two-Eyed* (London, 1979) p.121.
20. de Bary, T. *East Asian Civilisations* (Harvard, 1988) p.25.
21. de Bary, T. op.cit. p.24.
22. Gombrich, R. *Thervada Buddhism* (London, 1988).
23. For Chinese Eremitism see Vervoon, A. *Men of Cliffs and Caves* (Hong Kong, 1990).
24. Gregory, P.N. *Tsung-mi and the Sinification of Buddhism* (New Jersey, 1991) p.3.
25. Gregory, P.N. op.cit. p.110.
26. For Buddhist hermeneutics and sinification see Chappell, D.W. "Hermeneutical Phases in Chinese Buddhism" in Lopez, D.S. (ed.) *Buddhist Hermeneutics* (Hawaii, 1988).

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28. Gimello, R.M. op.cit., p.487.

29. For Nestorians, see Hickley, D. *The First Christians of China* (London, 1980).

30. Israeli, R. "Islamisation and Sinicisation in Chinese Islam" in Levtzion, N. (ed.) *Conversion to Islam* (New York, 1979) and "China's Muslims" in Clarke, P. (ed.) *Islam* (London, 1988).

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The Peace

Liam Fitzpatrick

To Live in darkness is thought hard
by those upholding the service of light.
I make my bed in the darkness of God,
aslep to those who hold it right
to illuminate distinction and division
where in darkness there is none.

They fear the life of spaciousness
who confine themselves to some small place.
I spend my life in thankfulness
that I have no space to call my space.
I have given it to others to make their own
that I might know all space as home.

This dark, this space, cannot be known
by those who wear a daylight self.
I leave myself that I might be shown
the beyong of self, the something else.
Unhappy are those who will not dare
the freedom of the darkness there.