

天主教与新教对西方社会的影响

Catholicism and Protestantism: Their Impact on Western Society

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[英文提要]

The Catholic form of Christianity has formed the western European cultural and social life during two millenniums, whereas the Protestant form of Christianity has done that for some five hundred years. Both have left their deep marks into almost any form and dimension of human life in Europe. Apart from this historical perspective, looking at the moral and ideological implications underlying the idea of the modern European Union, we can easily observe that both the Catholic and the Protestant forms of Christianity made significant contributions to the basic values of modern European way of life, its political system, economic, cultural, and social life. Catholicism has always effectively promoted the idea of unity and centralism. It made great contributions to the principle of legality or law - obedience as the basis of social life, and the implementation of common law placing all citizens — at least in principle — into an equal position. Catholicism also in innumerable ways fostered the cultural unity of Europe during two thousand years.

Protestantism, on its part, promoted the freedoms and rights of each individual, alongside emphasizing the equal value and dignity of every individual's life. The concept of equality gradually led into the idea of a

democratic society. It energized individuals and nations for new economic, political, cultural, and educational achievements. The secular society is a democratic society which has not only the duty of guarding the equal rights of people but also an obligation of taking care of its weak members.

It may be correct to say that, in spite of its profoundly secular nature, the basic principles and moral ideas of the modern European Union owe very much to some fundamental views of both Catholicism and Protestantism. Accordingly, the influence of Catholicism and Protestantism on western society and culture is not only of historical nature, but it remains a living and powerful reality even in today's Europe. During the 20th century, also the ecumenical movement trying to bring the various Christian churches closer to each other, has contributed to the idea of unity in Europe.

What has been said here in relation to western Europe, could, with some modifications, be applied to the situation in North America as well. The most notable difference is that the influence of Protestantism is stronger than that of Catholicism in North America, whereas, in an overall estimation, the influence of these two forms of Christianity is more or less equal within the European Union — with a Catholic south and a Protestant north. The role of a third type of the Christian religion, Eastern Orthodoxy, is not yet very significant within the European Union.

在这篇文章里,我想指出在天主教和新教传统中对基督教教义理解上的一些深层结构性的不同,特别是它们与现代欧盟的价值观念相关联的部分,以及他们各自对西方社会的影响的关系。

因为是同一种宗教的两种形式,天主教和新教有很多共同之处。这里,我以它们的差异作为讨论中心,而不提及它们的共同之