

The Changing Church in Europe, by Wayne A. Detzler;
Zondervan Publishing House, 1979; R.G. Mitchell, Don Mills, ON; 256 pp.

The author, an associate director of Greater Europe Mission with a Ph.D. in history from Manchester University and residing in England, is obviously well qualified to write this book. His work testifies to careful scholarship and wide reading. Each chapter averages 70 footnotes. It also has a good bibliography and an index.

As the title implies, the author is concerned with the European church. Therefore, he doesn't cover the work of some 2,000 North American missionaries based there. Detzler discusses the issues frankly. He tells how, since 1960, the church in Europe has plunged more deeply into the deep freeze of secularism. Parish life in Protestant countries has dramatically lapsed into decay. In the Dutch army there is already a humanist chaplain. Paganism is reviving. Cults and sects are mushrooming. The quality of life is visibly declining. Committed Christians comprise a decided, sometimes pathetically small, minority. The blame for the rise of secularism and the decline of faith is placed at the door of rationalistic, liberal theology.

Detzler divided the chapters topically rather than geographically. One is devoted to cults, two to Roman Catholicism, one to the dialogue between communism and the Roman Catholic Church, two to the Christians behind the Iron Curtain, two to the life of the church in England, and one to the "Enigmatic Orthodox Church."

What is the outlook for the European churches? Though the spirit of secularism is very stubborn in Scandinavia, evangelicals in Germany show the most promise, followed by Switzerland and the Netherlands. Evangelical cooperation is also more evident. The period of 1960 to 1976 marked for Europe, the birth of a new spirit of evangelical unity. Evangelical minorities are growing throughout Europe. The Lord is still adding to the church.

The overall picture in Western Europe is not bright. The church seems to be more virile in East European countries where discipleship is costly.

This excellent book should be of great interest to our readers, as many have their roots in Europe. Recommended!

Johan D. Tangelder,