

# Systematic Secularization: Analysis and Response

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Most of us have an intuitive idea of what secularization is and are probably more or less convinced that we know it when we see it. And chances are that, for many of us, the image that lodges in our minds causes us to view it with some alarm. To borrow a line from the old Johnny Carson Show routine, "How bad is it?" Here are a few possible responses. (The figures have been obtained from a data set furnished by the MicroCase Corporation. See Barkan, 1998.)

\* It is so bad that, whereas in 1978 only a third of Americans approved of legal abortion for *any* reason by 1996 this figure had climbed to forty-five percent.

\* It is so bad that the percentage of people saying that premarital sex is NOT wrong rose from 27% in 1972 to 43% in 1996 (the last year for which figures were available).

\* It is so bad that the percentage of Americans saying that homosexual sex is ALWAYS WRONG declined from 75% in 1990 to just 60% in 1996.

\* In fact it is so bad that when my pastor referred to the "S" word last Sunday, I didn't know whether he was talking about secularization or--that other "S" word.

But the trends that many of us are worried about are not exclusively concerned with sex. For many, support for prayer in the public schools has become the litmus test of one's Christian commitment. For those so persuaded, once again the news isn't good. In 1972 less than a third of Americans approved of the Supreme Court decision banning prayer in the public schools. By 1996, the percentage approving of the ban had risen to 40%.

## Detecting Secularization from Social Trends

We might well cite such trends as incontestable evidence that secularization is upon us and is moving forward at a rapid rate. But before reaching this conclusion, it might be well to make reference to some other trends.

Social scientists have called attention to how, in the wake of the cold war, ethnic conflicts have become so wide spread that they have replaced ideological conflict as the source of greatest turmoil in the world today. And while ethnic conflict has far from disappeared from the American landscape, attitude surveys reflect a growing acceptance of different ethnic groups. Consider the following.

\*In 1977 over 45% of Americans approved of racial segregation in housing. In 1996 this figure had fallen to a mere 13%.

(I suppose because I am married to an African, I find the next observation particularly reassuring.)

\*Whereas in 1972 nearly 40% of Americans supported laws against racial intermarriage, by 1996 a mere 12% indicated that they supported such a ban.

While many Americans are still inclined to view African Americans' problems as due to their lack of motivation and will power—a situation of blame which Gunnar Myrdal (1944) has referred to as “An American Dilemma”—today they appear significantly less inclined to do so than they were twenty years ago. (In 1977 less than 65% of Americans felt that African American’s problems were due to lack of motivation and will power; in 1996 just over 50% felt this way.)

The good news that we might attend to is not entirely race-linked any more than the bad news is exclusively sex-linked. Christians who view the human body as God's temple can take joy in the increasing numbers of Americans whom are giving up smoking.

\* Between 1977 and 1994 the percentage of Americans smoking cigarettes had declined from 42% to 28%.

### **Detecting Secularization from Religious Trends**

When examining evidence of secularization, the data that we “read” and how we “read” it (or what we read into it) is in a large part determined by our fears and our moral conditioning.

Another way of attempting to detect a secularizing process is to focus less on social trends and more on trends in religious expression. One of the most common—though less-than-ideal — indicators of how serious people are about their faith is to look at their church attendance. A look at the pattern of church attendance among Americans in recent years does reveal a decline. Between 1972 (on the eve of U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam), 42% of Americans reported weekly church attendance. But by 1996 the figure had fallen to just 30%. However a look at the historical evidence may put this trend in a different perspective. Roberts, in his book, *Religion in Sociological Perspective*, cites historical evidence indicating that in 1800, only about 20% of the population attended religious services. If we look at church membership, a somewhat similar pattern emerges. In 1800 less than 10% of the American population belonged to churches. By 1965 this figure had risen to 73% but had declined to 68% by 1992 (Roberts, 1995:351).

Of course institutional membership and attendance is only one manifestation of religiosity. Another is personal belief. Yet polls indicate that, far from eroding, high percentages of Americans—88% in 1990—say that God is important in their lives (MicroCase, 1998). Add to this the findings from a recent Angus Reid poll of a cross-section of Ontarians—people residing in that secular city somewhere to the north—that almost 2/3 of Ontarians believe in miracles or divine intervention, and one might begin to question whether any real erosion of religious faith is occurring at all (Angus Reid Group, 1996).

Looking at this and similar evidence, sociologists like Andrew Greeley, Stark and Bainbridge, and Hadden have become outspoken critics of “secularization theory.” (For a review of the debate, see Tschannen, 1994.)

## **Detecting Secularization from Faith and Position on Social Issues**

A third way of attempting to decipher secularization is to examine how “religious” people compare to others in their views on social issues . For example, if secularization has really “come of age” then we would probably not expect to find much difference in the positions that frequent and infrequent church attenders take on selected social issues. An examination of the evidence does reveal a pattern. Upon analyzing General Social Survey data for 1992, 1994, and 1996 (MicroCase, 1998), it is apparent that the more frequently people attend church, the more likely they are:

- \* to agree that premarital sex is always wrong
- \* to disagree that abortion should be legal
- \* to maintain that there should be laws against the distribution of pornography
- \* to believe that divorce in this country should be more difficult to obtain.

However a further examination of the evidence reveals that, when comparing people who believe that the Bible is the actual word of God with those who believe the Bible to be the inspired word of God and with those who view the Bible as an ancient book, it turns out that the social views of the “actualists” and of the “inspirationists” are often remarkably different and that this latter group is often in closer agreement with the “ancient book” group than with the “actualist” group. (Such a division in ranks might be expected to effectively mask any difference in the social views of frequent and infrequent church attenders except for one thing. Biblical “actualists” are significantly more inclined to attend church on a weekly basis than are “inspirationists.”)

## **Secularization and “Moral Meltdown”**

For three memorable days in March of 1979 residents in the community adjacent to Three Mile Island, Pennsylvania, hovered in a state of fear as stories circulated that the nuclear power station on Three Mile Island was about to release a poisonous cloud of deadly nuclear radiation. As the plant was undergoing evacuation, the careful calculations of a local engineer concluded that the town actually had nothing to fear—at least not for a number of weeks. Because of the seriousness of the situation, a renowned nuclear physicist from New England was consulted. This physicist's calculations indicated that a hydrogen bubble had formed over the nuclear core of the Three Mile Island facility and that the whole plant could literally blow up at any hour. Soon word of the incident reached the Carter White House. Sensing the need to bring calm to a very tense situation—and not knowing whose calculations were right—Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter made their way to Three Mile Island where Jimmy personally inspected the plant. As it turned out, the New England physicist had somehow used the wrong formula. Yet later inspection of the fuel rods revealed that even as Carter visited the plant, a state of nuclear “meltdown” was under way.

Are we, in these twilight years of the 20th century, approaching “moral meltdown?” Is it possible that we are already in the midst of one? Nuclear physicists are used to employing

very precise measurements of very real phenomena. Yet if these physicists can disagree over whether a nuclear meltdown is under way, one might wonder at the chances that social scientists—who must be content to work with relatively imprecise measurements of phenomena that are only indirectly observable—can agree on the extent to which secularization is occurring.

### **Secularization: Reconceptualization and Reassessment**

The fact that religious beliefs are very much in evidence at the dawn of the “post-industrial” age is hard to deny. But does such persistence mean that secularization is not occurring? Recognizing that a miscalculation could be fatal, some have called for a new, more “modern” approach to secularization. According to Swedish sociologist, Oliver Tschannen: “The modern approach to secularization (unlike most previous formulations) does not rest on the idea that religion is disappearing as an item of personal experience. Thus, although religion may remain very prominent in most people's lives, it may at the same time be losing its position in society.” (Tschannen, 1994, p. 72).

Tschannen’s suggestion that religion may be declining in influence both as an institution and as a personal belief system even as religion remains a prominent part of people’s lives is an idea which bears further examination. We shall proceed to consider this by briefly looking at contemporary attitudes toward religion in the public arena and then by considering a larger process behind it.

When Jimmy Carter was confronted with two opposing calculations about whether a nuclear catastrophe was about to occur, he went out for a “look see.” For many Christians who venture out into the public arena for a “look see” what they often find these days is a rather unfriendly and inhospitable environment. Another Carter—Stephen Carter—has written extensively about this environment. In his book, *The Culture of Disbelief*, Carter observes that when one attempts to apply the principles of his faith in the public arena, he is increasingly regarded as some kind of religious fanatic who is trying to impose his religious views on others. Carter observes an irony in that Martin Luther King did just that—using his religious views to press for dramatic social change. Yet Carter notes that we somehow manage to convince ourselves that King was acting on secular grounds, not religious ones. Today the overwhelming feedback that most Christians get is quite clear. If you wish to be accepted in the public square, you had best keep your religious convictions to yourself.

The issue of the “naked public square,” as Richard Neuhaus has described it, involves the relationship of church and state. And Stephen Carter and others have become openly critical of Supreme Court interpretations of the First Amendment—the Freedom of Religion Amendment. In a thought-provoking paper sent to me by Jon Johnston entitled, “Where Church and State Intersect,” the author, Stephen Monsma, comments on the “wall of separation” between church and state. He points out that in acting on the principle of strict separation, the Supreme Court, in a series of post-World War II cases, has held that “the religious freedom language of the First Amendment should be interpreted to mean that church and state must be kept in as separate spheres as possible and that government may not subsidize or support religion.” What this has come to mean, Monsma points out, is that

religion has, in effect, been banished from tax supported college and university campuses. He gives an illustration of it's impact.

If, for example, a school teaches such issues as race relations, human sexuality, and civic responsibility without any reference to religion, the message being sent is clearly that religion is irrelevant to such topics, or at the least, that such topics can be fully understood and discussed without reference to religion. Most of the world's great religions would dispute this conclusion, while secular systems of belief would firmly hold to it. Thus, it is anything but neutral (Monsma, 1998:3).

Monsma believes that the strict no-aid-to-religion interpretation needs to be replaced with an equal treatment or substantive neutrality position. This position maintains that, "the First Amendment—properly interpreted—seeks to assure the neutrality of government towards persons and groups of all faiths and those of none. This means government ought not to advantage or disadvantage any particular religion, nor ought its actions advantage or disadvantage religion in general or secularism in general. Only then will full freedom of belief for both the religious and the nonreligious among us prevail (Monsma, 1998:6).

### **Secularization and Social Differentiation**

The separation of church and state issue, while reflecting the particular history of this country, also reflects a process which has impacted industrialized countries across the board. The process is known as differentiation. It essentially involves a progressive division of society into separate spheres, each of which has become progressively more specialized in its focus. For example, in the herding and horticultural societies we read of in the Old Testament, the family typically functioned as a unit of economic production while the size of the family provided a measure of military security. Now both economic production and physical protection have been given over to other institutions. Similarly the spheres of religion and government once closely intertwined (e.g., New Testament Palestine), have become increasingly separate and distinct from one another.

Today it has become conventional to distinguish between private and public spheres and to incorporate the former when referring to family or religion and to incorporate the latter when referring to public education, business and politics. This distinction has become quite acceptable to those of us raised in the modern and significantly shapes the way we think about and apply our concept of morality. Consider the case of President Clinton's affair with Monica Lewinski. The polls indicated that most people regarded this as a private "affair," and not a public one and had little bearing on his job performance as the nation's chief executive.

Differentiation has become structured into modern society. Individuals learn to divide their lives into segments—some segments being reserved for family, some for work, some for religion. Social scientists use terms like stress and role conflict to describe what happens when people are unable to keep these separate spheres of life from interfering with one another. To adapt to the conditions of modern society, individuals are effectively required to compartmentalize their lives. We call this "adjustment." And through the instruments of socialization—both formal and informal—we learn how to

## The Impact of Differentiation on Religion

The outcome of the differentiation process is such that religion, both as a personal belief system and as an institution, has become more and more separated—isolated, if you will—from the rest of society. This, I will suggest, is the essence of secularization. Its impact has effectively resulted in what I shall term “The Great Disconnect” between religion and the social world. I shall proceed to examine these in terms of three significant consequences, consequences which have severely jeopardized the capacity of the church to realize its mandate to be the light of the world.

### 1. Truncation of Mission

Some years back I complained to my pastor, Rev. George, that I could sit in church on Sunday and never know that there was “a world out there.” Perhaps acting on my comment, George, proceeded to address some issues of the day and even invited a black inner-city pastor from the same denomination to come and speak on Sunday. This black pastor did remind us of the issues and challenged us to get involved. But after this event George began to get additional feedback—much of it negative. One fellow seemed to represent the sentiments of many when he said, “I come to this church to be fed. Since George began his ‘crusade’ to expose us to the world, I stopped getting fed. (At the risk of a poor pun, what this fellow was saying was that he was “fed up”.)

Judging from the findings of numerous studies and reports, (see, e.g., Campbell and Pettigrew, 1972; Stark et al., 1973; Berton, 1965; Campolo, 1991) laymen, on the whole, do not want their churches getting involved in the public sphere. (Interestingly when people attend church, they go into the “sanctuary”—a place of refuge from the world.) And, for the most part, church leaders have accommodated their desires. With a few notable exceptions, such as abortion and prayer in the public schools, churches have restricted their focus to the private concerns of individuals and their families.

In his provocative book, *The Way of the Modern World: Or Why It's Tempting to Live As If God Doesn't Exist*, Craig Gay (1998) notes that the focus of the church has become largely therapeutic—helping people to adjust. He adds that this focus has contributed to a modern preoccupation with self—a sort of self-absorption.

In summarizing one of his major concerns, Gay sounds a warning:

...we cannot resist the “secularity” of modern society and culture by retreating into the private sphere. While such a retreat does present the path of least resistance, the withdrawal into private life has left the contemporary Church far too vulnerable to subjectivism and to the triumph of therapeutic sensibilities. By rendering the Christian faith so that it appears to be irrelevant to public life, the strategy of resistance-by-withdrawal has also made faith seem somewhat unreal to those who must staff the public sphere on a daily basis. In compensating for the impersonal quality of the modern marketplace, furthermore, private religiosity only increases our tolerance for the barrenness and “secularity” of modern public life, thereby actually contributing to the ongoing process of secularization (Craig, p. 262).

## **2. Truncation of Ministry**

Craig Gay's reference to the faith that seems unreal in the public sphere reflects a declining vision for ministry beyond the private sector. I recall the assistant pastor in my church handing out a rather lengthy and impressive list of ministries that church members could become involved in. Upon examining his list I discovered that the items had one thing in common. In one way or another, all of them serviced the local church or its parent denomination. While Craig Gay has called attention to the self-absorption of modern man, it occurred to me that the organized church may at times be guilty of the same tendency. Rather than equipping laymen to minister to the world, it has become content to have them minister to itself.

An important legacy which came out of the Protestant Reformation was the affirmation of "the priesthood of all believers." One might suppose that this legacy would provide a powerful motivation to prepare laymen to permeate the public sector, to confront the principalities and powers of this world, and to challenge social structures and routine practices which oppress vast sectors of the human community and pollute and destroy God's fragile creation. One might expect Protestants to become the very kind of transforming agents that we read about in the book of Acts—the kind that turn the world upside down. One might also expect that these would be the sort of people that are honored and revered and looked up to as examples of "full-time Christian servants." I challenge you to review of the contents of church bulletins, to check on the material displayed on their bulletin boards, to examine the books and flyers displayed in their vestibules or available in their libraries. I suggest that they will reveal strikingly little interest or investment in the public sphere.

## **3. Truncation of Theology**

Perhaps you've heard a variant of this story. While walking through the back alleys of a city in India, a visitor happened upon a stone quarry. Out of curiosity he asked through his interpreter what one of the workman on the quarry was doing. The weariness in the laborer's voice didn't need translation as he explained that his task was to turn his pile of stone into ten square building blocks by nightfall." Walking a little further he found another workman and asked him the same question. "I'm working to earn Rs 500 by the end of the week," he said. As the visitor was about to leave the quarry he encountered a third workman and, out of curiosity, asked him the same question. There was a sparkle in this man's eyes and excitement in his voice as he responded, "Do you know Mother Teresa?" I'm building a clinic that will help her in her work with the sick and dying. This man's vision made his work meaningful and enjoyable. But where do you suppose this person could have gotten his vision?

For laymen to develop a vision for ministry in the world, they need a world-relevant, world-relating theology. Theology is considered to be, in the words of the theologians who gathered in Belgium at a World Congress of theology, "a reflection of Christians upon their faith and their Christian experience in a particular time and culture. Hence only Christian communities, involved in the life of the contemporary world, and taking active responsibility within their society can fashion the theology of the future" (Amalorpavadass, 1973, p. 2).

But what happens if Christian communities are *not actively involved* in the life of the contemporary world? What then?

Some years ago I attended a peace conference sponsored by Fuller Seminary in which Ron Frase—then chaplain at Whitworth College—gave an unforgettable presentation. He shared how, at a young age, he had felt a call to work with young people in Latin America. He went on to note how, in his effort to prepare himself for this ministry, he had attended the best Christian colleges and seminaries that he could find. He observed how these schools had helped him pursue the answers to all of the questions that young people were asking—questions about sex, about marriage, about career, etc. With great excitement he took his first assignment—to work with students at one of Brazil’s large universities. But Ron then shared how his excitement slowly turned to despair and then to anger as he realized that the questions which he had so carefully prepared the answers to were not the questions that these university students were asking. They wanted to know what Christianity had to say about oppression, about the political disenfranchisement of indigenous peoples, about the expropriation of their lands. They wanted to know whether Christianity had anything to offer them as they set about the task of rectifying the injustices meted out against the hordes of people squatting together in Brazil’s favelas.

“I gradually came to the horrifying realization, Ron confessed, “ that in all of the years I had spent getting my education, I had been presented with the wrong questions and had come up with the wrong answers. I had to start my education all over again.

After teaching in Kenya for a number of years, I think I know something of Ron Frase’s experience. Students there want to know how the church can help them with a systemic corruption that has gutted their health care system as well as virtually all other areas of the public sector. They want to know what Christianity has to say about the way in which “politically incorrect” people are falsely accused of a crime and mysteriously die before their case is brought to trial. They want to know what my students think of the International Monetary Fund and its Structural Adjustment Program. (Africans call these SAPS.) They also want to know why our missionaries have such a difficult time identifying with Africans.

The late black evangelist, Tom Skinner, once encountered a man with a placard which read, “Christ is the answer.” Tom’s response is noteworthy. “If Christ is the answer, he asked, then what is the question?” Indeed, asking the right questions is central to developing a twenty-first century world-relevant theology. But to do so requires leaving the comfort of the sanctuary and entering the discomfort of the “secular.”

Once during World War II, when German U-boats were routinely sinking U.S. battle ships, Will Rogers was reportedly asked for his advice on how to solve the problem of the U-boats. “If you boil the ocean, he said, the U-boats will all float to the surface.” “But how do we boil the ocean?” someone asked. “I’ve given you with the theory,” he said. “Now it’s up to you to work out the details.” In theory, Christ IS the answer. But we need much help in working out the details. Let’s not settle for a “boil the ocean” theology.

### **The COST of Engagement vs. the COST of Disengagement**

We've all heard the expression, "Old doctors never die, they just lose their patients." It might also be said that "world-engaging" pastors never die, they just lose their parishioners.

In a previous section I mentioned George, my former pastor. In an effort to be more "world engaging," George began to address the issues. Sadly, his efforts ended up generating more heat than light. It might be said, in jest, that this heat might have boiled some salt water. But it did embroil the congregation. To help cool things down, the pastor organized a Sunday night meeting in the church basement. Unfortunately heated emotions held sway and, within the space of a few short weeks the church board moved for George's dismissal.

Not too long after that event I moved to Idaho and became active in a local church. In the process of preparing for a new year, the pastor gathered several of us laymen together to make suggestions about what we'd like to see the church do during the year. I recall suggesting something about a task force who would investigate issues confronting the community and formulate a Christian response. Perhaps I was thinking of producing something "small," like the Bishop's letter on economic justice (see National Council of Catholic Bishops, 1986). (That document was circulated in parish congregations throughout the U.S. and got quite a response.)

Perhaps wisely, this pastor ignored my advice.

While engagement may have its costs, the cost of ignoring public issues and the public sector—is significantly greater. Noninvolvement in the public sector leaves saints with a shallow understanding of how to shine light into the world. On those occasions when, out of a sense of righteous indignation (or self-righteous irritation) the church feels compelled to "take action," and crosses the moat between itself and society to do battle against the "forces of evil," it finds itself confronting people it has never related to facing issues it doesn't fully understand. Having confronted the "forces of evil," rather than remaining to replace or rebuild fallen structures and foster loving relationships, it is tempted to rush back across the moat and into the refuge of the "sanctuary."

A few months ago I received a flier from *Sojourners* magazine. Printed on the flier was the following observation. "When people on the streets are asked, What is a Christian? What do they stand for?, on nearly every occasion words come back such as anti-abortion, anti-gay, anti-feminist, anti-welfare, anti-this, anti-that. And words like harsh, self-righteous, intolerant, or mean-spirited. Yet another poll of people, asked what they think Jesus was like, almost universally returns with words like compassionate, nonviolent peacemaker, and reconciler. How do we explain the contradictions here? Either the popular conception of Jesus is mistaken, or we in the church have been following the wrong agenda" (*Sojourners* magazine flier, October, 1998).

Let me quickly reiterate the essence of what I've said thus far. The church has withdrawn from the public sphere and into the private and in the process it has become disconnected and aloof from the world. The costs of this "disconnect" have been substantial.

\* The cost to the laymen has been in loss of vision and direction.

\* The cost to the church is that it finds itself advancing answers without issues.

- \* The cost to the post cold-war world entering a "post-modern age" is that it faces public-sphere issues without theologically and morally grounded answers.
- \* The cost to the image of the church in the eyes of the world is a loss of credibility.

### **The Task Before the Church**

The task before the church is, as always, to bring salt and light to the world. It must do this by reconnecting with our "work-a-day," "dog-eat-dog" world. To accomplish this task it must equip the priesthood of believers by helping them

1. Detect and then reflect on the issues and forces which are impacting both themselves and the secular world.
2. Develop a vision for the role that God would have them play in terms of feeding the diverse variety of creatures inhabiting the public pond
3. Nurture a vision for how they might decrease the stagnation and reclaim the pond, e.g., the structures within which the fish must swim.

### **Vehicles for Engagement**

If the tide of secularization is to be turned around, the church as the body of believers must resource its laymen. It needs to do this by whatever means available. I've previously referred to Craig Gay's book, *The Way of the Modern World* and to this author's insights into the secularization process. As Craig Gay began to reflect on how to best respond to the secularization phenomenon, he focuses on the Protestant concept of the calling. Here's what he says:

...it occurs to me that the time may ironically be ripe for the rediscovery of one of the doctrines that, as we have seen, may have been responsible for catalyzing the practical rationalization of economic life to begin with, namely, the Protestant doctrine of *calling*. There are two reasons for this. The first is that this doctrine is deeply individuating and personalizing. The second is that the notion of calling does not allow us to separate our work in this world from our faith in and our responsibility before God. The notion of calling simply cannot be understood in a secular fashion, at least not if it is taken at all seriously....

The Christian calling neither encourages nor permits us simply to withdraw from the realm of economic activity, however. On the contrary, we are each called to real work in the world. This was Luther's critical discovery and it has subsequently been discussed under the heading of "particular calling" in Protestant theology. That we are called to particular work in the world implies that it is precisely in the context of worldly work that our salvation is to be worked out "in fear and trembling. (Phil. 2:12); and it is in the real world of work that God promises to be present to us. Worldly work is not to be envisioned simply as a proving ground for eternal life either. Rather...it is by means of creative human work that the created order is, mysteriously by the Son and through the Spirit, to be returned to the Father in love and worship (Gay, 1998:176,177)

For the personal calling to be actualized requires organization. In a book entitled *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today*, John Stott describes one way in which the church can facilitate this process.

It is a very healthy think for the local church's oversight or leadership to encourage people with similar concerns to coalesce into "special interest" groups or "study and action" groups. Some will have an evangelistic objective– house-to-house visitations, a music group, a world mission group, etc. Other groups will have a social concern – sick and welfare visiting, a housing association, community or race relations, the care of the natural environment, pro-life, anti-abortion campaigning, the needs of an ethnic minority, etc. Such special groups supplement one another. If an occasional opportunity is given to them to report back to the church membership as a whole, the representative nature of their work will be affirmed, and they can receive valuable support from their parent body in terms of advice, encouragement, prayer and financial backing.

John Stott's suggestion is only the beginning. With a little thought and creative use of resources, the possibilities for organizing and equipping the priesthood of believers for ministry to the public sphere are limitless. As laymen begin to address the principalities and powers of the "secular" world, their faith takes on new meaning, their churches experience new vitality, and the mandate to be the salt and light of the world is fulfilled. The secularization process is *not* irreversible. The giant is not invincible. An exciting challenge–and special blessing–awaits God's church. Let's get to work.

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