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bearers can experience oneness as the body of Christ. It appears that at present the body is disjointed.

William Kerr speaks of suffering in passion for the perfection of the church and the accomplishment of its mission. But, this is not a solitary suffering, but rather it is sharing of the fellowship with Christ. In the two-fold task for 'discipling and perfecting' it is inevitable for members of the Church who are called for witness to go through agony of pains which Paul speaks as 'in travail' ([Gal. 4:19](#)). The One who did [p. 49](#) come for the redemption of man had to take this way: Love means pain. He suffered for his task even unto death. Without this deep involvement, there is no genuine transformation for man. 'The "kerygmatic" responsibility of the church is inseparable from its "koinoniatic" character. Only a Church of cross-bearing Christians can preach the cross of Christ' (William Kerr: p.8).

In the short history of the Korean Church, the element of suffering physically and spiritually is experienced. Although the Korean Church's suffering is not comparable to the Early Church, it is a painful experience.

V. CONCLUSION

The redemptive work through suffering which Christ had undertaken is complete. No one else can add to it or be a part of it. That is once for all for all people and for all ages. Yet, there is suffering which Christians can take part in for mission in order to be a part in the mission of Christ.

The cross of Christ was the total expression of God's love for man. He got involved Himself in that painful process of bearing the cross; it was the manifestation of His love for the world. It is significant that He came down where people are and took the form of a most humiliating death—death on the cross. 'It is willingness to serve and sacrifice, to forgive and make allowances, to share and sympathize, to lift up the fallen and restore the erring ([Gal. 5:25ff.](#), [Rom. 12:9ff.](#), [1 Cor. 13:4ff.](#)) in a community which owes its whole existence to the mercy of God and the sacrificial death of Christ' ([Phil. 2:1ff.](#), [1 Cor. 8:11](#)) (William Kerr: p.9). The model for missions is the mission of Christ. Through the cross, there is also a need of suffering for the missionary involvement today.

Looking back Over a century of mission history in Korea, genuine growth of the Church was possible through the suffering of individual cross-bearing Christians whether nationals or missionaries. In a way it can be said that, 'Suffering is the element of mission strategy' (A. R. Glasser).

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Secularization and Secularism Some Christians Considerations

Klaus Bockmuehl

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This profound paper on the 'special problem of Contemporary Christianity', namely, the question of the secular, touches the nerve-centre of the modern attitude to God, religion and morals. With its well-researched historical perspective on the subject, it convincingly shows various ways secularism and secularization have seeped into current thinking and life-style. One might miss an exhaustive treatment on the theme, such as e.g., saeculum as a concept exclusively used for an outlook limited to 'this age', in contrast with mundus, used for world in a spatial connotation as Harvey Cox and others have done; but the article gives an adequate alternative to such a this-worldly emphasis. The conclusion forcefully brings out Church renewal as an antidote to secularism—renewal in prayer, fellowship and proclamation.

(Editors)

To clarify its understanding of the secular and to define its attitude to it, should be a primary concern of the Christian Church in the present situation of society and culture. Bryan Wilson, the British sociologist of religion, marvels at the perspective of a theologian who declares: the problem of ecumenism is the order of the day. An independent observer would have thought 'that the problem of secularization could much more suitably have been chosen as the special problem of contemporary Christianity'.¹ And indeed it is. A Church that was destined by its Founder to be evermore in a process of consolidation and expansion, must be disturbed by experiencing uncertainty of heart and dwindling numbers in many places.

However, the Church in the West where these developments primarily occur, does not seem to have given much serious thought to the problem, with a peculiar kind of belief in providence, some authorities persuade themselves that secularization, the movement away from the Church to the world, is essentially, or at least can be interpreted as, a salutary move somewhat comparable to the Incarnation or *kenosis* of Christ. Others, Evangelicals among them, focus their attention on the future of their respective groupings, and seem to be well content if they add to their numbers even when the overall state of Christianity deteriorates. Others again fight Evangelicalism as their foremost enemy, regardless of the general ascent of secularism. As against this, the sobering observation of the sociologist points to the fact that secularization and secularism touch on the question of the very existence of religion and its institutions, and, as the figures show, especially in areas traditionally Christian. What then is secularization and secularism and how should the Church respond to them? Attempting to answer these questions, we shall first study the nature of secularization, secularism, and the secular, then consider its prospects, and finally try to determine possible responses to it.

I

THE NATURE OF SECULARIZATION AND SECULARISM

Historical Observations

As we look at the meaning of secularization and secularism, it seems to be insufficient to merely sketch the history of the concept which may not cover the history and extent of the subject-matter itself.

¹ Bryan Wilson, *Religion in Secular Society. A Sociological Comment* (1966), Harmondsworth (U.K.): Penguin 1969, 151.

Karl Helm, who together with J. H. Oldham and the participants of the International Missionary Council's meeting in Jerusalem 1928, was one of the exponents of an early phase of awareness of the problem, addressed himself to the question why secularization and secularism would spring up and become so intense and extensive especially in the areas covered by Christendom. Helm felt this was due to the fact that Scripture allowed for creation, the world, to be an entity and agent by itself, vis-à-vis, though in relationship, with God, whereas in other religions it is merely an extension of the deity and thus cannot act on its own. Only where there is a duality of God and world, God and man, can there develop a dualism, a corruption of the original and intended community.²

This may be part of the explanation although it would not explain why secularization and secularism did not also, and with the same intensity, originate in Judaism and Islam which share the presupposition of the transcendence and aseity of God or, not allowing for the Incarnation, hold to it even more vigorously.

In Christendom, there is the additional matrix of the medieval antithesis between the holy and the secular. Monastic theology, e.g., can hardly be beaten in its fierce contrasting of the 'angelic' contemplative life of monk and nun, and the drudgery and uncleanness p. 52 of the ordinary Christian in the world. It is well known how the monastic ideology ravaged the traditional doctrine of the Christian life, until the monastery was the Church, taking the vows of rebirth and the second baptism, and the monk the only true Christian, leaving nothing for the believer whose walk was 'in the secular'.³

Out of this juxtaposition of Church and world, *sanctum* and *saeculum*, grew the process of secularization. It begins, in the Middle Ages, with the withdrawal or dismissal of the individual monk or priest from the monastery or the ranks of the clergy as an act of 'secularization'. During the Reformation monasteries and Church estates come into secular hands and become secularized. In the peace negotiations ending the Thirty Years' War in 1643 the French delegate suggests the 'secularization' of certain Church territories. The year 1803 sees the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation and at the same time the alienation ('secularization') of the remaining ecclesiastical territories with which Napoleon meant to compensate the princes whose lands he had taken for himself and the members of his family. We observe thus, on the level of laws and institutions, an ever-growing circle of objects drawn into the process of secularization on this primary level.⁴

A similar development may be observed on the level of the history of ideas and knowledge. F. X. Arnold⁵ points to the philosophical school of Averroism in the Faculty of Arts of the University of Paris in the thirteenth century which postulated the liberation of philosophy from the supremacy of theology, and the disjunction of rational and revealed truth, speaking of 'twofold truth', and already held to almost the whole catalogue of tenets of modern unbelief.⁶ The intellectual movement of the Italian Renaissance continued this effort and in the famed *Principe* of Machiavelli practically proclaimed the secular. ization

² Karl Helm, *Der Kampf gegen den Säkularismus* in: H. H. Schrey, Hrsg., *Säkularisierung*, Darmstadt: Wiss. Buchgesellschaft 1981, 112ff.

³ Cp. Klaus Bockmühl, *Säkularismus und christlicher Glaube*, Porta-Studie 8, Marburg: SMD 1985, 8f.

⁴ Hermann Lübke, *Säkularisierung. Geschichte eines ideenpolitischen Begriffs*, Freiburg u. München: Alber 1975, 23ff.

⁵ Franz Xaver Arnold, *Der neuzeitliche Säkularismus*, in H. H. Schrey, *op. cit.*, 140f.

⁶ C. Colpe, Art. Averroismus, in: *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 3rd. edition, vol. 1 (Tübingen: I. C. B. Mohr 1957), 796f.

of political ethics. Thomas Hobbes and Hugo Grotius established the framework for a secular conception of political theory [p.53](#) and the law, and Adam Smith as well as Karl Marx, his immediate counterpart, very effectively did the same for the whole world of economics. The materialists of the eighteenth and nineteenth century from Holbach to Haeckel looked after the secularization of the philosophy of nature whereas historians of the said period claimed the same for their own field of endeavour.

It has been frequently observed, however, that the secular viewpoint is largely independent of the empirical argument both in the natural sciences and in history. Rather, it is very much the consequence of an existential attitude, voluntative secularism. O. Chadwick pointed out that 'the onslaught upon Christianity owed its force ... not at all to the science' (e.g. of the nineteenth century). It was made 'not in the name of knowledge, but in the name of justice and freedom'.⁸ Karl Marx reacted against the concept of creation (and voted for the theory of a self-generation of the universe) precisely for reasons of human independence and autonomy. In his early notebooks he picked up on the argument forwarded by French materialist D. Holbach who, resurrecting the pre-Christian critic Lucretius, described religion as man's undignified subjection to, and worship of, the deities of nature, lightning and thunder, and correspondingly heralded Prometheus, the ancient symbol of rebellion against the gods.⁹ Sharing Marx' refusal to distinguish between religions, Feuerbach, Bakunin the anarchist, and Büchner the materialist of the end of the nineteenth century, all think in similar lines.¹⁰

The nineteenth century is yet remarkable for another development in the thrust towards secularization. The Enlightenment in the second half of the 18th century was the undertaking of the intellectual elite. Voltaire among others refused to talk atheism 'in front of the maids' because he took the view that religion upheld the morality of servants which could only be profitable for him.¹¹ The same attitude prompted the notorious edict of 1788 written by F. W. von Wöllner, the Prussian minister, in which enlightened pastors were constrained from preaching anything in discord with the teaching of the Church, notwithstanding their own personal convictions. Secularity of views here is a private matter, of the individual, not of the public mind; neither the masses nor the institutions are as yet secularized. The situation is quite different at the end of the nineteenth century, at least in the European [p.54](#) continent which seems to have pioneered the development. As Chadwick has shown, this is quite likely due to the victory of Marxism over the other schools of thought within the European workers' movement. Workers took a long time to be convinced that social renewal could only be achieved over the defeat of religion. But with the ascent of Marxism, socialism as well as the liberalism of the bourgeoisie, became the vehicle of secularism. Thus Chadwick can say: 'Marxist theory is the most influential of all symbols for the process of secularization in the 19th century.'¹² Different from the Enlightenment, secularism a century later has reached the general populace; it is one of the ideas which, as Marx had it, 'become a revolutionary force as soon as they grip the masses'. The final de-institutionalization of religion is then only a matter of time.

Definitions

⁸ O. Chadwick, *op. cit.*, 155.

⁹ Karl Marx-Frederick Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 1, New York: international 1975, 102, 30f.

¹⁰ As noted by E. Fackenheim, *op. cit.*, 57, 59 and O. Chadwick, *op. cit.*, 59, 171. 11.

¹¹ O. Chadwick, *op. cit.*, 10.

¹² O. Chadwick, *ibid.*, 69, 79.

Although ‘... the range of meaning behind the term secular’ can include all sorts of things, e.g. ‘assimilation to established power, an overtly materialist doctrine, hedonistic indifference, religious propaganda based on psychic utility’, even the phenomenon that the bishop is a warrior,—‘we have the paradox of secularization always with us’,¹³—we can, on the basis of the historical survey, nevertheless attempt a definition of the concepts under consideration. Taking into account the different aspects, one might say that secularization is the withdrawal or emancipation of social institutions, world views, and individual lives from instruction by, or responsibility to, ecclesiastical or divine authority.

It is important to keep in mind the secularization both of the social institutions and public life (which sociologists primarily seem to study¹⁴) and of the world of ideas, human consciousness and ‘ideation’¹⁵ (which historians seem to be more concerned with). It is also important to perceive the process of secularization as a mass departure of individuals from church and religion. Just as statisticians can, as it were, give us, a day-by-day breakdown of the growth of Christianity in certain countries, so we must think of the loss of faith as p. 55 a concrete process made up of the decisions or attitudes of individual people even if it should not be marked by visible actions as in baptism.

It seems that secularization and secularism differ one from another in that secularization denotes an actual *process* of ‘becoming worldly’—it can be thought of in terms of singular and plural—whereas secularism denotes the *programme*, the intention of worldliness, or ‘the will to secularization’ as a practical world view.¹⁶ As such—and similar to other—isms—it is unified (we don’t tend to think of secularism in the plural) and limitless in its thrust.

Secularism in itself seems to be the ‘positive equivalent’ to atheism, a *de facto* atheism, a forgetfulness of the things of God, as compared with the belligerent denial of God in atheism proper. It is rather an attitude on the other side of atheism, of ‘let’s get on with the job’, the practical stance which Marx and Engels advocated berating their atheist mentor Ludwig Feuerbach who never seemed to be able to leave religion alone, once he had effectively criticized it. Secularism is the proposition to live ‘without God in the world’ ([Eph. 2:12](#)).

We are now in a position to also interpret the final distinction given in the definition above, and in the course of this determine the meaning of ‘the secular’. The distinction between ecclesiastical and divine authority in the working definition given is indispensable. Many authors fail to distinguish between the two, a failure which creates havoc in the apperception of history as well as in communication about contemporary concerns. We are faced with a cluster of problems that need careful sorting out.

To begin with, the Latin root word of the term ‘secular’, *saeculum*, occurs not infrequently in the Vulgate translation of the New Testament, taking the place of the Greek *aion*. One particular occurrence, [Tit. 2:12](#) (... *abnegantes impietatem, et saecularia desideria, sobrie, juste, et pie vivamus in hoc saeculo* ...) shows that the term can be used both in a negative (‘worldly desires’) and a morally neutral sense (‘live in the world’). In this it resembles the notorious ambiguity of its synonym *kosmos/mundus*: the world as fallen world and as God’s creation and object of His love.

¹³ David Martin, *A General Theory of Secularization*, New York, etc.: Harper Colophon Books 1978, 272f.

¹⁴ B. Wilson, *op. cit.*, 14, 256; D. Martin, *op. cit.*, 288.

¹⁵ Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor Books 1969, 107; *Idem*, *The Heretical Imperative. Contemporary Possibilities of Religious Affirmation*, Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor Books 1979, 24.

¹⁶ H. Lübke, *op. cit.*, 95 fn. 11.

In toppling the monastic antithesis of the secular and the holy, the Reformation recovered the Christian relevance of the life of the laity in the secular world, e.g. in one's civil vocation. Overcoming the monastic abandonment of the life of the normal work-day, the Reformers moved from the holy precinct into the marketplace not in order to live there an unholy life, but to claim it for the holy God. As is [p. 56](#) well-known, Luther in the course of his career changed from the Augustinian doctrine of the Two Kingdoms, the kingdom of Heaven and the kingdom of this world, to his own teaching which distinguished between the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of God, the realm of salvation and the realm of creation, Gospel and Law, church and state. The secularization that took place during the Reformation (Luther's adversaries accused him of making the whole of Christianity 'profane') was therefore a denial not of the divine ordinances, but of ecclesiastical tutelage and dominion over the life of society. Breaking away from Rome (and from some imaginable Protestant clerocracy as well) was quite different from breaking away from God and His commandments.

That this distinction seems to be overlooked most of the time can also be seen in that many authors, Catholic as well as Protestant, make the Protestant Reformation out to be the beginning of the modern process of secularization. Some do it on the account that the Reformation broke Christian unity (and thus created the movement towards modern pluralism and the consequent possibility of confessional or religious neutrality). They do not, however, interpret the earlier schism of Christendom into the Eastern and Western Church, in a similar manner. Others credit (or debit) the Protestant Reformation with the invention of the modern principle of moral autonomy.¹⁷ The whole debate of secularization and secularism revolves indeed around the question of autonomy. But for the Reformation it was an autonomy of the secular as over against ecclesiastical authority, not as over against the authority of the divine commandments. The secular was not emancipated and dismissed to decide according to its own discretion (that is a modern concept, originating with accommodation to subsequent secularism), but it was made subject to a different set of rules 'Andersgesetzlichkeit', not 'Eigengesetzlichkeit'.

Luther occasionally (e.g. in 'The Bondage of the Will') enhances the role of human reason in earthly concerns, in order to denounce it the more regarding the questions of God and salvation. He elaborates, as it were, on the famous dictum of [Eccl. 15:14](#) (also pursued by Thomas Aquinas): 'God made man from the beginning and left him in the hand of his own counsel.' But, as at least our forefathers were well aware, the text continues: 'He added His commandments and precepts. If thou wilt keep the commandments ..., they shall preserve thee.' That is the framework of God's 'Kingdom at the left hand', His order of preservation which is to determine the life of society. [p. 57](#)

Of course, one can take the view that Martin Luther was rather a proponent of the Renaissance and its thrust toward secularity. But that does not fit with the historical observation, again and again emphasized by Troeltsch and others,¹⁸ that in terms of Social Ethics the Reformation, both in the Lutheran and the Calvinian versions, very much represents a continuation, not a 'Copernican revolution' of the medieval synthesis. It is also a fact that the secularization of the mind (and later of the state), in recapitulation of the ideas of the Renaissance, originated in France and Scotland, and not in Luther's native Thuringia.

Indeed, the Lutheran doctrine of the Two Kingdoms is to be considered as a viable third option between a hierocracy and the always inevitable secularism as a reaction to

¹⁷ H. Lübke, *op. cit.*, 42, 47; expressly so: P. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, 125.

¹⁸ Cp., e.g., Gerhard Ritter, as cited in H. H. Schrey, *op. cit.*, 3.

it. The Two Kingdom doctrine clearly taught to distinguish between 'Christianity' and 'Churchianity'. It would allow for a pluralism of confession within one and the same state, 'one nation under God, not under Catholicism or Anglicanism or Presbyterianism'.¹⁹ It is able to distinguish between de-confessionalization, the dis-establishment of a church, and the demise of the divine laws. It would also stand well with the desirable secularity of a state that was previously (or still is) confessionally Muslim or Hindu; indeed, it can serve as a common framework for people from different religious communities living together.²⁰ The recognition of the Reformational doctrine of the Two Kingdoms would also go a long way to remove the painful uncertainty of high and low in the United States concerning the separation of state and church. The Fathers of the Constitution seem to have been well aware of the difference between a de-confessionalized and a secularist state.

We therefore have to distinguish throughout between two types of secularization, between emancipation from ecclesiastical tutelage, and withdrawal from one's responsibility to the Judgement of God. The former is the intention of Reformation, the latter the programme of more recent centuries. Only the latter is an unlimited proposition, and can thus be called secularism.

II

PROSPECTS OF THE SECULAR AND OF SECULARISM

Our own time seems to be widely dominated by the mindset of **P. 58** secularity. One finds it difficult to tell what there is still left to be secularized. Before we can come to suggest a Christian stance vis-à-vis these developments, it is necessary not only to survey their past, but also to probe into their future insofar as it seems to be prefigured in earlier events, or as it already unfolds in the present. Certain evolutions are discernible, on the levels both of mass psychology and social structures.

Two Phases of the Secular Mindset

The progress of the secular mind seems always to begin with a mood of euphoria. We have the testimony of exhilaration in the heyday of Enlightenment at the beginning of the second half of the 18th century. The same mood seems to have pervaded Western culture around the turn of the 19th to the 20th century when the educated elite consciously linked up with the Enlightenment and its optimistic view of human nature. Owen Chadwick quotes an advertisement for the Encyclopaedia Britannica of 1898 that exalts 'the wonderful story ... of modern progress in the arts, sciences and industries' and promises to 'tell how the light was spread'. Spirits are waking everywhere: how glorious to be alive! Humanity is seen to be potentially almighty. However, these sentiments do not last. The atrocities of the French Revolution and its tyrannical pursuit of virtue have a sobering effect. Later, it is surprising to see, e.g., how the mood of French historiography changes between the optimism of Michelet and the dejection of Hippolyte Taine, and how the public reception of Darwinism turns sour.²¹

¹⁹ D. Martin, *op. cit.*, 63, 41.

²⁰ Cp. J. Wesley Ariarajah's postulate, in: *Lesslie Newbigin, The Other Side of 1984*. Questions for the Churches, Geneva: WCC 1983, 75.

²¹ O. Chadwick, *op. cit.*, 153, 210.

The First World War had similar effects. The evangelists of materialism around the turn of the century made way for culture critics who brooded over the relativisms and meaninglessness of the technological age. Karl Heim observed the sobering of mood in the leading scientists.²² Generally, many people already felt at the time, that the 'Roaring Twenties' resembled dancing on a volcano ready to erupt, and they tried to, as Thornton Wilder characterized the mood, 'eat their ice cream while it is on their plate'. One theologian at the time captured the cultural climate in a startling manner: 'Fear of God has died. But a new fear replaces it, fear of everything ('Weltangst') ... Adoration of culture turns into disdain. The dark gate, to which all secularization leads, is pessimism'.²³ Man, having abolished God, now clamours about being a 'cosmic orphan'. p. 59

Peter Berger, the eminently readable sociologist, who has a wakeful eye on intellectuals, observes at one point that they 'are notoriously haunted by boredom'. For whatsoever reason, Berger feels that on the other side of secularism, 'there is no telling what outlandish religiosity, even one dripping with savage supernaturalism, may yet arise in these groups ...'.²⁴ Ultramoderns develop a new belief in fate, turn to superstition in search for 'meaning', and make enlightenment perfect in a new obscurantism.²⁵

The most remarkable instance of such a change in mood is the recent collapse of secular optimism in Western Europe. Whereas the sixties, with their booming economy, sported an exuberant mindset of confidence in limitless progress and human abilities, after the first oil crisis, the public awakening to seemingly intractable ecological problems, a period of economic decline and the renewed perception of the threat of nuclear war have completely changed the picture. Today visitors from overseas marvel at the weariness and melancholy, the doom and gloom that rule over Europe. Problems may be far greater in India or in Latin America, but it is 'Euro-pessimism', 'the disappearance of hope' that characterizes the old countries. People speak of themselves as the 'no future generation'. All creativity is gone. Man has lost his moorings—after faith in God has been discarded he is now also through with the belief that he was to have in himself. Sartre's prophecy of 'Huis clos' and 'La nausée' is fulfilled. One wonders what happened to the 'principle of hope' and the 'theology of hope' which were hailed in the sixties—could they have become 'old hat' in less than twenty years?

Disorientation and despondency again give rise to new eccentric faiths. David Martin observes: 'Amsterdam ... one of the most secularised areas in Holland ... at the same time is besieged by minor cults'.²⁷ People begin to meddle again in witchcraft and necromancy.

²² K. Heim, *op. cit.*, 123.

²³ H. Schreiner, as cited in H. Lübke, *op. cit.*, 89.

²⁴ Peter L. Berger, *A Rumor of Angels. Modern Society and the Rediscovery of the Supernatural*, Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor Books 1970, 24.

²⁵ Manès Sperber, *Die vergebliche Warnung. All das Vergangene ...*, Wien: Europaverlag 1975, 207.

²⁷ D. Martin, *op. cit.*, 197. This pertinent observation presents us with the opportunity to dwell on the opinion voiced not infrequently that sociologists were their advertisement of secularization. Secularization was not irreversible. Did Berger himself say that people were unimprovably religious, and that there always be the need of defining one's identity, and thus a place for religion? Also, parallel to secularization there was a process of resacralization underway, in the forms, of re-Islamization in certain parts of the world or, indeed, of the influx of Eastern religions into Western civilization. Therefore, the overall development need not be understood as a change from religion to no religion but from one religion to another: coming society would only be post-Christian, not post-religious. This is exactly David Martin's point. But surely a Christian theologian cannot feel relieved and happy at this different prospect? For him, the one development is as bad as the other. What can be learnt from these observations is merely that Christian proclamation should not

p. 60 Astrology is 'a burgeoning industry in the most "advanced" countries of the west'.²⁸ Where God and man have been abandoned, humanity discovers that the cult of Satan is next: it begins to dominate whole sectors of cultural expression, as, e.g., in the rock scene. Secular society quickly becomes a victim of fear and superstition as people have lost their anchorage in a ground that does not shift with the moods of the day. These perspectives make the question 'After secularism what?' mandatory.

'Anomie', or: The Prospects for the Social Structures

The same question is well worth asking also in view of the social-structural consequences of a secularity that denies any allegiance to God. Secularism proves a terrifying solvent of social bonds. Secular sociologists today are the foremost witnesses to the quality of religion as providing both identity and bonding, as well as to the effects of the loss thereof in a largely secularized milieu. 'That religion has been a carrier of identity is axiomatic'; it also stipulates organic solidarity and looks after the 'coherent relation' of one's social and personal identity 'to a whole'.²⁹ Sociologists are aware of religious ethics as the running endorsement of the ancient teaching 'God said to them: "Beware of all iniquity" and commended to everyone his neighbour' ([Eccl. 17:12](#)).

It is even more remarkable that modern sociology, beginning with Emile Durkheim, should have chosen a term—anomie—for the secular dissolution of social bonds that figures prominently in the eschatology of the Gospel: 'Because *anomia* (lawlessness) will abound, the love of many will grow cold' ([Mt. 24:12](#)). Sociologists, philosophers and historians see this disintegration of the social network in the progress of secularization, e.g., in the field of economics where emancipation from the traditional directives of religious ethics and the renunciation of the proprietor's responsibility before God has resulted in the theory and practice of an utter individualism, with the resulting fragmentation of society and overt acts of unmitigated class warfare bringing misery over millions of p. 61 people.³⁰ Others observe the ominous rise of nationalism concurrently with the maturing of secularity, another fragmentation for which the world has already had to pay dearly in two world wars.³¹ The desacralization of religion can quickly turn into a sacralization of politics.

In more recent times we are faced with a mounting disintegration of the family, the social unit which sociologists fifteen or twenty years ago still thought to be highly resistant to the acids of secularization. But here, too, social disorganization is under way.

The overall result is 'anomie', an atomism of social life which we only now recognize as the contents of the prophecy in the arts, music, painting, and literature of the first half of the 20th century that are dominated by the same principle (can we still speak of any sizeable creation of art in the second half of this century, except in reproduction?). This *anomie* expresses itself in the abolition of moral consensus which is at first perceived as the opening up of individual freedom. Liberals like J. Stuart Mills postulate that the individual must and can be trusted to be himself responsible for his morality. But what, if others, like F. Nietzsche, come and proclaim, that not only religion, but also morality is

blindly treat all people simply as secular moderns and, on the basis of some theory of secularization, ignore their quest for the transcendent and proclivity to religion which will always resurface.

²⁸ L. Newbigin, *op. cit.*, 18.

²⁹ D. Martin, *op. cit.*, 77, 83, 88, 108, 205.

³⁰ L. Newbigin, *op. cit.*, 11, 22.

³¹ H. Lübke, *op. cit.*, 77; O. Chadwick, *op. cit.*, 131.

'opiate for the people', only designed to stifle the genius?³² How shall we then live together? Where there are no absolute values, all behaviour is arbitrary, and Adolf Eichmann and Mother Teresa only represent different individual predilections.

Nietzsche knew that secularism and anarchy go together, in the same way as faith in God and belief in structure: 'I fear we won't get rid of God as we still believe in grammar ...'³³ Only the dissolution of all structure, social or otherwise, seems to be able to give man that total autonomy that will supposedly facilitate the ultimate self-realization and gratification that he feels entitled to.

Enlightenment took individuality, a prominent boon from the inheritance of Christianity and severed it from its organic links; it turned into individualism, an uncontrollable cancerous growth, just as brotherhood is being blown up into collectivism. A paradigm of the whole development can be seen in the evolution of types in the philosophical school of the 'Young Hegelians' after their rejection of Hegel's synthesis of Christianity and culture. Each position, as it were, coagulates in the stance of an individual person, the whole presenting p. 62 an instructive genealogical tree: D. F. Strauss combines the apex of Bible criticism with the veneration of humanity, L. Feuerbach the overall criticism of religion with the worship of the I-Thou-relationship. Next the Bauer brothers are atheists and anarchists, and the end product is Julius Stirner's philosophy of 'solipsism', neatly expressed in the title of his book *The Only One and His Property*. The road that began with Enlightenment must be completed with Stirner; in its beginnings, the life of Rousseau granted already some glimpses of the end. The historian James Hitchcock shrewdly observes: Insofar as 'the ultimate demand of the secularised individual ... is absolute personal moral autonomy', 'the most fundamental disease of the modern psyche is solipsism, the need for an empty universe to be filled by an infinitely expanding self.'³⁴ Stirner's *The Only One and His Property* can also be seen as the secret of Adam Smith's Political Economy divulged. The logical conclusion, as we cannot afford to depopulate the globe for the benefit of the Only One, must be civil war, be it a cold one. One can already understand Marx's desperate scramble to evade the consequences through the proclamation of socialism.

However, the logic is not only one of theory. We are beginning to feel the palpable burden of the rising spiritual and material costs of social disintegration, of the international order as well as of the family, in terms of social expenditure which the taxpayer has to answer for. There comes the moment when people are no longer willing to bleed. Attempts at setting up new goals on the basis of this worldly human responsibility fail. The consensus of perception concerning mechanics and the 'How to' of science cannot be repeated regarding morals and the 'What For?'³⁵ This impasse of pluralism which comes to sense that no social system can exist without a basic commonality of norms, can of course be countered by growing institutionalism. More blatant than this, and sometimes replacing it, can be the emergence of an unsurmountable public desire for a new ideological re-integration, if necessary, by force. Robespierre may

³² O. Chadwick, *op. cit.*, 28ff., 232.

³³ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Werke*, K. Schlechta, Hrsg., vol. 2, Darmstadt: Wiss. Buchgesellschaft (1966), 960.

³⁴ James Hitchcock, 'Self, Jesus and God: The Roots of Religious Secularization', in: P. Williamson and K. Perrotta, eds., *Summons to Faith and Renewal Christian Renewal in a Post-Christian World*, Ann Arbor, Mich.: Servant Books 1983, 29, 35.

³⁵ H. Lübke, *op. cit.*, 70.

serve as a classical example for the reversal of secularization into sacralization.³⁶ Re-integration comes with the suggestion of a 'salutary' dictatorship which will make the decisions of renunciation and frugality for us which we can no longer bring ourselves to. It is the type of the beneficent dictator who steps in when, facing the confusion of goals and values, a majority p. 63 begins to feel: It cannot go on like this. The imminent change of mood is sometimes recognized in the shifting place of the concept of freedom. Most prominent as a slogan at the outset, it becomes obsolete, almost a *pudendum*, before the advent of the benevolent dictatorship, just as confidence in the potential of man will be replaced by the induction of fear and a feeling of powerlessness vis-à-vis of pressing social problems, serving the same ultimate purposes of the impending dictatorship.

Sociologists are only too aware of these historical consequences of 'anomie'. At the end of his study of 'Religion in Secular Society' Bryan Wilson, the Oxford sociologist, himself reveals a remarkable change of mood. All through his book he sounded as though slightly sneering at the demise of religion and fending off any sign of its meddling in public affairs again, as if to say 'the secular world can do very well without it'. Towards the end he becomes quite thoughtful. He observes that Christianity has brought into our culture 'the extension of kin-group and neighbourhood affectivity into generalized and impersonal goodwill', also 'a strong internalized sense of impersonal individual honesty', as well as 'disinterested devotion to one's calling'—all qualities which render much social control dispensable and may well have been decisive to make our present culture possible.

Now when the liturgy, the theology or the social life of the Church deteriorate, then that concerns the Church only. However, with ethics, things are different. Those moral qualities now appear 'as a type of moral capital debt which is no longer being serviced'. Therefore, 'whether indeed our own type of society will effectively maintain public order, without institutional coercion, once the still persisting influence of past religion wanes even further, remains to be seen.' What can be seen already and must be further expected, is the increase of crime and public disorder.³⁷

Wilson's colleague David Martin comments on the disorientation in the wake of European secularism: '... the extension of pluralism can create the conditions under which either the older forms of integration will try and re-establish themselves in control, or the pluralistic tendency will be pushed dangerously close to anarchy and atomism, or the monism of the Eastern European system will come to seem attractive by virtue of the ideological vacua and disintegrations which p. 64 have been created ... Anarchy in any context is frequently a prelude to totalitarian re-integration.'³⁸

The state must then take over the enforcement of morals and replace God as the guarantor of the morality of social life, i.e. the state must become totalitarian. It must try to inspire awe and reverence and must establish a secret police which if possible would know everything and could read the thoughts of the heart, just as God did, becoming the replacement of conscience as the representation of the objective moral law within the individual subject.

One can already determine what ideology would be favoured by such a state. It must be socialism or nationalism, as attempts to recover social cohesion and to legitimise

³⁶ O. H. von der Gablentz, as cited in H. Lübke, *op. cit.*, 123f.

³⁷ B. Wilson, *op. cit.*, 254, 261ff.—It is very doubtful whether the 'influx of Eastern religions' will continue to provide social bonding through 'impersonal goodwill', a sense of civil vocation and concern for the public square with which Christianity originally endowed Western civilization.

³⁸ D. Martin, *op. cit.*, 164, 89, cp. 46, 90, 188.

outward enforcement of the commonality of life, or preferably a mix of the two. The German reintegration of 1933 gives all necessary instruction.

It is thus the secular sociologists who today seem to be most aware of the threatening corollaries of secularization: less religion must logically mean more coercion. They substantiate William Penn's dictum: Nations must be governed by God, or they will be ruled by tyrants. If that is the truth that can already be gleaned from the pages of recent history, then secularism is the enemy not only of religion, but of humanity.

The problem that surfaces everywhere in these explorations is the old question of whether there can be legality without morality, and whether there can be morality without religion. Concerning the first half of the question, the secularists of a hundred years ago were convinced that one could not (as J. Stuart Mill has proposed) leave the basic moral decisions in the hands of the individual on a large scale. They therefore demanded that morality be taught in schools. Then, of course, they ran into the problem of motivation. Their materialist world view and a natural history of accidents would not support the quality of mercy. It could not rule out Auschwitz. Nietzsche derided D. F. Strauss in his later attempt to combine a naturalist world view of causality and contingency with the exhortation to humanism and brotherhood. Marxism still labours with this dilemma. Voltaire had quietly endorsed the necessity of faith as the foundation of morality when he refused to 'talk atheism in front of the maids'. Kant examined, as it were, the problem under laboratory conditions, and decided that morality must always lead to religion and rely on religion.³⁹ One p. 65 French intellectual, F. Brunetière, as Chadwick relates, went through this argument existentially in the course of his life, beginning as an atheist, but returning to the Church under the conviction that 'society cannot dispense with religion in its acceptance of moral axioms.'⁴⁰ It cannot dispense with it because responsibility, the backbone of morality, is a theological concept, and the group or the state cannot serve as its point of reference.⁴¹

Cycles of Apostasy and Conversion

In our historical survey we have met with several examples of the different stages of development, e.g. the optimism of the Enlightenment, at the turn of the 19th to the 20th century, and in the decade of the sixties. We have witnessed repeated periods of social disorientation and decay. Karl Helm thought that the mindset of secularism was an age-old problem, only compounded in Christian culture.⁴² Indeed, already the Psalmist was faced with a milieu ignoring God: 'Help, Lord; for there is no longer any that is godly; for the faithful have vanished from among the sons of men'. ([Ps. 12:2](#))

What we observe, is perhaps the 'natural' process of moral corrosion in a fallen world, a tendency to corrupt ([Eph. 4:22b](#)) which would finally tear down humanity if it was not for measures of divine preservation, disinfection, expurgation and renewal. These are measures which may be well perceived of as visible historical counterparts to the renewal of creation praised in [Psalm 104:30](#): 'You send forth your Spirit ... and You renew the face of the earth.'

³⁹ Frederick Copleston, S. J., *A History of Philosophy*, vol. 6: *Modern Philosophy*, pt. II: Kant, Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Image Books 1964, 135.

⁴⁰ O. Chadwick, *op. cit.*, 243.

⁴¹ Cp. H. H. Schrey, *op. cit.*, 130.

⁴² K. Heim, *op. cit.*, 110, 112, 123. However, Helm felt in 1930 that Christians were approaching a final battle of the spirits, *op. cit.*, 127.

These measures are of different kinds. Not only the dispersion of mankind, [Gen. 11](#), but also the calling of Abraham in [Gen. 12](#) must be seen as God's response to man's rebellious undertaking exemplified in the Tower of Babel. As we look into recent history, sometimes the secularist exultations ended in wars, of an ever more terrible scale. Perhaps there is the other possibility of a culture, a nation, a creative minority, returning to the mercy of the Eternal God. Christ's parables of the Mutinous Tenants and of the Prodigal Son seem to indicate this double outcome of secularization. We would then be faced with a cycle of apostasy and conversion as already experienced by the people of Israel at the time of the early Judges.

In the light of this, the most advanced group of people would then [p. 66](#) be those Russian intellectuals who, having gone through the empty promises of rationalism, through nihilism, the Marxist re-integration of society, finally through the utter disillusionment and mortification of an ageing Marxist society, and who are now in growing numbers turning to the orthodox Christian faith. Of them we have recently been given a first glimpse in Tatiana Goricheva's disturbing and fascinating book *Dangerous to Speak of God*.⁴³ Through their witness, western society is once more given the grace of an opportunity to choose between the Road of Light and the Road of Darkness.

III CHRISTIAN RESPONSES

Available Responses

How have Church and theology in modern times responded to their new environment of committed secularity that does not allow for any further input by religion, but thinks it can 'do without God as a working hypothesis'? There are a number of responses already tried and available, and we are in the lucky position that we can look at them with the eyes not only of the theologian, but also of the sociologists of religion, quasi outside observers who, too, have already examined the options.

Bryan Wilson distinguishes three organisational responses of Christianity to contemporary secularization, i.e. of the churches, the denominations, and the sects. He sees the mainline churches withdrawing into esoteric pastimes like reform of the liturgy when public proclamation and interaction is no longer welcome, or trying to buttress their flagging strength by way of mergers (the ecumenical movement, object of Wilson's special scorn), or bureaucratization. Denominations may have a different past, but appear to be longing for the same future that the churches are already displaying. Only the 'sects', a concept which Wilson understands in sociological instead of religious terms, i.e. as small groups sustaining a high level of commitment, identity, and life together, may as yet have a true future and a contribution to make to society in general.

P. Berger looks at the 'possibilities of religious affirmation', i.e. the intendable theological attitudes, and discusses Deductionism (the 'neo-orthodoxy', e.g., of Karl Barth), Reductionism (Bultmann) and [p. 67](#) Inductionism (Schleiermacher). We will look at these options and P. Berger's meanderings between them in due course.

First, however, we need to consider the position which Berger, perhaps due to his mainline church orientation does not set apart and describe in itself. It is the position of *withdrawal*. This attitude can be fed by the earlier Anabaptist tradition which teaches believers to separate from society and live the Christian life in the small circle of disciples,

⁴³ Tatjana Goritschewa, *Von Gott zu reden ist gefährlich. Meine Erfahrungen im Osten und im Westen* (1984), Freiburg etc.: Herder 1985.

perhaps even in physically separate settlements. Some strata in Evangelicalism hold to a similar view, only allowing for occasional forays into the world in order to save individual believers as 'brands plucked from the fire'. The same attitude can also develop as a reaction to a previous over-involvement in society which has seen high hopes of a Christianization of the world frustrated, and now withdraws into private life refusing to give any further moral leadership in the public square.

All these attitudes of withdrawal appear to forget the duality in the meaning of the biblical concept of 'world'. The prophets do not shrug their shoulders saying: atheism and destruction are the course of this world; I told you so. They enter, as it were, the cosmic courtroom as God's representatives, in order to argue with the world. Jonah has to learn mercy with Nineveh as God Himself feels it. Jesus sheds tears over Jerusalem; he does not wash his hands of its transgression. The true Christian attitude is characterized by difference, not withdrawal, and by radiation. Christians are supposed to be not only a 'light in the Lord' ([Eph. 5:8](#)), but also the 'light of the world' ([Mt. 5:14](#)) and 'lights in the world' ([Phil. 2:15](#)). In a similar vein, the view of 'snatching from peril' must be complemented by the perspective of bringing presents and gifts, 'the glory and honour of the nations' ([Ps. 72:10](#); [Rev. 21:26](#); cp. [Mt. 2:11](#)) into the Kingdom of God. Defence against secularism needs to have as its correlate the employment of all creational human abilities in the service of God ([2 Cor. 10:5](#)).

The second available attitude is the one of *surrender* to secularism. Peter Berger shares many shrewd observations of this stance for which secularism in its initial glamorous pose of self-confidence becomes not so much a contention, but an assumption, the unquestioned critical standard by which the Christian tradition is then examined and found wanting.⁴⁴ J. Hitchcock, the historian, thinks that far more damage is being done by this attitude of church dignitaries and theologians who openly espouse the cause of secularism, ridicule or destroy the tenets of the Christian faith, and nevertheless retain their respectability in church and society.⁴⁵ Berger points to the self-defeating effect of such a degree of accommodation that is equal to surrender: if a person can have all alleged benefits of modern worldliness as such, why bother to buy them with an additional Christian label?⁴⁶ That could only appeal to those who still struggle with inherited Christian sentiments, a special group that must logically die out in the near future.

Next comes the response that Berger characterizes as *Reductionism*, i.e. an accommodation of the message to the standard of secularity, at the expense of the integrity of the message. Berger here deals very energetically with the programme of demythologization set forth by Rudolf Bultmann which he sees as the 'strategy of orderly retreat' of theology before the forces of modernity. He rightly criticizes the uncritical acceptance at the outset of some assumed standards of modernity to which the biblical material must be subjected: 'secularity here is taken as (cognitively) superior'. Therefore demythologization implies secularization. With a perceptiveness and circumspection not always characteristic of modern theologians, Berger concludes that the critique of religion as human projection by Ludwig Feuerbach 'hovers over every ... programme of secularizing the religious view of reality (including the programmes of thinkers who are

⁴⁴ P. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, 167; J. Hitchcock, *op. cit.*, 28f.

⁴⁵ J. Hitchcock, *op. cit.*, 24.

⁴⁶ P. Berger, *A Rumor of Angels*, 19ff.

unaware of Feuerbach)'.⁴⁷ Close to Bultmann stands F. Gogarten who taught us to understand secularization as a legitimate development from Christian origins, as it were, 'christening' the secular as long as it does not idolize itself again which he sees as being the case in secularism as distinct from secularization.⁴⁸ Harvey Cox in his panegyric of the new freedom of 'The Secular City' took his cue from Gogarten. Both Bultmann and Gogarten concede in so many words the 'proper autonomy' of the secular, thereby showing that they have abandoned the Reformational understanding of the two Governments of God.

Gogarten's thesis, proposing the end of hostilities between Christianity and secular culture, was widely acclaimed although some of its earlier consumers like the Protestant H. Thielicke and the Catholic J. B. Metz later had second thoughts about this seemingly unlimited emancipation and authorization of the secular.⁴⁹ One could have p. 69 taken a warning from the observation that Gogarten wrote already very much on the same lines when he accommodated his theology to the advent of National Socialism.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ P. Berger, *The Heretical Imperative*, 92, 102, 99, 111; cp. *A Rumor of Angels*, 11.

⁴⁸ H. Lübbe, *op. cit.*, 120f.; P. Berger on Gogarten: *The Sacred Canopy*, (151), 165, cp. *A Rumor of Angels*, 9ff.

⁴⁹ For H. Thielicke, see his *Theologische Ethik*, vol. II, 2, Tübingen: I. C. B. Mohr 1958, 244 and 733f., for J. B. Metz: H. H. Schrey, *op. cit.*, 30, 32.

⁵⁰ At this point we may perhaps comment on the exaggerated claims of some sociologists (esp. among those representing the 'sociology of knowledge') to be able to trace, e.g., theological developments back to certain underlying socio-economic processes, as suggests Peter Berger: 'One may say, with only some exaggeration, that economic data on industrial productivity or capital expansion can predict the religious crisis of credibility in a particular society more easily than the data derived from the "history of ideas" of that society' (*The Sacred Canopy*, 151). This claim covers not only general associations, as between industrialisation and urbanisation on the one hand, and secularization on the other, but also the ability 'with embarrassing clarity' (*ib.*, 164, cp. *A Rumor of Angels*, 11) to date particular theological events like Bultmann's programme of demythologization and Gogarten's 'new attitude to the secular world' of 1953 as consequences of the West German currency reform of 1948 and the ensuing recovery of the economy. Also, Barth's attitude in 1934 as expressed in his pamphlet *No! Response to Emil Brunner* is here seen as 'appropriate' to a socio-political situation as given with the monolithic ideology of un-Christian National Socialism.

However, Karl Barth proclaimed what one might see as his antithetical stance to culture not after 1933 when it would seem 'plausible' but in 1922, in the heyday of cultural pluralism. Rudolf Bultmann wrote his essay on 'New Testament and Mythology' in 1940, under the economic restrictions of the early war years. Friedrich Gogarten developed his understanding of the Reformational Two Kingdoms doctrine as the autonomy of the secular already around 1930 before he applied it, as he did, to the events of 1933. If there is one thing 'embarrassingly clear' it is the lack of detailed coincidence between major theological advances and socio-economic factors determining them. Indeed, those advances may, as antitheses or as continuations, perhaps yet be better understood in the context of the history of theology. The study of Kant seems to remain just as important as the perception of socio-economic milieus.

In addition, one should be hesitant to look at the general history of secularization solely in terms of a one-directional determination of the (religious) superstructure by the (socio-economic) basis, or else one might be led to a vulgar historical materialism which Karl Marx himself did not espouse. It has been pointed out, for instance, that the rural provinces of the North of Germany would seem to be far more 'secular' in terms of low figures of church attendance, than the highly industrialised and urbanised land of Württemberg in the South where Pietism traditionally has a strong presence. Moreover, in the United States the 19th century, the century of industrialisation, was certainly not at the same time the century of secularization. By the middle of the 20th century Christianity seems to be no less accepted than a hundred years earlier. Of course, some sociologists, might marshal the facts in order to uphold their general findings, and denounce North American Christianity as superficial and all hollow inside, to make it as secular as the European situation. I reject that facile solution on the basis of my own observation and comparison of both continents. There are great quantitative and qualitative differences. This does not, of course, exclude the possibility that those differences disappear over time.

Peter Berger himself has become a case in point for this stance of accommodation through reductionism. In his earlier, more sociology-oriented book, *The Sacred Canopy* (1966), he had disposed of Bultmann and Tillich as quite unacceptable theological reductionists. p. 70 At that time, he criticized Schleiermacher's 'Speeches on Religion' for exactly the same reason, i.e. the 'defensiveness' vis-à-vis the seemingly definitive 'truths ... of secular reason, outside the Christian sphere', which, 'rather than the sources of his own tradition, now serve the Protestant theologian as arbiters of cognitive acceptability.' That is the same as with Bultmann: 'Theology adapts itself to reality presuppositions of modern secularised thought.'⁵¹ In his later book, *A Rumour of Angels* (1968) Berger attempted to recover ground apparently lost to the secularists, through the presentation of a quite remarkable kind of natural theology with which he, setting out from general human experiences like order, play, hope, moral damnation and humour, tried to inductively argue for transcendence. In the third book of this trilogy, *The Heretical Imperative* (1979), he is back to claiming the special religious experiences which Schleiermacher based his theology on and in general throws in his fortune with this hero and prototype of all modern liberal theology.

Berger now believes in an inductionism of 'controlled accommodation'. Although he is aware of having entered a procedure which 'all too often ends in reductionism ...'⁵² It does, in his case too. It would have been good had he also consulted Schleiermacher's *Two Letters to D. Lücke* in which the great theologian expounds with all desirable clarity that he is indeed engaged in a 'strategy of orderly retreat' from the advances of a modern world view, and willing to alleviate the Christian baggage of objects like the Old Testament as well as doctrines like creation, the divinity of Christ, the miracles in the Gospel, etc. etc. Already in his 'Speeches' Schleiermacher had, prefiguring the decisions of Bultmann and Gogarten, 'renounced' all claims of religion to co-determine anything that belonged to the fields of metaphysics and morality. Peter Berger, however, in his recent book, goes far beyond Schleiermacher. Not only does he now vindicate the modern resemblance, earlier deplored, of religious truths and consumer articles in a super-market, maintaining that we moderns must 'pick and choose' (whence *The Heretical Imperative*),—he now also proposes to stock the products of the other religions ('My understanding of "ecumenicity" has expanded very greatly'⁵³), and he does so even if it means that he can no longer carry items like the 'once-and-for-all' and the 'no-other-name', i.e. the exclusive attributes of Jesus. Give up historical Christianity, retain religion—that is the outcome of 'controlled accommodation'. p. 71

In view of this, one is almost eager to reassess the virtues of Berger's further model of 'Deductionism' (representing Karl Barth and 'neo-orthodoxy') and to explore James Hitchcock's statement that attempts by the church to mollify usually have the opposite effect, 'while paradoxically a firm purpose ... often makes the church more credible even in the eyes of the skeptic'.⁵⁴

Desirable Responses

Having surveyed the main specimens of available responses, we would like, in conclusion, to add a few remarks concerning further desirable responses.

⁵¹ P. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, 159, 167; also: *A Rumor of Angels*, 9.

⁵² P. Berger, *The Heretical Imperative*, 59.

⁵³ P. Berger, *The Heretical Imperative*, X.

⁵⁴ J. Hitchcock, *op. cit.*, 28f.

1. It seems to be necessary to expose the mechanism of secularization and secularism so as to reveal their inherent pitfalls. The recognition of a diffuse and hidden peril is of immense value. It needs to be said that secularism is the adversary of the Gospel, that it will never engender love of God and love of neighbour, but only love of self, and that there is no future for faith in its appeasement. Such an analysis of secularism and its working can act like a necessary disinfectant.

2. However, we propose at the same time that a 'response' should not merely be shaped by the analysis of the opponent, be it in terms of accommodation or rejection. The 'response' should in no way be a reaction, not determined by the milieu but by the Word of God. Taking example from Barth's *Theological Existence Today* in the political crisis situation of Germany in 1933; Christian proclamation must in the last analysis go on 'as if nothing had happened'. Accommodation is strictly a matter of form of speech whereas the difference of the contents of the message, the incommensurability of the Gospel with any secular epistemology, must be upheld. The church, furthermore, must not withdraw from the world but, according to its marching orders in the New Testament, aim for holy living even in unholy places ([Eph. 4:17ff.](#); [Tit. 2:12ff.](#)).

3. On this basis, three transactions are necessary to sustain Christian identity and outreach: prayer, sustenance of the fellowship, and proclamation.

(a) The first task is to strengthen the centre of Christian identity, i.e., a person's relationship with God. This is done through prayer. Prayer is the expression of respect for, and love of, God, clearly the extreme [p. 72](#) antithesis to secularism. In prayer, the Christian holds up humanity and the course it is taking.

Prayer engenders steadfastness and independence and yields the necessary orientation. The German author Ernst Jünger noted in the days of the turbulent dissolution of the National-Socialist Empire: 'What could one recommend to help people, especially simple people, to avoid conformism with, and standardization by the system? Nothing but prayer. This is the point of leverage, even for the humblest ... It yields uncommon gain and tremendous sovereignty. This is also true apart from all theology. In situations where the most clever ones fail and the most courageous look in vain for ways out, you sometimes see a man quietly counsel the right and do what is good. You can trust that that is a person who prays.'⁵⁵ Prayer helps to recover perspective and teaches us what Os Guinness has called 'a basic requirement of contemporary discipleship': to be 'ready to "think globally but act locally"'.⁵⁶ Perspective comes as a fruit of perceptive prayer and is as such the prerequisite of ministry to fellow believers and to the world.

Moreover, prayer needs to be followed up ([2 Tim. 2:19!](#)) by a life of sanctification, by the willingness to 'live soberly, righteously, and godly in this world' ([Tit. 2:12](#)), i.e. to live differently from the rest, to stick to God's absolute moral standards and not yield to general permissiveness, to live conscientiously, and yet not turn one's back on humanity, to withdraw from evil although not from people. There can be no Christian life without the struggle against secularism, a struggle against the will to autonomy and the forgetfulness of the things of God, which characterizes the *Zeitgeist*, and the daily battle to awaken to Him and to the hallowing of His name.

(b) *Diligite dominum agite viriliter, et confortetur cor vestrum*, 'love God, act bravely, and He shall strengthen your hearts', is how the Vulgate translates [Ps. 31:24f.](#) The whole psalm speaks confidently of the possibility of courageous action in an alien environment and reminds one of Paul's words of encouragement for his brethren in [1 Cor. 15:58](#):

⁵⁵ Ernst Jünger, *Strahlungen III*, München: dtv 1966, 14, cp. 27f.

⁵⁶ Os Guinness, *The Gravedigger File. Papers on the Subversion of the Church*, Downers Grove, Ill.: Intearsity Press 1983, 233.

‘Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, inasmuch as you know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.’ The second task, combining the interests of identity and outreach, concerns the ‘strengthening of the brethren’ ([Luke 22:32](#); [Acts 14:22](#) etc.). It endeavours to ‘fan the flame where you find it’, to support any [p. 73](#) discernible movement in the direction of faith, and to strengthen Christian commitment.

This will find expression in the conscious cultivation of cell groups, small circles which support those purposes. Bryan Wilson felt that any good that might still come from religion would come from ‘the religion of the sects’ by which he seems to have meant the unpolluted Christianity of small groups of committed people not associated with the churches. He may have underestimated the network of such groups *within* today’s churches and denominations, successors of the *ecclesiola in ecclesia* of early Pietism and of Wesley’s ‘bands’, which successfully countered institutional torpor and the dissolution of social bonding. David Martin seems to have been fascinated with the widereaching effects of Haugeanism, the corresponding movement within the Norwegian church.⁵⁷ Faith here proves once more not only the guarantor, but the source of salutary human relationships.

(c) Finally, proclamation. This concerns Christian outreach. In the first place, it is the calm re-announcement of the reality of God, both of his righteousness and mercy, to a secularity forgetful of these facts. In a secular environment religion may perhaps still be allowed as a topic, but the question of God (like death) has almost become a *pudendum*. It is of utmost importance that individuals, as well as society as such, be faced, in a matter-of-fact way, with the question of its relationship to God. It is the task of the Church, to announce God again to ‘a crooked and perverse generation’ ([Phil. 2:15](#)). The Church is to remind the world that God ‘has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained’ ([Acts 17:31](#)) and that this Man, Jesus Christ of Nazareth, at the same time is the one ground of our salvation. We therefore support Bishop Newbigin’s plea for ‘a genuinely missionary approach to post-Enlightenment culture’.⁵⁸

In the pursuit of these tasks the Church will be the light of the house ([Mt. 5:15](#)) which she shares with the rest of humanity. The Church will act like leaven in the dough, and resemble the mustard in its surprisingly abundant growth, making it the nesting-place for many. In the pursuit of these tasks, as well as in the work of their creational callings, Christians will not only ‘help to build the temple of the Lord’ ([Zech. 6:15](#)), but, in the meantime, also unwittingly participate in God’s own work of sustainment of His creation.

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⁵⁷ D. Martin, *op. cit.*, 34, 69.

⁵⁸ L. Newbigin, *op. cit.*, 31f. (without the subsequent confusion created by the author’s call for dialogue that can lead to conversion either way).