

Faith In A Secular Age

This book compares secularity in societies not shaped by Western Christianity, particularly in Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa.

The return to religion has perhaps become the dominant cliché of contemporary theory, which rarely offers anything more than an exaggerated echo of a political reality dominated by religious war. Somehow, the secular age seems to have been replaced by a new era, where political action flows directly from metaphysical conflict. The Faith of the Faithless asks how we might respond. Following Critchley's *Ininitely Demanding*, this new book builds on its philosophical and political framework, also venturing into the questions of faith, love, religion and violence. Should we defend a version of secularism and quietly accept the slide into a form of theism—or is there another way? From Rousseau's politics and religion to the return to St. Paul in Taubes, Agamben and Badiou, via explorations of politics and original sin in the work of Schmitt and John Gray, Critchley examines whether there can be a faith of the faithless, a belief for unbelievers. Expanding on his debate with Slavoj Žižek, Critchley concludes with a meditation on the question of violence, and the limits of non-violence.

Churches often realize they need to change. But if they're not careful, the way they change can hurt more than help. In this culmination of his well-received *Ministry in a Secular Age* trilogy, leading practical theologian Andrew Root offers a new paradigm for understanding the congregation in contemporary ministry. He articulates why congregations feel pressured by the speed of change in modern life and encourages an approach that doesn't fall into the negative traps of our secular age. Living in late modernity means our lives are constantly accelerated,

and calls for change in the church often support this call to speed up. Root asserts that the recent push toward innovation in churches has led to an acceleration of congregational life that strips the sacred out of time. Many congregations are simply unable to keep up, which leads to burnout and depression. When things move too fast, we feel alienated from life and the voice of a living God. The *Congregation in a Secular Age* calls congregations to reimagine what change is and how to live into this future, helping them move from relevance to resonance. Although historians have suggested for some time that we move away from the assumption of a necessary clash between science and religion, the conflict narrative persists in contemporary discourse. But why? And how do we really know what people actually think about evolutionary science, let alone the many and varied ways in which it might relate to individual belief? In this multidisciplinary volume, experts in history and philosophy of science, oral history, sociology of religion, social psychology, and science communication and public engagement look beyond two warring systems of thought. They consider a far more complex, multifaceted, and distinctly more interesting picture of how differing groups along a spectrum of worldviews—including atheistic, agnostic, and faith groups—relate to and form the ongoing narrative of a necessary clash between evolution and faith. By ascribing agency to the public, from the nineteenth century to the present and across Canada and the United Kingdom, this volume offers a much more nuanced analysis of people's perceptions about the relationship between evolutionary science, religion, and personal belief, one that better elucidates the complexities not only of that relationship but of actual lived experience.

The place of religion in society has changed profoundly in the last few centuries, particularly in the West. In what will be a defining book for our time, Taylor takes up the question of what

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these changes mean, and what, precisely, happens when a society becomes one in which faith is only one human possibility among others.

Strict enforcement of unreasonable contracts can produce outrageous consequences. Courts of justice should have the means of avoiding them.

Hope in a Secular Age
Deconstruction, Negative Theology and the Future of Faith
Cambridge University Press

In his recent writings on religion and secularization, Habermas has challenged reason to clarify its relation to religious experience and to engage religions in a constructive dialogue. Given the global challenges facing humanity, nothing is more dangerous than the refusal to communicate that we encounter today in different forms of religious and ideological fundamentalism.

Habermas argues that in order to engage in this dialogue, two conditions must be met: religion must accept the authority of secular reason as the fallible results of the sciences and the universalistic egalitarianism in law and morality; and conversely, secular reason must not set itself up as the judge concerning truths of faith. This argument was developed in part as a reaction to the conception of the relation between faith and reason formulated by Pope Benedict XVI in his 2006 Regensburg address. In 2007 Habermas conducted a debate, under the title 'An Awareness of What Is Missing', with philosophers from the Jesuit School for Philosophy in Munich. This volume includes Habermas's essay, the contributions of his interlocutors and Habermas's reply to them. It will be indispensable reading for anyone who wishes to understand one of the most urgent and intractable issues of our time.

In this challenging but hopeful new book, *Church, Faith, Future: What We Face, What We Can Do*, Father Louis J. Cameli renders a carefully composed portrait of the church

in North America today. Drawing on philosophy, history, cultural analysis, and sociology, he offers a sobering picture of where church and faith stand in our society and where they seem to be headed. Identifying several possible ways forward, Fr. Cameli points out the way he sees as the most promising and most faithful to Catholic tradition. In a fascinating afterword to the book, Cardinal Blase Cupich enters into dialogue with Fr. Cameli's thinking, describing how the Archdiocese of Chicago has begun to address the issues and the directions indicated.

Andrew Root's well-received *Ministry in a Secular Age* trilogy offers a developed practical theology that uniquely attends to divine action. The three volumes engage with Charles Taylor's articulation of our cultural context and the challenge he raises for Christian life in a Western world that has found divine action increasingly unbelievable. This project provides not only a needed and deep dialogue with the issues Taylor presents but also offers a constructive vision for confronting Taylor's challenge. In *Faith Formation in a Secular Age*, Root provides an alternative take on the issue of youth drifting away from the church and articulates how faith can be formed in our secular age. Through an abundance of examples, *The Pastor in a Secular Age* explores how pastors have both perpetuated and responded to our secular age, and provides a new vision for pastoral ministry today. *The Congregation in a Secular Age* articulates why it is so hard for congregations to change and encourages an approach that doesn't fall into the negative traps of our secular age.

The loss or disaffiliation of young adults is a much-discussed topic in churches today. Many faith-formation programs focus on keeping the young, believing the youthful spirit will save the church. But do these programs have more to do with an obsession with youthfulness than with helping young people encounter the living God? Questioning the search for new or improved faith-formation programs, leading practical theologian Andrew Root offers an alternative take on the issue of youth drifting away from the church and articulates how faith can be formed in our secular age. He offers a theology of faith constructed from a rich cultural conversation, providing a deeper understanding of the phenomena of the "nones" and "moralistic therapeutic deism." Root helps readers understand why forming faith is so hard in our context and shows that what we have lost is not the ability to keep people connected to our churches but an imagination for how and where God could be present in their lives. He considers what faith is and what steps we can take to move into it, exploring a Pauline concept of faith as encounter with divine action.

Uncertainty is the essence of the human condition, and nothing is more uncertain than God. Yet passions run hot when it comes to God, both among believers and non-believers. *God is a Question, Not an Answer* aims to unsettle readers on both sides of the issue. William Irwin argues that because belief occurs along a continuum of doubt and we can never reach full certainty, believers and non-believers can find common ground in uncertainty. Beginning with the questions of what we mean when we talk

about God and faith, Irwin shows that from a philosophical perspective, the tendency to doubt is a virtue, and from a religious perspective there is no faith without doubt. Rather than avoid uncertainty as an uncomfortable state of emotional despair, we should embrace it as an ennobling part of the human condition. We do not have to agree about the existence of God, but we do need to practice intellectual humility and learn to see doubt as a gift. By engaging in civil discourse we can see those who disagree with us as not only fully human but capable of teaching us something.

In *Believing Again* Roger Lundin brilliantly explores the cultural consequences of the rather sudden nineteenth-century emergence of unbelief as a widespread social and intellectual option in the English-speaking world. / Lundin's narrative focuses on key poets and novelists from the past two centuries Dostoevsky, Dickinson, Melville, Auden, and more showing how they portray the modern mind and heart balancing between belief and unbelief. Lundin engages these literary luminaries through chapters on a series of vital subjects, from history and interpretation to beauty and memory. Such theologians as Barth and Balthasar also enter the fray, facing the challenge of modern unbelief with a creative brilliance that has gone largely unnoticed outside the world of faith. Lundin's *Believing Again* is a beautifully written, erudite examination of the drama and dynamics of belief in the modern world. In *Believing Again* Roger Lundin brilliantly explores the cultural consequences of the rather sudden nineteenth-century emergence of unbelief as a widespread social and intellectual option in the English-speaking world.

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Probably no book published in the last decade has been so ambitious as Charles Taylor's *A Secular Age*. He seeks nothing less than to account for the spread of secularism and decline of faith in the last 500 years. Now a remarkable roster of writers—including Carl Trueman, Michael Horton, and Jen Pollock Michel—considers Taylor's insights for the church's life and mission, covering everything from healthcare to liturgy to pop culture and politics. Nothing is easy about faith today. But endurance produces character, and character produces hope, even in our secular age.

How can one explain the resurgence of religion, even in a western context of rationality, postmodernity and scientific endeavour? The persistence of religious expression has compelled even diehard secularists, or proponents of the 'secularization thesis', to rethink their positions. Jonathan Benthall explains precisely why societies are not

bound to embrace western liberal rationality as an evolutionary inevitability. He shows that the opposite is true: that where a secular society represses the religious imagination, the human predisposition to religion will in the end break out in surprising, apparently secular, modes and outlets. Concentrating on what he calls 'para-religion', a kind of secular spirituality that manifests itself within movements and organisations who consider themselves motivated by wholly rational considerations, Benthall uncovers a paradox: despite themselves, they are haunted by the shadow of irrationality. Arguing that humanitarianism, environmentalism, the animal rights movement, popular archaeology and anthropology all have 'religiod' aspects, his startling conclusion is that religion, rather than coming 'back', in fact never went away. A human universal, the 'religious inclination' underlies the fabric of who we are, and is essential for the healthy functioning of any society.

In *Faith Formation in a Secular Age*, the first book in his *Ministry in a Secular Age* trilogy, Andrew Root offered an alternative take on the issue of youth drifting away from the church and articulated how faith can be formed in our secular age. In *The Pastor in a Secular Age*, Root explores how this secular age has impacted the identity and practice of the pastor, obscuring his or her core vocation: to call and assist others into the experience of ministry. Using examples of pastors throughout history--from Augustine and Jonathan Edwards to Martin Luther King Jr. and Nadia Bolz-Weber--Root shows how pastors have both perpetuated and responded to our secular

age. Root turns to Old Testament texts and to the theology of Robert Jenson to explain how pastors can regain the important role of attending to people's experiences of divine action, offering a new vision for pastoral ministry today.

How should one proclaim of the gospel of Jesus Christ in a secular age? Seeking to infuse apologetics with an appeal to the imagination, the aesthetic, and the affective, Justin Bailey engages with two examples of those who have done apologetics through the imagination: George MacDonald and Marilynne Robinson.

Churches often realize they need to change. But if they're not careful, the way they change can hurt more than help. In this culmination of his well-received Ministry in a Secular Age trilogy, leading practical theologian Andrew Root offers a new paradigm for understanding the congregation in contemporary ministry. He articulates why it is so hard for congregations to change and encourages an approach that doesn't fall into the negative traps of our secular age. Living in late modernity means our lives are constantly accelerated, and calls for change in the church often support this call to speed up. Root asserts that the recent push toward innovation in churches has led to an acceleration of congregational life that strips the sacred out of time. Many congregations are simply unable to keep up, which leads to burnout and depression. When things move too fast, we feel alienated from life and the voice of a living God. This book calls congregations to reimagine what change is and how to live into this future, helping them move from relevance to resonance.

Uses premodern theology and postmodern theory to show the endurance of religious and political commitments through the practice of hope.

Is religion a factor in initiating interstate armed conflict, and do different religions have different

effects? Breaking new ground in political science, this book explores these questions both qualitatively and quantitatively, concluding that the answer is yes. Previous studies have focused on conflict within states or interstate aggression with overtly religious motivations; in contrast, Brown shows how religion affects states' propensities to militarize even disputes that are not religious in nature. Different religions are shown to have different influences on those propensities, and those influences are linked to the war ethics inculcated in those religions. The book analyses and classifies war ethics contained in religious scripture and other religious classics, teachings of religions' contemporary epistemic communities, and religions' historical narratives. Using data from the new Religious Characteristics of States dataset project, qualitative studies are combined with empirical measurements of governments' institutional preferences and populations' cultures. This book will provide interesting insights to scholars and researchers in international security studies, political science, international law, sociology, and religious studies.

This title was first published in 2001. *Proclaiming the Gospel in a Secular Age* explores how a religion, Christian or any other focussing on a personal God, may be communicated to people in a secular age. With people uninterested, uninformed or unbelieving in the Godward dimension and in any particular religious tradition, David Attfield claims that appropriate communication is essential. Before direct communication can begin some background conditions in the targeted population must be satisfied, and communication then requires a series of stages. This book offers an examination of seven particular species for communication: evangelism; inter-faith dialogue; nurture of adults; nurture of children; religious education in schools; the academic study of religion; professional ministerial formation. David

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Attfeld offers fresh insights and practical suggestions which will be of interest to a wide-range of students, academics and those in ministerial training and practice.

This book examines the post-secular idea of 'religion for non-believers'. The new form of unbelief which is dubbed as 'tourist atheism' is not based on absolute rejection of religion as a 'dangerous illusion' or 'mere prejudice'. Tourist atheists instead consider religion as a cultural heritage and a way of seeking perfection. What are the origins of these new forms of atheism? What are the implications of the emergence of a type of atheism which is more open toward religious teachings, rituals, arts, and world views? Hashemi argues that public intellectuals must consider that it is a sign of a post-secular age in which believers and non-believers go beyond mere tolerance and engage in a creative process of co-practice and co-working.

A New York Times bestselling and widely admired Catholic writer explores how we can retrieve transcendent faith in modern times Critically acclaimed and bestselling author James Carroll has explored every aspect of Christianity, faith, and Jesus Christ except this central one: What can we believe about—and how can we believe in—Jesus in the twenty-first century in light of the Holocaust and other atrocities of the twentieth century and the drift from religion that followed? What Carroll has discovered through decades of writing and lecturing is that he is far from alone in clinging to a received memory of Jesus that separates him from his crucial identity as a Jew, and therefore as a human. Yet if Jesus was not taken as divine, he would be of no interest to us. What can that mean now? Paradoxically, the key is his permanent Jewishness. No Christian himself, Jesus actually transcends Christianity. Drawing on both a wide range of scholarship as well as his own acute searching as a believer, Carroll takes a

fresh look at the most familiar narratives of all—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Far from another book about the “historical Jesus,” he takes the challenges of science and contemporary philosophy seriously. He retrieves the power of Jesus’ profound ordinariness, as an answer to his own last question—what is the future of Jesus Christ?—as the key to a renewal of faith.

Fewer Canadians identify with a religion, believe in a god, or attend weekly religious services than in past decades. What explains higher and lower levels of religiosity? Is secularization a myth or reality? What impact does religiosity or secularity have on a society’s social and civil fabric? In *The Meaning of Sunday*, Joel Thiessen addresses these questions by weaving together narratives from interviews with members of both religious and secular communities. Exploring the meanings and motivations behind people’s religious beliefs and behaviours, the book features discussions with three groups of people: those who attend religious services weekly, those who attend services mainly for religious holidays and rites of passage, and those who do not identify with any religious group and never attend religious services. Interview responses show that religiosity levels correlate to one’s personal experiences with the supernatural, religious organizations, and social ties with those who either encourage or discourage religious identification, belief, or practice. Concluding that the demand for religion is waning regardless of what religious groups include in their programs, Thiessen suggests that, apart from some initial social and civic concern, Canadian society may be just fine without it. Testing two dominant theories in the sociology of religion - secularization and rational choice theory - *The Meaning of Sunday* provides in-depth qualitative research on people’s “lived religion” and contributes to a major ongoing debate concerning the nature and importance of

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religion in contemporary society.

The practice of offering reasons for the Christian faith, or apologetics, strikes many unbelievers today as offensive, an attempt to proselytize, while Christians themselves often view apologetics as unsophisticated or even faith-undermining. After all, shouldn't a believer focus on presenting the gospel rather than attempting to argue people to belief? In *Telling a Better Story*, author Joshua Chatraw presents a new and better way to do apologetics, an inside-out approach that is attuned to our late-modern moment and respectful of unbelievers, all the while remaining focused on Jesus. With chapters on cultural understanding, dealing with the difficult issues, and presenting Jesus in a holistic, contextual manner, *Telling a Better Story* offers a roadmap to effective apologetics both for experienced apologists and those new to sharing their faith with others.

Pastor, politician, and Dutch Neo-Calvinist theologian Abraham Kuyper's lectures on the role of Christian faith in politics, science, and art have become a touchstone of contemporary Reformed theology. Revisiting these lectures, Jessica and Robert Joustra bring together theologians, historians, scientists, and others to consider Kuyper's ongoing importance and complex legacy for today.

In these essays Charles Taylor turns to those things not fully imagined or avenues not wholly explored in his epochal *A Secular Age*.

A groundbreaking argument for recovering Jesus for Christian ethics.

How do contemporary audiences engage with sacred music and what are its effects?

Why do so many evangelicals follow leaders with dubious credentials when they have other options in their own faith? Exploring intellectual authority within evangelicalism, the authors

reveal how the concept of anointing—being chosen by God to speak for him—established a conservative evangelical leadership isolated from secular arts and sciences.

Drawn from the eponymous blog essays on faith, culture, and lives of Christian discipleship by young Jesuit priests and seminarians for young adult seekers.

The plight of religious minorities in the Middle East is often attributed to the failure of secularism to take root in the region. *Religious Difference in a Secular Age* challenges this assessment by examining four cornerstones of secularism—political and civil equality, minority rights, religious freedom, and the legal separation of private and public domains. Drawing on her extensive fieldwork in Egypt with Coptic Orthodox Christians and Bahais—religious minorities in a predominantly Muslim country—Saba Mahmood shows how modern secular governance has exacerbated religious tensions and inequalities rather than reduced them. Tracing the historical career of secular legal concepts in the colonial and postcolonial Middle East, she explores how contradictions at the very heart of political secularism have aggravated and amplified existing forms of Islamic hierarchy, bringing minority relations in Egypt to a new historical impasse. Through a close examination of Egyptian court cases and constitutional debates about minority rights, conflicts around family law, and controversies over freedom of expression, Mahmood invites us to reflect on the entwined histories of secularism in the Middle East and Europe. A provocative work of scholarship, *Religious Difference in a Secular Age* challenges us to rethink the promise and limits of the secular ideal of religious equality.

How (Not) to Be Secular is what Jamie Smith calls "your hitchhiker's guide to the present" -- it is both a reading guide to Charles Taylor's monumental work *A*

Secular Age and philosophical guidance on how we might learn to live in our times. Taylor's landmark book *A Secular Age* (2007) provides a monumental, incisive analysis of what it means to live in the post-Christian present -- a pluralist world of competing beliefs and growing unbelief. Jamie Smith's book is a compact field guide to Taylor's insightful study of the secular, making that very significant but daunting work accessible to a wide array of readers. Even more, though, Smith's *How (Not) to Be Secular* is a practical philosophical guidebook, a kind of how-to manual on how to live in our secular age. It ultimately offers us an adventure in self-understanding and maps out a way to get our bearings in today's secular culture, no matter who "we" are -- whether believers or skeptics, devout or doubting, self-assured or puzzled and confused. This is a book for any thinking person to chew on.

You are what you love. But you might not love what you think. In this book, award-winning author James K. A. Smith shows that who and what we worship fundamentally shape our hearts. And while we desire to shape culture, we are not often aware of how culture shapes us. We might not realize the ways our hearts are being taught to love rival gods instead of the One for whom we were made. Smith helps readers recognize the formative power of culture and the transformative possibilities of Christian practices. He explains that worship is the

"imagination station" that incubates our loves and longings so that our cultural endeavors are indexed toward God and his kingdom. This is why the church and worshiping in a local community of believers should be the hub and heart of Christian formation and discipleship. Following the publication of his influential work *Desiring the Kingdom*, Smith received numerous requests from pastors and leaders for a more accessible version of that book's content. No mere abridgment, this new book draws on years of Smith's popular presentations on the ideas in *Desiring the Kingdom* to offer a fresh, bottom-up rearticulation. The author creatively uses film, literature, and music illustrations to engage readers and includes new material on marriage, family, youth ministry, and faith and work. He also suggests individual and communal practices for shaping the Christian life.

Fading Faith Cronicles the decline of faith world-wide as well as America and predicts that America is travelling the same path into secularism that has been travelled by all other developed nations of the world.

When we're young, it's easy to believe in the supernatural. But as we grow older, even as Christians who believe in the resurrection, we live as if reality is merely what we can see. Mike Cosper has discovered disciplines that awaken the possibility of living again in an enchanted world. With thoughtful practices woven

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throughout, this book will feed your soul and help you recapture the wonder of your Christian walk.

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