



The Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization

The Whole Church taking the Whole Gospel to the Whole World

Lausanne Occasional Paper 8 Christian Witness to Secularized People

The Lausanne Occasional Papers (LOPs) are historically important documents that have emerged from global consultations involving widely recognized evangelical leaders. The LOPs have been placed in the Lausanne Website to make more accessible and understandable the historical context and development of the various aspects of world evangelization.

Report of the Consultation on World Evangelization

Mini-Consultation on Reaching Secularists

held in Pattaya, Thailand from 16-27 June 1980

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Prefatory Note

This report, *Christian Witness to Secularized People*, is one of a series of Lausanne Occasional Papers (LOPs) emerging from the historic [Consultation on World Evangelization \(COWE\)](#) held in Pattaya, Thailand, in June 1980. The report was drafted by members of the "Mini-Consultation on Reaching Secularists" under the chairmanship of Dr. Ludvig Munthe, who also served as International Co-ordinator of the pre-COWE study groups on Secularists.

The major part of this report went through a draft and a revised draft, which involved all members of the mini-consultation. It was also submitted to a wider "sub-plenary" group for comment, but the responsibility for the final text rests with the mini-consultation and its chairman.

The report is released with the prayer and hope that it will stimulate the church and individual members in reaching this large segment of the population.

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Introduction

This document focuses primarily on strategy for reaching the secularized with the gospel. Initially, we shall attempt a broad definition of the concepts of "secularization" and "secular" in order to identify the target groups. Moreover, we have, in the work of the groups, found that not only the world but also often the church, both in its theology and view of missions, has been influenced by the process of secularization that has been going on in society at large.

We have also discovered that secularization is a phenomenon confronting not only the Christian religion, but also, to a great extent, other religions as their adherents are faced with a modern secular culture or ideology. Hence, this report is not only concerned with the "post-Christian" culture, but also with the increasing number of "de-religionized" people in the Second and Third World. Secularization is not only a Western phenomenon; it is also a universal phenomenon. In our opinion, some of the points of view presented in this report may be applied in quite different secularized cultural contexts.

1. Definitions and Nature of Secularization

- a. *Definitions*

Secular people live without awareness of and reference to God and his church. Modern culture has replaced God as the basis for behaviour, decisions, and moral values. God and his people are felt to be irrelevant to real life.

To try to express what this definition means in practical terms, we shall present three mini-cameos of what secularists look like on a sliding scaleâ€”from partial, unconscious, to conscious secularism.

Example 1: A secularized church member is one who has made a profession of faith in Christ and usually maintains some formal relationship to the church. In his manner of life, however, he either ignores consciously or unconsciouslyâ€”or seeks to explain awayâ€”the biblical imperatives. The practical result is a manner of life in which God is essentially absent from the major decisions being made. He does not obey God, and Christ is not Lord of all of his life. The result is a way of life which is not discernibly different from that of the prevailing culture.

Example IIa: An unconscious secularist has no real contact with the church. He has no awareness of God. Even if there is a God, he is irrelevant to life. Such an unconscious secularist might be someone who lives in a suburb of a large Brazilian city. He went to college, has a good job, and a comfortable home. He travels for the company internationally. He is now in the midst of "the male menopause." He and his wife have little in common. Younger, attractive women no longer notice him. His idols are crumbling between his fingers. He gives no thought to God and the church.

Example IIb: A different example of an unconscious secularist whose world is entirely limited to the here-and-now world of reality is a Londoner living with a large family in the poor area of London. Her work is slow, tedious, and poorly paid. She thinks little about the past. Her contact with the church was some school religion. God and religion are irrelevant to her present struggles. She thinks no further than the next meal, next week's wages, and the rent.

Example III: A classic secularist sees the world and his life in terms of the here and now. He may often be a sensualist following the playboy philosophy of eat, drink, and be merry. Life is to be enjoyed in the here and now, for that is all there is. He might go a stage further and dismiss God and religion and actively seek to prove the irrelevance of God for morality and human life. The political activist, annoyed by the activities of Christian students, might engage in a systematic campaign to discredit them and their message. Usually the secular activist has some alternative solution to the world's problems (e.g., communism or materialism).

It is clear that the term "secular" covers a wide selection of people whose only common characteristic is the feeling that life is to be understood simply in the here and now in our modern culture. The danger in talk of the secular is to pretend that it is something out there rather than something which affects us all, including the church.

The secular effect on the church may be typified in two waysâ€”either the picture of the essentially nominal Christian who does not realise or accept the need for obedience to Christ as Lord, or it may be that the church herself has fallen uncritically into a pattern of life and activity which makes it indistinguishable from the world it is supposed to challenge and reach. Modern methods of education, business, marketing, and communication may have a vital place in our ministry; but too often we adopt them uncritically and allow the world to force us into its mould.

Secular people may still look "religious" in much that they do, but they have their own gods such as money, sex, materialism, success, power, social acceptance, or their own philosophy. Since these gods are of man's own making and merely outward symbols, his allegiance to or dependence on them may changeâ€”while all the time his fundamental allegiance to himself remains. By changing his symbols or revising his goals, he tries to avoid confrontation with the powerlessness of his gods and his own personal bankruptcy apart from God.

The modern support for football teams might help our understanding here. There is the team which is the basic ultimate valueâ€”"my team, right or wrong, in sickness or in health, in success or in failure. If it wins, then the fan is transported with delight; if it loses, he is in the depths of despair. The football game even has its own liturgy. The fan and the players must wear the correct gearâ€”the liturgical dress matters. There are team songs which must be sung, especially when winning. Great sums of money are spent in supporting the team and in buying tokens and souvenirs of the players and games. The players themselves can do no wrong and are held to possess magic qualities. A recent sign on the terraces of Liverpool football ground affirmed of one of their star players: "Kenny Dalglish walks on water."

This secular attitude may be *conscious* or *unconscious*. We may simply pick it up as we do the air we breathe. We are all the products of the modern world and cultures in which we live, move, and have our being. These cultures are not without moral values. It is rather that those values are not seen as stemming from and being empowered by God. Lacking a sense of the divine, we substitute both the good and the bad from our culture without judging it according to the mind of Christ.

There are societies (e.g., in countries of the communist bloc) where, after many years of official atheistic propaganda and suppression of any forms of religion, *secularization* has reached its highest level. The vast majority of these people call themselves atheists and have very little or no awareness of any spiritual being and have no chance to meet a Christian. Because of the special conditions, problems, mentality, and needs of those people, reaching them requires approaches, methods, and means somewhat different than those described in this paper.

b. Secularism and Secularization

It is important to make some formal definitions and to have some awareness of the sociology of the secular process. The following description is intended to give some intellectual background to the crucial importance of reaching secularized men and women. In approaching the subject of the "secular," we were all too conscious of the popular confusion between secularism and secularization.

Secularism is a philosophy. It has been defined as a system which rejects all forms of religious faith and worship, and accepts only the facts and influences derived from the present life. The secularist is thus a person who is humanist in attitude and is anti-religious. His view of God, man, and morality is reductionist. He is someone "selling" a particular attitude to life and a way of life which rejects all that Christianity stands for and proclaims.

Secularization, on the other hand, is essentially a process which has happened and is largely in the Western world. It is a process by which religious thinking, practice, and institutions lose their social significance. It is the transition from the beliefs, activities, and institutions presupposing convictions of a traditionally Christian kind to beliefs, activities, and institutions of an agnostic and/or atheistic kind.

Secularity, as a mood, a set of assumptions, and a way of viewing the world and life was introduced *de facto* into Western culture with the decline and fall of Christendom. The Renaissance, the so-called "Enlightenment," and the Industrial Revolution were major events which accelerated the secularization initiated by Christendom's decline, and the process was further amplified by later widespread urbanization.

Though it was primarily a cultural phenomenon, affecting human beings at an unconscious level, the academy and prominent thinkers played their part. Such figures as Newton, Darwin, Marx, and Freud permitted people to perceive the universe, the origin of humans, the goal of history, and even religious experience, differently than they had before. Such figures as G. J. Holyoake began crystalizing the new pervading assumptions of secular culture and propagating the new views through "societies."

It should be mentioned that Christianity is one of the *causes* of the secularization of pre-Christian religions. By exposing the natural world as *not* inhabited by spirits, Christianity has helped to free people in the West to study and subdue the natural order, and, by "power encounters," has frequently stripped the tribal religions of the perceived reality of their spirits, ghosts, and demons. Also such phenomena as the Reformation contributed to the withdrawal of some areas of life from the church of Christendom, and thus to the secularization of those areas.

c. The Challenge of Modernity

We live in the "modern" world and talk of "modern" man and woman. What is this modernity, particularly in terms of its effect on religion? The modern culture and consciousness are the result of human interaction with the carriers of modernity. "The primary carriers are the capitalist market

economy and the centralised bureaucratic state; and among secondary carriers the new industrial technology, rapid urbanisation, population growth, and the mass media are the most important." It is vital that these forms of modernity are matched with awareness of the *content* of modernity. This may be seen clearly in a number of often-competing philosophies which affect, and even control, the individual's and the group's mind-set and presuppositional framework.

There is *existentialist* thought with its emphasis on the individual, the absurdity of everything, both in its individuality and its universality, and a stress on the power of the will.

There is the utilitarian philosophy, which emphasises the individual and corporate search for happiness and pleasure, the pragmatic approach to the whole of life, and ends with a "throw-away" society.

There is an *empiricist* philosophy, which reduces truth to physical reality, experience to sense experience, and religion and morality to matters of taste and personal preference.

There is a *subjectivist* emphasis, which stresses the feelings to the denigration of thinking and rationality, concentrates on individual taste and opinion, and makes the individual the final authority and the sole criterion by which all else is to be judged.

There is a *scientific* mentality, which is multi-formed but is essentially mechanistic and deterministic, and reduction is to a basic biological, psychological, materialistic, economic, or sociological core. It thrives on the "success" motif and rests on the authority of the practitioners.

One further key content in the "modern" understanding is *relativism* and particularly cultural relativism with its denial of absolutes (absolutely or relatively?), its stress on understanding only in a limited context, and its denial of any cross-cultural universal authority.

It is not difficult to see how, in practice, such "modernity" has posed-and is posing—a major challenge to the church in terms of the understanding of *Scripture*, *Christ*, the *church*, and the *doctrine of man*. The real difficulty with "modernity" is that we think that because we are modern we know what "modernity" is. "We do not see it because we see with it." The impact of such modernity is horrific. "Modernisation operates like a gigantic steel hammer, smashing both traditional institutions and traditional structures of meaning" (P. Berger).

d. Secularization, Pluralization and Privatization

Secularization is the process "by which religious ideas and institutions are losing their social significance, the ideas becoming less meaningful and the institutions more marginal." Western society has been subjected to a process of de-Christianization. The categories of the sacred, mystery, holiness, transcendence, and otherness are increasingly foreign and mystifying to the modern person who has an empirical, pragmatic grasp of reality. Crucially, such an attempt to deny man's basic nature has led to a strong reaction evidenced by the growth of interest in cults, mysticism, and astrology.

This process of secularization is accompanied by that of *pluralization*, by which modern societies are confronted with a selection of competing world views or presuppositional frameworks. The pluralistic setting is not a new phenomenon, for the early church grew and flourished in such a setting. It was, however, not a part of the *status quo*; whereas, in terms of western culture, Christianity has played a major part in defining the nature and practice of the *status quo*.

The threat now to Christianity from a pluralistic setting is the challenge to the sense of the givenness of Christianity and the emphasis on *personal choice*. The scale and context of the demand to choose and take responsibility for one's choice is frightening when the scope of such choice is realized as a result of mass communication, travel, geographic, economic, and social mobility, education and the development of knowledge. In a pluralistic setting everything is open to question, especially those areas of life which traditionally have been accepted in an uncritical way—e.g., the family, marriage, life-style and faith.

The aspect of personal choice carries with it the notion of the importance of freedom and personal fulfillment. *Privatization* is the process of cleavage between the private and public spheres of life. The private becomes the crucial realm where fulfillment is possible by the exercise of one's freedom. This privatization separates life into two categories.

There is the macro-world of the state, industry, business, the media and bureaucracy. It is a foreign world, coldly impersonal, highly rational and largely incomprehensible. The other sphere is the private realm of the micro-world of family, leisure, hobbies, social life, and the church. This is the realm of personal freedom, and a compensation for—and a retreat from—the big, bad world. The problem with such a micro-world is that it is limited and limiting, fragmentary and compartmentalized, unstable and fragile, vulnerable to infiltration and manipulation by others.

Our contention is that we are all secularized. The church must reflect on the impact of such a process on herself, her understanding of modern secularized people's needs, and on the strategies she must use to reach these secularized people.

2. The Biblical Ground and Message

a. The Necessity of a Biblical Basis

The Lausanne Covenant, Article 2, declares: "We affirm the divine inspiration, truthfulness and authority of both Old and New Testament Scriptures in their entirety as the only written Word of God, without error in all that it affirms, and the only infallible rule of faith and practice."

It confirms that which is fundamental to all evangelical missionary work—the whole Bible is the only authority for faith and practice. The article then goes on to affirm "the power of God's Word to accomplish his purpose of salvation. Through it the Holy Spirit still speaks to-day."

The endeavours of man to conform the revealed Word of God to human ideologies distort the message, which consequently loses its saving power. In particular, we must take note of the ways in which the processes of secularization may have affected our understanding of and obedience to God's Word. It is this Word, through the Spirit, that is "able to instruct for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" and to "equip for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:15-17).

b. The Biblical View of the World and Man's Relationship to It

The world is created, and hence is not divine. God has created all, and so no things are to be worshipped (e.g., heavenly bodies, Gen. 1:14-18, Isa. 41:25-26, 44:25-27). The world belongs to God and is good (Psa. 24: 1, Gen. 1:31, 1 Cor. 10:26, 1 Tim. 4:4). We need to capture/reclaim the Christian's perspective on the "natural" all around us—acknowledging that everything that is good and beautiful comes from God.

Too often, evangelicals demand the "supernatural" to confirm the working of God in the world. In so doing, we live in the grey light of the ordinary and miss the extraordinary work of God each day in ordering a physical, spiritual personality and other phenomena where it is good and beautiful.

This is not to suggest that we should not declare a God who acts in the present world—that he is active and responds in time and history to the prayers of his people. However, it is to say that, for the secularist, we gain a powerful point of reference when we reclaim all of the wonder of God's hand as a starting point for our communication with modern man.

The goodness of matter is also affirmed in the fact of the Incarnation and the Resurrection. Christ's own example shows him enjoying "eating and drinking," although his own poverty ("nowhere to lay his head") shows him not to be bound by material things. Much of his teaching concerned the misuse of material things. Mankind is created in God's image. As such, by God's gifts, man has honour and glory. Humans are also created to be in community ("male and female"). As a result of sin, all relationships have been disrupted (Gen. 3-11: man-God, man and himself, male-female, manworld, family- society-nation s). God, however, still regards man as the object of his saving action. Thus, through Christ, man's dignity is seen and relationships are being restored.

Man is a steward of God's world (Gen. 1:26-30), but he has sought to use it independently of God for his own purposes (Gen. 3). Man's exploitation and misuse of the world are evident.

Man's sin is seen in two further ways. On the one hand, one may treat the world and material things as evil, not to be enjoyed; while on the other hand one may "enjoy" selfishly without thanksgiving (1 Tim. 4:1-4) and without concern and personal responsibility for others (Amos 6:4-6, Rom. 14:14-16, James 2:14-17, Eph. 4:28).

We confess that Christians throughout the ages have not been free of either misuse. There is the particular danger of regarding affluence as God's reward for successful Christian living. Old Testament passages often cited (e.g., Deut.) are in a community context. It is a modern reinterpretation to apply them to individuals. Accumulated wealth is not just a matter of individual responsibility before God, but is to be shared (e.g., Lev. 25, 2 Cor. 8:12-15). (Attention is here drawn to an Evangelical Commitment to Simple Life-style, March 1980.)

Sin has so affected creation that God's purpose is to renew the whole creation (Rom. 8:18-23, Col. 1:15-20, 2 Peter 3:11-13, Rev. 21:1-3). Thus the world, as we know it, is not final, although Christians are to act now as a "sign" of the future. In God's redemptive purpose, Christ has been given all authority (Matt. 28:18, Col. 1:15-20).

Especially in the gospel and letters of John, "world" is used to refer to human society organised in opposition to or in rejection of God. It is into this "world" Christ and his disciples are sent (John 17:18).

As implications for evangelization, we observe the following:

Secularization is theologically justified when it places creation in the correct relationship to God, as having no divine features. What must be denied and judged, however, are attitudes whereby man acts as if he is divine or as the master and owner of the world, treating this world as being not God's, or when he regards this world as being absolute and ultimate. When man does this, ridding himself of the dimension of transcendence, he himself suffers and his worth is reduced. There is always the danger of absolutizing man himself and his own culture.

c. *Secular Man's Predicament*

We believe the gospel is God's good news for the whole world, and we are determined by his grace to obey Christ's commission to proclaim it to all mankind and to make disciples of every nation (Lausanne Covenant, Introduction).

This is still our belief and our obligation. Modern secular man, as we meet him today, is, as well as religious man, the receiver of the call of the gospel and the invitation to discipleship. The biblical description of man without Jesus Christ applies also to secular man, as does the description of the way of salvation in Jesus Christ.

It is as we see the extent of God's love in the incarnation and death of Jesus Christ that we realize more clearly the nature of man's predicament. Out of the wealth of material in the New Testament that describes man without Christ, Eph. 2:1-3 presents a view that includes several of the different aspects of man's lostness without Christ.

Man without Christ is bound by "the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience" (v. 2). This may not be a conscious relationship of slavery and obedience to Satan, but basically only two possibilities exist for man: darkness or light, the power of Satan or God (Acts 26:18). According to the words of Jesus himself, "Every one who commits sin is a slave to sin" (John 8:34; cp. 8:44).

This slavery to evil spiritual powers is accompanied by an obedience to "the desires of body and mind" (Eph. 2:3). The "flesh" or fallen human nature is the ruling force. The "flesh" does not denote only the desires and passions of the body, but also the sinful thoughts and opinions of the mind.

Man without Christ stands under the judgement of God (v. 3). This position is due to man's fallen and sinful nature and applies to all men without exception because all have sinned. "We were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind." This means that the right God-man relationship is broken. In spite of God's infinite love toward all people, they are all, whether they know it or not, on account of their sins, under the judgement of God. This is man's basic predicament.

The lostness of secular man is especially seen in his bondage to the things of the world, ideas and ideologies that exclude God, the "desires of body and mind." Man often imagines that freedom is following one's own will and desires. The Bible shows that this freedom is an illusion, and that secular man is in bondage to powers stronger than himself.

Although secular man experiences his lostness in a particular way, it is necessary to state that the gospel that saves *secular* man is *identical* with the gospel that saves *all* men.

d. *The Gospel of God's Action*

Following the description of man's predicament in Gen. 14:1, Abraham is called "to be blessed" and to be the means whereby "the nations will be blessed" (Gen. 12:1-3).

God acted to deliver his people out of Egypt, out of slavery, that they might live as his people. The laws give evidence of the ways in which Israel, as God's redeemed people, were to live differently than the nations around, both in their worship and in their social, political, and economic relationships. Israel, however, showed in many ways her desire to be "like the nations" and her disobedience led ultimately to judgement. Her disobedience is seen in both her religious life and in her socio-economic and political life.

Through the prophets, God promised that he would deliver his people, that they would be ruled by a king concerned for justice, and that they would live in right relationship with God and with one another. Such "salvation" would be evidence to the world that God is the only God-and that he saves-whereas the idols of the nations and their political or military might are unable to save. God's saved people will thus be "witnesses" and a "light" to the nations (Isa. 49:1-6, 43:8-13, 45:14-25).

In Christ we see both the righteous King and the true Israel (e.g., "light," "vine"). The church is then called to be the "people of God" (1 Peter 2:9-10). The coming of the Holy Spirit is also a fulfilment of prophecy. It is the Spirit who creates the fellowship of the church, and who gives power and direction to the church in her witness. It is through the Spirit that the presence of the transcendent holy God is experienced in the life of the church and proclamation of God's Word (Acts 1:8, 2:16-21, 4:31, 13:2-4; 1 Cor. 14:24-40).

We share the view of the Lausanne Covenant that "there is only one Saviour and only one gospel Jesus Christ, being himself the only God man, who gave himself as the only ransom for sinners, is the only mediator between God and man" (Article 3). The gospel of Jesus Christ is God's answer to man's basic need as outlined above. Jesus Christ brings about reconciliation with God through the forgiveness of sins. By faith in Christ, man is transferred from a relationship with God where he is under the anger of God, to a relationship with God where he is under the grace of God (Eph. 2:7-8).

Forgiveness of sins is the basis of man's acceptance by God. This means that man who was spiritually dead through his sins is made *alive* together with Christ by God's grace (Eph. 2:7-8). This is the miracle of regeneration which gives man a new nature. He becomes a spiritual man, enabled by the Holy Spirit to put off the old sinful nature and put on the new righteous nature (Col. 3:9-10).

The believer who in this way by God's grace is justified and made alive with Christ is, although he always remains a sinner with a sinful nature, at the same time liberated from the ruling power of Satan.

But secular man is also called to discipleship. The coming of the Kingdom is a call to repentance, to a life lived in allegiance to the King (Mark 1:15,

Matt. 28:18-20). A disciple of Christ is called to serve (Luke 22:24-27), to offer himself up sacrificially to God and his fellowmen (Rom. 12:1-8), giving up all he has (Luke 14:33), and to suffer in doing what is right (1 Peter 2:20, Phil. 3:10).

The call to discipleship that is issued to secular man requires a total re-evaluation of priorities, where God is put first, the neighbour second, and then oneself. This call raises the important question of secular man's relationship to riches.

e. The Gospel and the Affluent

Secular man has taken, or is in the process of taking, the lion's share of the material wealth in the world today.

Secularized people are often the privileged people.

This historical fact raises in an acute fashion the question of the relation between wealth and poverty as far as God's message to the poor is concerned. Is the gospel only for that part of the world's population which is socially, politically, and economically deprived? Do the poor have a special promise given to them which the affluent have not? Who are the poor in the biblical sense of the word? ("The poor have good news preached to them.") is the gospel at all for the affluent?

If we turn to the New Testament, we discover that it uses the word for "poor" quite infrequently. But in the few places where it is used, it carries great weight. In some passages the word is used of the receiver of *alms* (Mark 10:21 ff; Luke 19:8, Mark 14:5,7ff). In these texts the focus is not the poor, but rather the giver of alms. Also in Mark 12:42ff and Luke 16:20-22 the word denotes people who live below the poverty level and are dependent on support. The word is used in an *economic* and *social* sense.

The most important passages are, however, those passages where the word denotes those who hear the message of salvation or receive the kingdom of God. These texts are Matt. 5:5, Luke 6:20ff (the beatitudes), Luke 7:22, Matt. 11:5 (the answer to John the Baptist), Luke 4:18,19 (Jesus' inaugural speech in Nazareth), and Luke 14:21-24 (the parable of the great banquet). Does the word "poor" here refer to poor only in the material sense, or is it used in an extended figurative sense?

It is obvious from the beatitudes that the word is used in the latter sense. In Matthew, the kingdom of heaven is given to the "poor in spirit." In Luke, the direct address of the beatitudes indicates that it is the *disciples* who are spoken of and spoken to—disciples who have left everything to follow Jesus. The Bible does not contain any general beatitude addressed to *all* socially and materially poor people.

There is no evidence in the ministry of Jesus that socially poor people had any monopoly with regard to the kingdom of God. Jesus addressed himself to all Israel, even to the affluent, but most often to "tax-collectors and sinners" to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (cp. Matt. 10:6, Luke 19:10), and it is they who most often responded to him.

The main point in the parable in Luke 14:16 ff is that the invitation to the kingdom of God is sent out to all men; and it is first and foremost the religious divisions between the pious and the sinner, and the Jew and the Gentile, that have to be overcome.

When Jesus is occupied with people in need and gives salvation and the kingdom of God to the "poor in spirit," while calling people to serve those in material poverty, does this fact imply that the affluent are under the judgement of God and have no hope of salvation?

The "woes" of Jesus against the rich in Luke 6:24 have to be understood against the background of Jesus' view of wealth as a threat to man's relationship to God. This threat is so serious that Jesus says that a divine miracle is needed if a rich man is going to be saved (Mark 10:24-27). Jesus did not exclude the rich young ruler from the kingdom, but called him to be a disciple. Jesus shows a special concern for him. "Jesus looking upon him loved him" (Mark 10:21). What prevented this man from becoming a disciple of Jesus was basically not the wealth itself, but his love for and attachment to his wealth.

In the preaching of Jesus we encounter strong warnings against riches. Affluence can lead to sin against the commands "to love the Lord your God with all your heart" and "to love your neighbour as yourself" (Matt. 22:37-39). Jesus' words are unavoidable—"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth... No man can serve two masters" (Matt. 6:19-21,24). Jesus' story of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31) illustrates Jesus' warnings against riches. It has a special relevance to our time. The church has to renew its call for repentance to all affluent people—and even to affluent countries—that today are blinded by their prosperity and welfare. The Word of God challenges people everywhere to choose between God and mammon.

Nevertheless, there are no passages in the Bible that exclude all affluent people from the kingdom of God. Even Luke, who in his version of the gospel has recorded some of the sharpest warnings against riches, tells in the Acts of the Apostles, of wealthy people who joined the Christian community. But he emphasized that their attitude to their wealth was changed by the meeting with the transforming power of the gospel and this led to action (Acts 4:34). Zacchaeus, the rich tax-collector, made up for previous injustice and shared his property with the poor (Luke 19:1-10). The church has a particular task to renew this attitude and this practice among its more affluent members. The affluent have a great responsibility towards the poor. It is their obligation to use their material means for the furtherance of the gospel and to alleviate social need.

Article 9 of the Lausanne Covenant has particularly emphasized our common Christian responsibility when it states, "All of us are shocked by the poverty of millions and disturbed by the injustices which cause it. Those of us who live in affluent circumstances accept our duty to develop a simple life-style in order to contribute more generously to both relief and evangelism."

Whenever affluent people break the commandments of love for God and neighbour and leave the poor to their poverty and exploit and oppress them, they are hit by the judgement of God. But those same rich sinners under God's judgement are called to conversion and a new life (cp. Luke 3:7-14).

Jesus' concern for the affluent is shown in his table-fellowship with the Pharisees (Luke 11:37), his relationship to rich women (Luke 8:3), rulers (John 3:1), rulers of the synagogue (Luke 8:41), and officers (Matt. 8:5). Jesus breaks through social barriers, whether it is "downwards" towards the poor and suffering or "upwards" towards the affluent, the powerful and the learned. The division between social classes is secondary to the division between those inside and outside the kingdom of God. The gospel applies equally to the affluent, who are poor in their relationship to God. Although the way of conversion seems to be particularly difficult for the affluent, we gather inspiration from the example of Jesus himself in our efforts to reach the rich with the gospel.

We are also aware that many secularists are poor and see Christianity either as a threat to their desire to become wealthy or wealthier, or as a means to keep them forever poor. Such people need to experience costly involvement from Christians who exemplify in their own lives the words they speak concerning Jesus and wealth. It is, sadly, often the actions of affluent Christian churches and leaders which reinforce the secularist poor in his position. (Refer to reports on "Reaching Urban Poor" and "Reaching Marxists.")

By and through Christ, in the fellowship of God's people we can be liberated from our sense of worthlessness and powerlessness into poverty-eradicating power (John 15:1-6, Matt. 19:16, Phil. 1:6). Any solution to poverty which fails to liberate people into awareness of their creative possibilities will fail to eliminate the deeper plight of poverty, a loss of self-worth which is every person's God-intended birthright (Phil. 2:13, 4:13).

It is therefore with courage, and on the basis of Jesus' own commission, that we take the one gospel about the one Saviour also to the secularized world. Even to the secularized man, whether affluent or poor, the call of the gospel "to come to him personally and so be reconciled with God" (Lausanne Covenant, Art. 4) is extended.

f. Jesus and the People

Secular men are not distinctly described in the Bible as an exclusive group. But there are some persons in the gospels that seem to be more or less

secular. Let us focus on them and try to see how Jesus met them.

There seem to be two kinds of secularists in the Bible. On the one hand, we have the self-satisfied. On the other hand, the dissatisfied, facing difficult problems and seeking answers.

In the first category, we have the rich farmer (Luke 12:13-20) and the rich man (Luke 16:19-21), who are eternally lost. In the other category, we have the Samaritan woman (John 4), the woman caught in adultery (John 8), Zacchaeus (Luke 19) and others. They all have different needs. Typical of Jesus' approach to them are his words in John 8:11. He does not approve of sin ("Go and do not sin again"), but he proclaims, "Neither do I condemn you."

The church's proclamation has to be based on biblical interpretation (1 Cor 2:1-5). We must not reduce the offence of the cross (1 Cor. 1: 18, Gal. 1:6-9).

In the words of Jesus in the sermon on the mount (Matt. 5:13-16) and the exhortations of the apostle Paul, we see a very clear relationship between the life of the church and the proclamation of the gospel. If the proclamation of the gospel is to be credible, it has to be rooted in a life-style in harmony with the message (1 John 3:16-18).

The Christian church is called to be evidence to the world of the reality of God and the salvation made possible by Christ. Through the quality of her life in her corporate being and through the attitudes, actions, and words of both individuals and groups, she is to be "salt" and "light" (Matt. 5:13-16), to give evidence of God's love for the world (John 17). As such, she is sent into the world of nations to make disciples (Matt. 28:18-20).

It is God's grace and power that the Word of God does bring faith even though the authenticity of the proclaimer be inadequate. It is the Holy Spirit who convicts and convinces (John 16:8-10, Heb. 4:12, Phil. 1:15-19). The life of witness of the church will both attract and repel. Christ spoke frequently of the opposition to the church as "God's people"; Christians are "aliens and exiles" in the world. Her life and words are witness to the gospel (1 Peter 2:9-12, Rom. 12:1-2). She does so as a "servant" (Phil. 2:5-11).

To enable the church to live and witness in such a way in a secular society, being "God's people" and not "conforming to the world," the importance of mutual encouragement and admonition is frequently mentioned (Heb. 10:23-25, Eph. 4:11-16, Col. 3:12-17, 1 Peter 4:7-11).

At the same time, the church is conscious of her weakness (1 Cor. 1: 18-31; 2 Cor. 4:5-7). She continues to live and witness in dependence on God's grace and forgiveness, and in the power of the Holy Spirit. Through the *life* and the *attitudes* of Christians, secularists might be attracted to become acquainted with the basis and the centre of the new life (1 Peter 2:12, Matt. 5:16).

They will never be brought to faith, however, unless they *hear* and *accept* God's Word, given to us in the Scriptures, being presented to them in one way or another (Acts 11: 14, Rom. 10: 17). The proclamation of the gospel will remain the essential element in our missionary strategy to modern, secular man. The proclamation of God's Word to secularists should not only give answers to questions raised by secularists or needs recognized by them-it should also help them to see the basic need behind the needs, and help them raise the questions they never ask.

Secular man may find his security and trust in a variety of man-made "systems," whether they be material possessions, science and technology, health-care, education, political and economic systems, nuclear arsenals, or military strength. Through both proclamation and the life of the church, such are shown to be idols which are powerless and under God's judgement (Isa. 43:8-13, 45:19-25). Through the proclamation, it should be made clear to the secularist that all things and all systems of this world will come to an end, whether in one's lifetime or in the age to come (Psa. 37:7-11, Psa. 73, Luke 12:13-21, 16:19-31).

Through the proclamation of God's Word, God is revealed as *the one who* is-the Lord of all, the sovereign, almighty God, who does not exist only on man's terms and as an answer to man's needs, but as the One who will judge all human beings, and before whom all knees will have to bow (Isa. 44:6, Phil. 2:9).

Through the proclamation of God's saving love in the power of the Holy Spirit-centred in Christ's death and resurrection-the secularist should be challenged to be freed from trusting his "idols" and to let Jesus Christ, through forgiveness of sin, become the Lord of his heart and the Master of his life.

The proclamation of the gospel is not only an invitation and a challenge; it is the power of God for salvation through faith. We have to preach not only about faith, but so that the Holy Spirit may use the words to create faith.

3. The Needs of Secularized People

The secular man's deepest need is to discover that he is meant to be a redeemed child of God. He is not a complete, fulfilled human being. Although a season of "temporary euphoria" in the lives of many other secular people around him will convince him that they are "moving up the ladder," have "got their act together," and "have got it made," time and events inevitably cause them to come down off their "secular high" and face their finitude.

The secularized man's felt needs-loneliness, emptiness, fear, guilt, meaninglessness, and a search for peace, love and joy-will only be satisfied when he encounters Jesus Christ and commits himself personally to him. This encounter transforms a life of frustration, superficiality, despair, and ultimate judgement. At this point, his unperceived need for self-esteem will be realised and he can live for God's glory-to know, love, and obey Him and to serve his fellowman (John 17:3, Mark 12:30-31, John 15:5, Matt. 5:38-48, 7:12, Luke 10:25-37).

The secularist, with a non-trusting attitude, seeks temporary relief through a variety of pursuits which may lead him to alienation and loneliness. We are discovering that the point of contact is found in the meeting place between his felt need and the facet of our multi-faceted gospel which is God's good news for that human need.

The following needs are characteristic of many secular people. No single secular person would be driven by all of these needs, but most secular people are presently struggling with at least *one* of these needs:

Many secular people long to know that they are genuinely and deeply loved and/or they want to discover the power (or ability) to love others, such as their children, as much as they want to love them. In the gospel and in Christian experience, secular people can discover such a love and such a power.

Many secular people are intent on "justifying their existence" -usually through conforming to their culture's "law of achievement." But they are impotent to become the super-achievers they are scripted to be, and they need to hear about and experience their justification by God's grace as appropriated through faith.

Many secular people appear self-sufficient. They are workaholics and may even give the appearance of leading a well-balanced life without God. They are ignorant of the fact, or refuse to admit, that they have spiritual needs. They may be brought by circumstances to total despair. They must be honest with themselves and acknowledge that they have some genuine needs that cannot be met by their own effort and initiative (Eph. 2:8, 9)

Many secular people are socially alienated or isolated and need an opportunity "to be loved" or "to be known," or to share meaningfully with others. The secularist can fulfil his primary need for acceptance and affirmation by a relationship with the divine Son of God. In addition, his need for a steady diet of positive emotional nourishment can and must be found in the fellowship of other Christians.

The local church's opportunity of "koinonia" is good news which should be offered to countless persons-perhaps on their turf. The "koinonia" is an experience which in itself brings positive input to the individual. In the New Testament church, there were tangible expressions of the "koinonia." These included common material possessions, tending the sick, meeting the needs of the hungry and widows, etc. (that is, serving others). These expressions should be attractively evident to the secularists who want and need to be served.

The church, then, is a deep resource of encouragement and affirmation. In the context of the church, the secularists find the direction of the Holy Spirit that will

lead them to see forgiveness where needed. They see living testimonies of the power of God and find relevant examples for their own experience. The church no longer presents meaningless religious dogma but is a living, vital community.

Many secular people suffer acutely from low self-esteem. Secularized Christians do not affirm the person who resides in them and lack self-assurance. They can discover and begin to realize their true dignity in Jesus Christ and the Messianic community.

Secular people, in great numbers, are driven by a quest for meaning in life. They long to make sense of their lives and to attain a satisfying world view. Their appropriation of Christian vocation and Christian doctrines can meet these needs (Eph. 4).

Among the working-class people especially, there are many secularists whose felt needs refer more specifically to their experience of powerlessness, unemployment, environmental alienation, conflict between class solidarity and the expectations and pressures from the society as a whole. This is especially true in the context of the Third World. Christians should be engaged in solving these problems in their society. At the same time, these secularists need to sense and appropriate the power of the Holy Spirit through the salvation and lordship of Jesus Christ in the midst of social insecurity and economic powerlessness.

Many secular people are now disillusioned with the unfulfilled promises of science and materialism. Deeply disappointed by religion and instances of conditional love, they may seek to alleviate their positions of bondage, loneliness, and emptiness. They may turn to cults and the occult, to hedonism, astrology, zen, etc. In finding no solution in these, they may be driven to the point of despair.

The secularist has a dire need to perceive that the church's gospel speaks relevantly to the whole spectrum of his life—marriage, family, work, relationships to people, his evaluation of international issues, and a host of other concerns. We must recognise two vulnerable periods in the growth and development of man during which exposure to the secular environment can do great and permanent damage. The moral and spiritual growth of young children and teenagers are stunted and distorted by an ungodly environment. These early experiences deeply affect our whole life. Young children need the security, love, and nurture within the Christian family and fellowship. By all means they must be introduced to Jesus, for of such is the

Kingdom of Heaven. Teenagers need available resources of accepting love and understanding during the turbulence of puberty. Jesus laid on his church the responsibility of tending his sheep and ensuring that no one should offend them.

These (and other) needs people feel are symptomatic of their deeper need for reconciliation with God—a need "the Fall" permits them to perceive only very dimly. The evangelical church will be most effective when it engages both people's felt conscious needs and their underlying need for God, bringing about true repentance from sin to walk by faith in the living God.

4. The Effects of Secularization on the Church

a. A Secularized Church

We confess that the church, like the world, has been secularized. We also confess that the spread of secularization in the most Christianized countries must be viewed as a judgement not on the validity of the gospel but upon the inadequate and ineffective witness of a Christian church, affected by either a liberal theology or by a rigid orthodoxy. Most cultures have been affected. We affirm that culture, like mankind, is sinful. Because of the Fall, all culture is tainted by sin. The Scriptures judge and evaluate every culture and its practices.

Not all aspects of secularization, however, are sinful. Secularization may be seen in both its positive and negative aspects. It is theologically justified when it places Christians in correct relationship to the world as immanent matter without divine features. Secularization may also render a service to the church insofar as it deprives the church of irrelevant and unjustified power in the world. But when God and theology are secularized, Christianity is emptied of its content. This creates a vacuum in which man may become absolute—the measure of all.

b. Secular and Christian Values

The following secular values (or value systems) have affected the church, obscured her mission, and have eroded her credibility in the world. Among these secular values we enumerate some as particularly insidious as opposed to Christian values:

- a. Our success orientation as opposed to a servant church
- b. Self-preoccupation as opposed to self-sacrifice
- c. A passive spectator involvement, as opposed to contribution of each member
- d. Elitism as opposed to Christian community
- e. Civil religion as opposed to a prophetic religion
- f. Divisiveness as opposed to desire for unity
- g. Secular power values as opposed to power of self-giving love
- h. Competition as opposed to co-operation
- i. Manipulation as opposed to respect for human dignity
- j. False security as opposed to radical commitment
- k. Isolationism as opposed to participation in society
- l. Managerial style as opposed to contribution of the whole body
- m. Goal of affluence and greed as opposed to biblical stewardship
- n. Racism, caste, and tribalism as opposed to oneness in Christ
- o. End justifying the means as opposed to means consistent with the biblical ends

The achievements of science and technology and secular philosophy have managed to intimidate the church to conform the biblical truth to a system of "humanism." As a result of a loss of respect for the authority of the Bible, we confess the lack of discernment, discipline, and an erosion of moral and social standards within the church. The lack of true biblical faith and personal courage, the desire of "other" acceptances made the church, in many situations, fall into the sins of *hypocrisy* and *dishonesty*.

c. How Should the Church Practically Combat Secularization Within the Church?

We affirm that if the church is to combat secularization we must return in spirit and life to the power and practices of the first-century church. Following Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost, the convicted people asked the all-important question, "What must we do?"

In his answer, Peter pointed to repentance, forgiveness, baptism, and the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:37,38). We believe the church should begin with repentance. It needs to repent because for so long the church has either been too punitive and judgemental or, in the name of "grace and love," too undisciplined and sentimental. Also, the leadership needs to repent of its lack of moral example. While rejecting secularism and materialism, often the leadership has been more like the world than like disciples of Christ. Rather than changing the church, the leadership has often brought in the ways of the world and its systems. So if the church is to combat secularism it must first confess its own complicity in sin, turn away from its own idols, and turn to God in faith.

When the surprised and bewildered people on the day of Pentecost turned to Christ in faith and were baptised, the Holy Spirit came upon them. They were led to five areas of life together (Acts 2:42).

They devoted themselves to the apostles' *teaching*. If we are in fact to combat secularization, we as a church must be very clear and precise about Jesus Christ and his call to new life under his Lordship. We must present the biblical Christ rather than a Christ of a particular culture or nationality. This biblical Christ judges our excesses, challenges and inspires our behaviour, and affirms our uniqueness as worthwhile, meaningful, valuable people whether we are successful in the secular sense or not.

We suggest that the secularized in the church be encouraged:

- (i) to join a Bible study group in the church or near one's place of employment where honest sharing, loving support, and care is given with strength and appropriate discipline.
- (ii) to meet as often as possible with his or her vocational interest group for sharing common problems and encouraging spiritual growth.
- (iii) to worship God regularly-where the Bible is taught and preached in a practical, honest, always strongly biblical manner.
- (iv) to be expected not only to learn theology, but live bravely in the secular world-thinking more of what is right than of survival and making a living.

The second aspect of the young believers' life together was "*fellowship*"—not the fellowship which we have come to know in our secular society, but fellowship with Jesus Christ as the divine distinctive.

The secularized in the church need to experience a strong, New Testament kind of fellowship—a fellowship of love and discipline—a community of people who also care enough to confront and hold one another accountable. This fellowship must not be a closed, club-like society of like-minded people who affirm each other's prejudices, but an open fellowship of people of all kinds, rich and poor, black and white, wise and foolish, committed Christians and those barely looking in. Secularized people need to know they can come to this family just as they are—not as others want them to be. They must feel comfortable—where no question is too heretical, and no doubt too absurd, to be dealt with in reasonable compassion by the body.

The secularized must feel that they are in the presence of similar strugglers—not people who have arrived. More secularized Christians have been loved into obedience than argued, disciplined, or manipulated to conform to what others may want them to be or do. The fellowship, to be continually alive, must continually be called to commitment and renewal.

Those filled with the Holy Spirit were also devoted to "*prayer*." The secularized Christians, those who don't seem to bear the marks of Christ in their secular world, often are brought under conviction and change of heart and behaviour as they pray with people whom they know will not judge but care and support them. Praying with brothers and sisters who are fellow strugglers often sensitizes one's conscience and changes one's attitudes and behaviour.

Another aspect of a praying church should be that those who have been disciplined become objects of prayer and loving concern of the body and not coldly excommunicated without a chance for renewal. Prayer by the body for fallen brothers and sisters is life-giving and keeps elitism and superior feelings at a minimum.

The early Christian believers also "*broke the bread*" together. Many understand this to mean Holy Communion. We believe Holy Communion is an essential part of life in the church family. The secularized within the church need to be continually reminded of the seriousness of taking holy communion "in an unworthy manner" and thus scoffing at the body and blood of Christ (1 Cor. 11:27). Holy Communion, when explained and carefully and lovingly shared, is a call to Christ and an offer of cleansing from all worldly salvation machines and idols.

But let us not make light of the fact that the first-century Christians also met to celebrate a common meal. Maybe believers must be willing to have loving "agape" meals with all people in the body—especially the secularized Christian. There is something holy about Christians sharing a meal together.

According to Acts 2, God moved the early Christians to consider their *economic commitment to the body of believers*. The secularized in the church today often feel their only posture is sitting in the pew and putting their hands in their pockets. We believe that a real understanding of Christ's Lordship will not be a deterrent to discipleship but will enhance one's love of Christ and feelings of usefulness in the Kingdom. The secularized often hear the references to materialism but seldom receive biblical teaching on the use and misuse of all one's material possessions under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. For the fellowship to grow and conform more to the Kingdom purpose of Christ, all Christians must regularly be called to commitment and obedient discipleship. We commend the practice in some churches of an annual renewal of covenant, or other opportunity for rededication.

5. Strategies for Reaching Secularized People

A discussion of strategy for reaching the secularized, or any other group, must be squarely based on the underlying recognition of the need for spiritual empowerment. The work of the Holy Spirit is fundamental in all evangelism, and the church will be prepared for her mission to secularists only as she is renewed and equipped by the Holy Spirit.

When we think about reaching secular men for Christ, we become deeply aware that "evangelization will become a realistic possibility only when the Spirit renews the church's vision, faith, holiness, love and power" (Lausanne Covenant, Article 14).

a. Church Must Be Flexible

Secularization, as we have noted, is a process of change in society. In the midst of social change around it, the church must be sensitive, creative, and flexible. A changing society demands a dynamic church able to adapt to new situations without changing its basic message.

That willingness to adapt approaches and methodology will mean the church must be prepared to tread new and untried ways, develop new strategy, and learn from the experience of others. There must be an accompanying willingness to change direction to cope with new challenges.

The process of searching for new structures will frequently lead us to a closer examination of the biblical pattern and the discovery that, basic to renewal and mission, is a return to the scriptural model and its adaptation for contemporary times. In changing our methodology, then, we will often be relinquishing a traditional, culturally-conditioned pattern for the biblical model!

The Church, the Body of Christ, expressed in many forms, must return to its biblical roots in order to model the New Testament church and train biblical believers.

If Christians are to be equipped to reach the secularized, we need to stress the biblical concept of fellowship and community. It is within the framework of a living, caring, supportive community that people are nurtured and given strength to reach out to the secular world. In addition, it is also a dynamic form of witnessing when the body of Christ functions in Christian love, and offers a radical contrast to the secular world's attempt at community (John 13:34,35).

(i) Small Groups

This fellowship and mutual care and support is best expressed in small groups related to the local church. In such groups, people can be discipled, disciplined, and held accountable. People growing as mature Christians will strengthen their witness to the secular society. In small groups it is much easier to discern and develop people's unique gifts so that each individual can confidently minister in a secular world.

It should be noted that the local body of believers is most often found in small numbers of less than 100 people. In such local churches, mutual sharing and support are essential if they are effectively to penetrate secular society. In larger local churches, it is necessary to organize cell groups, such as the system of 2,000 small cell groups in a large church in Seoul, South Korea, where group leaders are trained weekly by the pastoral staff.

In Perth, W. Australia (as elsewhere in Australia), several churches are growing through emphasising the importance of a network of small groups or family clusters. Many are much happier to attend a small group (although it is, and should be, church-related) where they see a reality in relationships and changed lives and people for whom God's Word is relevant. Small groups are also providing mutual encouragement and support for people in their individual witnessing.

(ii) Training and Education

That caring, training, and supportive role of the local church is basic. The most effective strategy for reaching secularized people will fall to the ground if Christians are not strengthened and equipped to implement it. Further, secular man has a right to expect that the nearby local church is a microcosm of that realm of life of which he has no part and to which he is beckoned. As the tide of secularism arises, the local church must equip its members to be articulate sharers of the Good News to secular man. If they are to do that, they must be directed to the scriptural teaching regarding their relationship to the secular society around them. Basic to that will be an understanding of the creative tension involved in being in the world, but not of the world (John 17).

Believers in those small groups and in the larger teaching/preaching context need to be taught to "think Christianly" about the world around them—to be preserved from its subtle pull and to have sensitivity in addressing secular man.

Some churches have evangelism training classes to equip Christians in personal witnessing. Those training sessions usually involve consideration of the scriptural message and how to present it to non-Christians. Since secularization is so pervasive, those courses should acquaint Christian witnesses with the hold that world view exercises over modern man. In addition, consideration should be given to areas of shared interest and bridgeheads by which the Christian can relate to secular man with the Good News.

Pastors and other church leaders obviously play a key role in this process. It is, therefore, important that seminary and Bible college education prepare church leaders for the contemporary world and assist them to bridge the gap between the eternal Word of God and secular man. Otherwise, ministers will find themselves speaking in a vacuum and living in a religious ghetto. Seminararians should represent as many of the sections of society as possible. Just as Jesus selected disciples from a variety of backgrounds, the modern church should have leaders who can relate to all strata in society.

(iii) Worship

We also call upon the church to speak in her various forms of worship to all people in today's world. The secular person and Christians who are involved in life around them are often confused and alienated by the seeming indifference or irrelevance of much within the church's worship. It is incumbent upon the worship leaders both to plan the service and proclaim the Word within the context of the world—in an idiom of today, and yet with a hope for tomorrow. The Christian gospel uniquely speaks to, and fulfills the need of, man. And yet, the gospel will always be in sharp contradiction to the world's wisdom. We must use all forms or means of proclamation of the Christian gospel that allow the message to be biblically accurate and relevant to the cultural context in which we live.

b. Witness to the Secularized Outside Churches

This document assumes, of course, that churches and individual Christians will be involved in conventional forms of evangelism such as team visitation, crusades, and similar forms of outreach. In addition, however, we must give more specific attention to reaching the growing numbers of secular people who represent a new and formidable challenge to the church. Churches should support and undergird Christians where they are in the secular places of employment, or work at home. The church must help doctors, mechanics, and mothers see their immediate environment as a central place of evangelism and Christian witness. And people need to be encouraged to have prayer groups and develop relationships with others at work, with a view to sharing the Good News. Christians should definitely be involved with secular concerns and activities, as well as with functions in their churches.

A local church in Stockholm, Sweden, has had a good experience in "evangelizing counselling." Church members, meeting in small groups where they received counsel and help in problems which are common in modern society, are also being equipped to help people in their neighbourhoods and jobs. Several people have come to the Lord and to the fellowship of the church as a consequence of such witness.

"Crisis counselling" centres in North America and Australia have also been effective in outreach—often to the victims of secularized society. Those who contact such centres—usually by phone—are counselled on a one-to-one basis about their problem; and the Christian counsellor with sensitivity seeks to present a personal witness.

To be effective in the witness to secular man (and to be faithful to the Lord), the church needs to show a biblical concern for the *whole* man.

Failure to do that would confirm secular man in his conviction that the Christian gospel is of no relevance in daily life.

The Scriptures and the gospel are eternally relevant, but people usually respond initially at their point of felt need. Sensitive churches and Christians close to the heartbeat of secular man will devote time and effort to determine those needs and to minister at those points in the name of the compassionate Christ. In addressing ourselves to those needs on a societywide scale, we will be called upon to speak Christianly in such issues as the family, racism, violence, homosexuality, abortion, and the growing disparity between the poor and the affluent. As we speak prophetically to those questions, we touch life at points where secular man hurts; and, in so doing, we earn the right to be heard in addressing what we know to be his deepest need.

c. Target Groups of Secularized People

We distinguish between three different target groups of secularists and suggest possible approaches. The three groups are:

- * our neighbours—those with whom our lives naturally intersect
- * people we don't know, but whom we encounter in our evangelistic outreach
- * people in places where little testimony exists (e.g., the arts, media, politics, and other places of influence)

All of us have contacts in the first group, and we should be cultivating even more. Churches and sensitive Christians should be formulating strategies to reach the other two groups as well.

(i) Evangelizing our secularized neighbours

Many of our neighbours seldom or never darken the doors of a church. The Bible is a closed book to them, and they may studiously avoid exposure to Christian radio or television programmes and literature. They are secularized, whether or not they are aware of that fact. No longer can churches assume that people will come to the churches to be evangelized through special meetings, Sunday School, or regular pulpit ministry. If there is to be evangelism, it will likely be on the secularized's own neutral turf.

We may be our secularized neighbour's only contact with the church or the Christian message. Local Christians have felt a sense of frustration at failure or inability to relate meaningfully and effectively with their secular neighbour.

The basic outreach will be one of building daily bridges through friendship and caring. Because secularized people's whole outlook seems so foreign, the Christian is apt to adopt an arms-length relationship. No effective evangelism will take place across that gulf.

But how can one proceed further and share the gospel in a specific way? If that caring relationship has been established (and only if it has), the Christian can proceed to make evangelistic overtures.

An evangelistic outreach held in a midwestern American city provided local Christians with a feasible plan by which they could build bridges to reach secular neighbours and friends with the gospel.

An eight-day crusade, involving evangelist Leighton Ford, was slated in Wichita, Kansas, for the final week of September. Participating churches recruited Christian couples to offer their homes as bases for hospitality evangelism. Each couple was encouraged to establish

genuine friendship bridges with six to eight neighbours and other friends and to invite them to their homes at least once before September. On that strictly social occasion, the couple extended a further invitation to come again to view a telecast dialogue with Leighton Ford on the weekends prior to the crusade opening.

The groups assembled in homes across Wichita on the evenings of the telecast. Ford addressed his remarks to contemporary secular people, and an opportunity was given for viewers to phone the television station with their questions, to which the evangelist responded. Those informal home groups provided an opportunity for Christians to relate meaningfully with unchurched neighbours and, in addition, they provided a model which the Wichita committee shares with other churches through a 35-minute video cassette recording.

(ii) Evangelistic Outreach to Secularized People At Large

Local churches must engage in an imaginative evangelistic outreach to that group. This may involve putting Christians in contact with those with whom they have no ties of blood, neighbourhood, or other common interests.

The most obvious example is visitation evangelism, in which individuals or teams of Christians go door-to-door, to places where people congregate, or to designated prospects. In a secularized era, visitation and training must give special attention to equipping the Christian messenger in his approaches to secular man.

Imaginative variations of that visitation evangelism should be examined. Door-to-door listening, for example, leads to opportunities to witness. The visitors would ask questions about people's beliefs, what they want, and what bothers them. The most effective follow-up might involve an "investigation group" of 6-10 people meeting on secular ground (if possible, a house of one of the members) with one or two Christian leaders. All questions are allowed.

A variation of the above might be to have well-advertised addresses by the minister or qualified laymen who would deal with the issues uncovered in the door-to-door listening process. Again, such meetings ought to provide ample opportunity for questions and comments, a time for unstructured encounter, and possibly refreshments.

(iii) Evangelizing Among Specialized Segments

Christians in the early church made sure that the gospel was heard by the secular powers, judges, rulers, governors, and emperors. They created opportunities through being arrested, appealing to authority, using their professional status, their citizenship, or jumping on a bandwagon. In season, out of season, the gospel was heard.

Contemporary Christians must use imaginative approaches if they are to reach many of the specialized segments that provide much of the leadership in secular society. Several examples have come to our attention. In an African society, for example, this approach is important for evangelism for a special reason. Professional achievement is relatively novel. And since a very small percentage of the population reaches professional status, the professional considers himself far superior to the average citizen. He will probably not participate in a Bible study group where the majority may be non-professional people whom he considers his inferiors, especially if he is a non-Christian. But if he is invited by people of his own profession, he is more likely to come. It will arouse his curiosity and make him feel at home. In such a situation, Christians must obviously use an approach that will touch that specific segment.

In England, there is a Christian theatre group called "Upstream" who produce professional plays for secular audiences. They select plays that provoke thoughtful questions or that offer a Christian perspective.

In various major cities of the world, concerned Christians have organized noon-time lunches to which they invite business associates. In an unstructured situation, the non-Christian need feel no threat and has the opportunity to meet his fellow workers who are Christians.

In New York City, a group of women staff members of Campus Crusade for Christ, set up a series of interviews with key women executives. These included national magazine editors, the presidents of major networks, and major corporate leaders. The interview questionnaires were designed in such a way that the answers could be used in ministry to college leaders. As part of the interview process, spiritual issues were raised, resulting in a small group of disciples being established from among the women executives.

Today the gospel needs to be heard in the corridors of power within governments, party political meetings, labor unions, and in media circles. Any evangelism that professes to be attempting to reach secular man can hardly overlook those circles of power.

d. How Do We Win the Secularized?

(i) We *identify* with those we are seeking to win. Our first concern will be, not to condemn, but to understand by listening, by asking questions, spending time, and honestly sharing our own experiences. We avoid the *us/them* mentality that fails to identify the points that we have in common. In short, we do all in our power that the love of Christ impels us to do.

(ii) We *stimulate* their interest in the gospel. We arouse their interest in a variety of ways: by following the teaching example of Jesus who made his contact by starting at his hearer's point of felt need, by using the Scripture in a fresh way as we witness, and showing that it speaks with power to contemporary people and situations, by using fresh language rather than jargon, and by being careful to explain carefully, creatively, and honestly biblical insights and expressions.

(iii) We *communicate* the *biblical* message. In our emphasis on the need to adapt our methodology and strategy, there is no suggestion that we change the message. We know that the secularized will not be reached, and God will not be honoured, by any dilution of the biblical message.

(iv) At the same time, we are called to timely communication of that timeless message. The process involves comprehension on the part of our secular audience. We are called to nothing less than the presentation of Jesus Christ to modern man.

That communication should be done in different forms and through all kinds of media. Local assessment will determine the specific needs. In some countries, there is a great need to produce relevant tracts and books that are really adapted to the secular person. In those instances, the church must imaginatively and creatively consider the question of distribution if the materials are to be placed in the hands of the target audience. We have noted, with gratitude, some stimulating developments of communication through drama, and the arts. Such communication will be sensitive to the local culture and not appear as foreign to it.

(v) We are convinced, however, that secularized people may be motivated to become involved in *direct Bible study*. In the development of sophisticated methods, the church must never lose sight of the power of the Word.

The old method of sending out colporteurs to sell and distribute Bibles may need to be reintroduced in some societies.

Simple Bible study courses could be offered through them, through visitation teams, or through media to facilitate a more systematic study and introduction to the Word. Churches in secular environments should be challenged to arrange and facilitate distribution of the Bible in modern translations.

In this context, we should mention again the use of evangelistic Bible study groups made up of believers and non-believers. In the setting of a home and in the shared study of the Bible, many feel more comfortable than in a formal service setting.

(vi) *Ongoing Pre-evangelism* should influence the whole climate of thought in a society. To this end, Christians should be dynamically involved in secular journalism, the media generally, and education. The churches must realistically face the fact that many secularists seldom hear or watch a Christian media presentation. Christian pre-evangelists then, perform a front line service in being salt in the media and elsewhere.

There is a need to acknowledge that the mass media, especially the electronic media, have, in Western societies, largely replaced the family and school in the authority and educational roles. This trend is increasingly true in the developing countries as well. In the United States and Canada, for instance, the average high school graduate will have watched 15,000 to 16,000 hours of television by the time he or she has graduated. The same student will have spent less than 12,000 hours in the classroom. If they are involved in a local church, they will likely have spent less than 1,000 hours in worship experience.

Secular world views are pervasive in the mass media and accelerate the transformation of society. Because of this, the mass media must be major targets for the church in its efforts to reach secular man. Not only must content that can stand up in the secular media be prepared by Christians, but there must also be major efforts by the church to encourage Christians to become professionals in those media-influencing their content from the inside and effecting a genuine transformation and reclamation of the media and, in turn, the minds of the readers, viewers, and listeners.

Simultaneously, we need to provide education as to the content presently being given through the media-seeking to help individuals and families evaluate their use of the media and its influence on their lives.

The church, and especially those involved in pre-evangelism, will need to make a determined effort to understand the secular world view, its assumptions, presuppositions, and unsatisfied longings (of which they themselves may be unaware). At the same time, we must develop a deeper understanding of the Christian world view, especially as it relates to the secularized.

In that process of helping the church cope with secular thinking, the church must assist its members in understanding not only the essential message of secular thinkers of today, but also in understanding at what points they concur with, and at what points they contradict, the biblical faith. Christians also need to understand what is their point of appeal and at what point we have failed to offer a more appealing alternative. Our aim must be to help Christians learn how to think Christianly-that is to analyse everything from a biblical perspective and world view.

The following examples come from university students' experience, but it could be applied to the church at large. The aim here was to offer courses that Christians could attend to deepen their own understanding of secular thinking, as well as the Christian alternative. They could also bring a non-believing friend to attend. Those studies involved consideration of what it is to be a human-the essence of man, models for our humanness, the nature of our dilemma, and possible solutions. In that study, the perspectives of literary figures were considered-Dostoevski, Tolstoy, Solzhenitsyn, Camus, Sartre, and Beckett. In addition, other models that are presented to modern man were considered-the view of a man as machine, B.F. Skinner's view, Huxley's viewpoint, and the insights from Marcuse. Then, of course, the study climaxed in the presentation of the outlook of Jesus Christ.

In the same series, university student organizations have presented Malcolm Muggeridge film series on great thinkers, the Francis Schaeffer films, or a study of C.S. Lewis and his contribution to Christian apologetics and the contemporary life.

Attempts to prepare Christians for pre-evangelism must not be limited, however, to the university campus. The need exists to train Christians in the local church to exercise a wide-ranging, ongoing pre-evangelism ministry at all levels in society. Several examples were brought to our attention.

A group of Christians working for a news network helped place competent Christians into assignments with the network when openings arose. This gave a greater Christian voice in the marketplace.

A group of Christian journalists in the United States shared thoughts through circulars on how to integrate Christ in their jobs. That approach could result in a meaningful community among Christians within a given area of secular society.

Scripture Union in the U.K. runs "academic courses" each year for high school seniors-with courses in such subjects as English literature, marine biology, physics, etc. The courses help Christians relate their faith to their studies, and cause non-Christians to think about Christian answers to questions raised in those studies.

The essential point is to *resist* wearing two caps: one for doing our "spiritual" activities and the other for doing the "secular." We need to break through the "secular/sacred" mentality.

To that end, courses could also be organized in the form of study groups within the local churches which would deal with the relation and relevance of the gospel to family, health, marital harmony, adolescence, and also to all aspects of public life. In that way, Christians could be equipped to respond to such questions from non-Christians and exercise a salting influence in a sick society.

We reach the secularized when we communicate the Scriptures clearly, faithfully, and relevantly. For example, when we see the brokenness that exists in family life, it is the duty of the church to offer courses or "marriage seminars" or sessions on "raising children with spiritual values." We can meet a crushing need for them, while, at the same time, offering a biblical foundation to our answers that enables them to see beyond the symptoms to the root causes.

In that essential work of pre-evangelism, we attract people as we seek to care for the oppressed-the refugee, widow, orphan, and poor. In Colorado, for instance, a network of Mennonite volunteers moved into an area ravaged by a flood and, in the process, rebuilt the area. The local people who had previously been very cool to the church were so struck by the love and labour of the volunteers that a good number gave their lives to Christ.

In all that work of pre-evangelism, there is no attempt to hide the fact that the Christian is *different*. Although we seek to identify with the secularized, we do not become secularized ourselves. Indeed, we are radically different as we radically identify. We demonstrate this difference by our Christian character, by Christian values that stand against culture when necessary, by a radical commitment to the Word of God, and through the fruit of the Spirit and sacrificial life-styles.

e. Needed: God's Perspective

It may be often of great significance for evangelization to plan consciously

on the basis of an expected development in the future. But it is not the political or ecclesiastical outlook which should fill us with hope or despair. As believers in God, our criteria are different. God himself has promised to complete his work (Philippians 1:6). He is the Lord of missions and will be with his people always. He is greater than he who is in the world (1 John 4:4).

The Christian church is invincible because its Lord already has conquered death and the devil. One day he will appear visibly in his power so that "at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2: 10-11).

A church on the offensive lives in this faith in the power of God which transcends our greatest expectations. Even when resistance and indifference to the message may tempt us to give up, the Lord himself goes before us and leads us into battle. What from a human point of view may look like defeat, he may turn into victory, progress, and growth.

We are inclined to see the world and the future from a purely human perspective. We assume that development will go on and that the future is determined, secularization will increase, and that people will increasingly turn away from God. That is the attitude of defeatism. It paralyzes our faith and curbs our courage. The question should rather be: What can *God* do? What will he do? What is the goal of our work? Do we see the opportunities which the emergence of secularism has placed before us? Do we view secularized people with the compassion of Jesus? We may live in the last hour of history, but, exactly in that hour, the words of Jesus are even more relevant: "This gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, as a testimony to all nations; and then the end will come" (Matthew 24: 14).

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