

Secular

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, all thy soul, and all thy might”

Our nation is imploding. It's collapsing morally, culturally, politically, and probably in other ways as well. It's not that we're an effete society, although in some ways that's true. That doesn't quite explain what's happening. We're simply going down the drain, reverting to the crassest form of paganism. And I think we can identify the reason.

For over a thousand years, the Church was united – well, more or less. There was an Eastern (Orthodox) Church and a Western (Roman Catholic) Church, and they had their differences. But both of them remained solidly structured on Constantine's “reforms.” The Church wasn't split up into factions like it is today until the Protestant Reformation. With that freedom from sacerdotalism came Anglicanism, Moravianism, Mennonites, Baptists, Congregationalists, Presbyterians, Methodists, and more, much more. The prayer of Jesus in John 17 for unity among His believers and for love for each other was nullified. The very concept of unity and love for the brethren vanished in the profusion of ideas about how church should be organized and how certain Scriptures should be interpreted.

When our nation was founded, those political leaders wanted desperately to avoid the sectarian warfare that raged in Europe. So, especially due to the influence of the Freethinkers and deists among them, they deliberately chose to make America a secular state. This certainly wasn't the vision that brought the Puritans to the New World, but by the time of the writing of the Constitution, it seemed to be the wisest thing to do. A neutral (or “secular”) government would necessarily tolerate all religious sects. Society should be open and free; all ideas should be able to be expressed without fear of a sectarian government's censure. The expectation was that the personal lives of its Christian citizens would keep the nation in God's blessing.

In short order, though, that vision evaporated. The effects of the Great Awakening waned. Another Awakening in the ante-Bellum years occurred, but its scope was narrower. Americans became less and less religious as the nation expanded. With the birth of the Industrial Revolution, peace and prosperity seemed to be our nation's destiny; that was especially so after WWI. Another Awakening of sorts occurred after WWII, although church historians don't term it as such. But there was a great proliferation of religious books and evangelistic crusades, and fundamentalist and Creationist ideas invaded the staid, dull mainstream denominations. Bible colleges formed and evangelical churches were planted, and there an intense interest in foreign missions developed. By the end of the 20th century, however, that too waned. What was going on outside the domain of the Church, however, was vastly more significant.

Government was secular. Secular doesn't really mean neutral. Secular was supposed to mean not religious, or not sectarian. But there's no such thing as “not religious.” All humans are religious, even if they espouse atheism. So “secular” in time turned from indifferent to religion to the rejection of religion, and finally to hostility to religion. Satan saw to it that “not religious” became “anti-religious.” Freedom of religion turned into freedom *from* religion. And not just government was secular. Almost from its founding, Hollywood kept pressing the limits on what was morally permissible, purposely, until those boundaries disappeared. And soon our entire culture simply progressed from Christian to secular to utterly pagan. The degeneration was unstoppable. Public education also had to be secular. After all, government schools couldn't be allowed to teach Protestant ideas to kids from Catholic families, etc. So public schools too followed the trajectory and slid into anti-theism and paganism. Higher education followed the same pattern, but worse: Many of them began as Christian colleges. But under Enlightenment's influence they degenerated into secular institutions, and from that they too turned hostile to theism.

So today we have Marxism vying for political control of our government. That's simply opportunistic. Although Marxists have been trying to penetrate and co-opt the Federal government since the 1930's, they simply are taking advantage of our “secular” (ie, anti-theistic) understanding of public affairs. Marxism is only superficially the problem. The real problem is deeper. We have – as a nation, including those in the Church – agreed that government has to be “secular.” We've bought the notion that secular means neutral and that's the wisest approach to tolerance and viewpoint diversity. We've adopted it so thoroughly that it has shaped our understanding of what it means to be a Christian in America: We're religious for 2 hours on Sunday morning when we attend church, but we're secular (neutral toward religious matters) the rest of the week. That's now a thoroughly American value. But it's a Satanic lie.

No one can be neutral regarding God and His will. That's not an option now and it never was, not anywhere. There are only two options: Either loving God with all our heart, soul and might and loving our neighbor as ourself or, by default,

being a pagan idolater in thrall to the world of demons. There's nothing in between. No one is in the middle for there isn't any middle for anyone to be in. God made Creation this way, He made us this way. Everything He made is moral.

Consider the following from the Bible: People morally are either of two lines, from Cain or from Abel. There are only two classes of people on earth, the Jews and the Gentiles. In Proverbs, there are only two options, being wise or being a fool. In Psalm 1, the head of the Psalter, there are only two types of people, righteous ones who are blessed, and those who are wicked who perish. In Daniel, those who are righteous arise from the dead to everlasting life, but others awake to shame. In the Sermon on the Mount's ending, there are two – and only two – options: the narrow gate that leads to life, and the wide gate that leads to destruction. And there are two kinds of hearers, the wise man and the fool. John 3:36 describes the destiny of two kinds of people. In the Epistles, one is either in Christ, or not. At the end of the Bible, there are those whose names are written in the Book of Life, and everyone else whose name isn't written there.

There's no such neutral position as "secular," or "agnostic," or "undecided," or "No religion." We've created these terms to deceive ourselves. Overwhelmingly American Christianity is a civil religion. It has features of biblical Christianity, such as belief in Christ and respect for the Bible, but it's also subtly fused with secular values, with the values of Western civilization and of patriotism. ("I mind my own business, and I expect others to do the same." "I take no unnecessary risks. I want to live a safe and peace-filled life." "Help people in need? My government does that.") Our civil religion's most important festival is Christmas, when a helpless, dependent baby is venerated and we celebrate that baby's birth by decorating our houses with bright lights and Santa Clauses. As part of our civil religion, we hold our nation in high regard; we want it to be great, exceptional among the nations. We want our nation to be well-ordered and prosperous; we take seriously our public duties as citizens. And so politics is an important component of our lives. We fulfill our religious obligation by attending church on Sunday mornings, but the rest of the week is ours to live as we choose. We don't kill people, or steal, or commit adultery. We keep our lawns mowed and shrubs trimmed. We bemoan the degeneration of our culture because American culture is so much a part of our life. We're basically good people.

People into civil religion say (or think): "I worship God on Sunday mornings. The rest of my week I may not be doing church work, but neither do I do evil; it's neutral." As our nation supposes that it's neutral regarding God, we suppose most of our life is too. To the extent our lives are no different from those of our secular neighbors, we're deceiving ourselves. Civil religion cannot change a society nor preserve what virtues it had. It's powerless. So the descent of American society into paganism is inexorable. Only disciples, Christ-followers, can be "salt and light." Similarly, civil religion cannot change its participants. Sanctification cannot and does not occur in civil religion. In fact, such individuals are only minutes away from monstrous cruelty. That happened in Germany. In the early decades of the 20th century, the German Lutheran church had transformed into a civil religion, so that Nazism was able to dominate the church with both astonishing ease and appalling consequences.

In Acts 24, when Paul was questioned by the provincial governor, Felix, who was as secular as anyone, and Paul mentioned the fact of judgment to come, Felix felt fear and broke off the interrogation. When Paul then was questioned by King Agrippa, another secular, the king said, "Don't try to persuade me to become a Christian!" (Acts 26:28). Seculars aren't neutral toward God, nor are they open to the Gospel if only they heard it. No way! They've shut God out of their lives and they fully intend to keep it that way. Inescapably, secular means worldly.

Dear reader, we're either totally in love with God, and hold Him in our thoughts continually. Or we don't really know Him, and we don't care. Paul exclaimed, "**For me to live is Christ.**" He also wrote, "**Everything that is not of faith is sin,**" and "**. . . the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world,**" meaning his *whole life* was one of trust in a sovereign, good, wise and loving God. That's how he lived, all day every day, regardless of circumstances, regardless how he felt. And God expects that kind of devotion from all of us. And why shouldn't He? After all, He's our Creator, our Savior, and our Provider. He's beautiful beyond description, a Person of exquisite goodness, and the just Ruler of the entire cosmos. And He knows our name! That's how much He loves each of us. God is the greatest reality there is. Nothing else compares to the wonder and greatness and joy that is ours when we think of the One who has called us into an intimate, eternal relationship with Himself. Reflecting all the time on God means that even doing the mundane things in life acquires a transcendent quality; the nooks and crannies of everyday life fill up with joy and thanksgiving. He has given us dignity and worth beyond anything else the world puts on offer as we serve Him according to His will.

Out of love for us God has promised us future blessings greater than anything we can possibly imagine. We certainly can – and should – love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul and might.