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The Second Religiousness of Western Society: The Forgotten Prophecy of Oswald Spengler and its Relation to Jesus

The Soul of Culture

When the modern technological mind of the 19th and 20th centuries envisioned the future it invariably conceived of it as holding forth the promise of space travel, rockets, super-science and miraculous medicine. It seemed impossible that our future could be dominated by anything other than science, freedom, rationalism and technology, all of which would marginalize holy wars, crusades, astrologers, Ayatollahs, Popes, mysticism, occultists, fideism and the like. Nevertheless, it was the dubious predication of the early twentieth century German historian Oswald Spengler (1880-1936) that such would not be the case.

Spengler believed that all Civilizations experience a return to their initial spiritual sentiments as they reach their greatest material heights. He called this phenomenon a “Second Religiousness.”¹ Civilization goes supernova, so to speak, in its technological and political development. It reaches a climax beyond which there can be no further progress. All its possibilities are exhausted. Simultaneously, the masses become bored, disillusioned and disgusted with this stage and experience a rebirth of that society’s religious feelings. This means a return to traditional beliefs, even antiquated and

¹ Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West*, vol. 1, trans. Charles Francis Atkinson (New York: Knopf, 1938), xi, 108, 424-428, 306; vol. 2, 45, 310-314, 386, 455. Bruce G. Brander, *Staring Into Chaos: Explorations in the Decline of Western Civilization* (Dallas: Spence, 1998), 87-154.

anachronistic ones that were once held in ill repute during society's rationalist phase, such as occultism and mysticism. Second religiousness means a new spiritual hunger develops in a post-rational world. "Belief in program [Socialism, Marxism, Nationalism, Liberalism and Technicism] was the mark and glory of our grandfathers – in our grandsons it will be proof of provincialism. In its place is developing even now the seed of a new resigned piety, sprung from tortured conscience and spiritual hunger, whose task will be to found a new Hither-side that looks for secrets instead of steel-bright concepts and in the end will find them in the depth of the 'Second Religiousness.'"² To the question can modern society live without God? Spengler answered a resounding No!

For Spengler all Cultures develop around an understanding of space and time. The *logic of space* reveals the cause and effect nature of the universe, but the *logic of time* speaks of direction and orientation of space. Time provides the basis for all religious belief.³ This understanding represents no mere materialist concept as modern natural science, physics and astronomy may wish to describe it, but a deep spiritual inwardness known intuitively as inner necessity, which he called a "great soul."⁴ Culture means a spiritual commitment to a way of thinking and living. The soul of a Culture is its spiritual vitality represented by a central driving ideal of space and time. This ideal is captured by a "prime symbol"⁵ that represents the essence of each Culture. The prime symbol is understood intuitively and informs the entire tenor of Culture including religion, art, science, literature and politics.

² Spengler, *The Decline of the West*, vol. 2, 455.

³ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, 7,55, 172.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 106.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 174.

The long corridor of the Egyptian temple and architecture that led the living down a straight path to death and the afterlife represented the Egyptian soul. The Arabian (Judeo-Christian-Islamic) soul expressed it self in the cupola of Hagia Sophia and represented cavernous space. The basilica and domed structures of churches and mosques represented an immense but limited universe, a contained space. The Classical soul (Greco-Roman) was exemplified by the polis the independent city-state culminating in Rome and in the freestanding nude statue. In both cases Classical time and space were bound and unextended, limited to the immediate horizon and concrete. The Classical was firmly planted on earth in an eternal present.

The Western soul, however, is radically opposed to the Classical; it strives to capture *infinity*, its prime symbol, best expressed in the soaring Gothic Cathedrals of the latter Middle Ages. A Cultural ideal seeks to live out its full potential, after reaching this goal the spiritual vitality of Culture gives way to a hardening and transforms into a Civilization in which all of the logical possibilities of the initial Cultural soul become realized. Soul finds itself exhausted resulting in only a mechanical unfolding of its initial vision without the necessary vitality that had given birth to it. In the Civilization stage soul loses its vital force and ennui becomes its principal characteristic. Civilization continues its relentless materialist expansion but without the spiritual vitality that supplied Culture with its original impetus. This does not mean an immediate end to Civilization for a Civilization can continue in this petrified state for centuries even millennia such as China, India and Islamic cultures. This condition creates a sense of alienation and tension between the ideals of society and everyday life styles of its people that can overtime lead to decline and eventual collapse as in the case of the Roman

polis, one of Spengler's favorite analogies for the future of Western Civilization.⁶

According to Spengler contemporary Western society had its precursor in the Nordic myth of Valhalla, a place of limitless and infinite loneliness and solitude.⁷ This eternal sense of space and time became Christianized in the Gothic Middle Ages around 1000 A. D. represented by the architectural achievements of the Gothic Cathedrals, Chartres, Notre Dame, etc., which have their modern materialist counterparts in today's sky scrappers, colossal buildings attempting to capture the infinity of space with their ever upward spires. In literature Bernard of Clairvaux represented Gothic mysticism, an inward soaring after infinity.⁸ The greatest expression of the search for infinity was in the divinity of the Holy Eucharist. The essence of the Gothic spirit was to strive to capture infinity of space, to rap time around the eternal as in Eucharist theology. Spengler called this world-feeling Faustian after the character Dr. Faust from the famous German poet Johann Wolfgang Goethe's play *Faust*. Faust sold his soul to the devil in order to gain knowledge and power. Spengler felt this image best captured the Western drive and striving for power over infinity. "Knowledge is power" has become the Baconian maxim for the modern world.⁹

Spengler credited the global extent of Western society and its unprecedented economic and technological prowess to its Faustian ideals of infinite striving over time and space. It is the cresting, ebb, exhaustion and eventual death of these ideals (in their modern scientific and materialist form) in the soul of the Culture that marks the onset of Civilization and the eventual return to religious feeling. However, this second coming of

⁶ Ibid., 1, 38.

⁷ Ibid., 1, 186, 400.

⁸ Ibid., Table 1; vol. 2, 250, 503.

⁹ Ibid., 1, 362.

religious sentiment is unable to save Civilization. In short, the ideas of a Culture die not because they have been refuted by other ideals but because they have lost all appeal in later generations. They have become boring and exhausted. People in the Civilization phase return to them much the way the elderly return to the forgotten faith of their childhood, for comfort and solace at the end of one's days, but it cannot rekindle the original flame in spiritual life of youth. Now there is only a long farewell before passing into eternity. "The soul thinks once again, and in Romanticism looks back piteously to its childhood; then finally, weary, reluctant, cold, it loses its desire to be, and, as in Imperial Rome, wishes itself out of the overlong daylight and back in the darkness of protomysticism, in the womb of the mother, in the grave. The spell of a 'second religiousness' comes upon it, and Late-Classical man turns to the practice of the cults of Mithras, of Isis, of the Sun – those very cults into which a soul just born in the East has been pouring a new wine of dreams and fears and loneliness."¹⁰

One commentator gives us a succinct description of the Civilization phase according to Spengler that leaves future inhabitants disgusted and longing for the inner certainty and meaning that only religious belief can deliver,

Civilization as Spengler used the word, is the inevitable destiny of an advanced society, its last, most external and artificial condition. Once a Culture's aim is attained – its idea, its entire content of inner possibilities fulfilled and made actual – it suddenly hardens. It mortifies. Its blood congeals. Its creative force breaks down. The fire in the soul dies. Life is fatigued. The society experiences no more fullness but, instead, inward poverty, coldness, emptiness, an intellectual chill and void. Values built up and maintained within the Culture begin to fall away. A sweeping transvaluation, a rejection, a persistent nihilism remolds all the old forms, understands them otherwise, practices them in different ways. The society begets no more but only reinterprets – and therein lies the negative mood common to all such periods, whether the age of the Buddha in India, of Socrates in Greece, or of Rousseau, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Wanger in Western society.

¹⁰ Ibid., 1, 108.

Everything begins to change. Religion of the heart yields to dead, abstract metaphysics or scientific irreligion. Reverence for tradition and respect for age vanish in cold, matter-of-fact practicality. Patriotism diminishes and internationalism increases, while home, race, and fatherland give way to a cosmopolitan outlook. The economic base of the fruitful earth is abandoned in favor of money. Quality succumbs to quantity, appeals for the best giving way to appeals for the most. Concern for creativity and growth is displaced by concern for comfort and luxury. Hard-earned rights are replaced by natural rights. The folk becomes the mass. Motherhood is replaced by sexuality. Social unity crumbles in social divisiveness. Ideals lose their power, and all further strivings are no more than struggles for animal advantage.¹¹

Spengler described the secularization process in which the spiritual and religious forces of society are drained and only the material form remains. This creates a rank skepticism and rationalism that gives birth to great scientific and technological achievements. This stage was passed in the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries. However, the age of rationalism leaves the world cold and metaphysically empty. This creates the conditions for a new religious feeling in society, a return to Civilization's initial spiritual beginnings. Every Civilization experiences this second religiousness as a sequel to its highest point of material development, which spells the end of its great scientific and technological accomplishments. Spengler's explanation may be applied to the current impasse in sociology of religion that finds both a persistence of secularization as well as new revival of religious consciousness taking place.¹² Secularization and revival can operate simultaneously, even stoking each other's growth. However, according to Spengler religion must prevail. Spengler believed that sometime in the

¹¹ Brander, *Staring Into Chaos*, 129-130.

¹² Steve Bruce, *God is Dead: Secularization in the West* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002); Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

twentieth century there would be a new religious turn that signaled the on set of this condition,

In this very century, I prophesy, the century of scientific-critical Alexanderianism, of the great harvests, of final formulations, a new element of inwardness will arise to overthrow the will-to-victory of science. Exact science must presently fall upon its own keen sword. First, in the 18th Century, its methods were tried out, then, in the 19th, its powers, and now its historical role is critically reviewed. But from Skepsis there is a path to “second religiousness,” which is the sequel and not the preface to the Culture. Men dispense with proof, desire only to believe and not to dissect.

The individual renounces by laying aside books. The Culture renounces by ceasing to manifest itself in high scientific intellectuals. But science exists only in the living thought of great savant-generations, and books are nothing if they are not living and effective in men worthy of them. Scientific results are merely items of an intellectual tradition. It constitutes the death of a science that no one any longer regards it as an event, and an orgy of two centuries of exact scientific-ness brings satiety. Not the individual, the soul of the Culture itself has had enough, and it expresses this by putting into the field of the day ever smaller, narrower and more unfruitful investigators.¹³

The return to religion comes in two phases. The first is *trivialization*, a toying with religious and occult beliefs as a past time and entertainment, a way of escape from the doldrums of sterile rationalism. In Classical civilization there was the Isis-cult in Rome that functioned as a past time for high society. “The Chaldean astrology was in those days a *fashion*, very far removed from the genuine Classical belief in oracles It was ‘relaxation,’ a ‘let’s pretend.’ And, over and above this, there were the numberless charlatans and fake prophets who toured the towns and sought with their pretentious rites to persuade the half-educated into a renewed interest in religion. Correspondingly, we have in the European-American world of to-day the occultist and theosophist fraud, the

¹³ Spengler, *Decline of the West*, 1, 424.

American Christian Science, the untrue Buddhism of drawing rooms, the religious arts-and-crafts business (brisker in Germany than even in England) that caters for groups and cults of Gothic or Late Classical or Taoist sentiment. Everywhere it is just a toying with myths that no one really believes, a tasting of cults that is hoped might fill the inner void. The real belief is always the belief in atoms and numbers, but it requires this highbrow hocus-pocus to make it bearable in the long run.”¹⁴

Although religion begins to make its reappearance in the form of playful curiosity and escapism (something plainly evident in popular culture today) the fact of its existence is a significant harbinger of a more serious and genuine spirit of religious consciousness to come. This will comprise the second phase of second religiousness. A serious and deep-seated piety grips the soul of late Civilization and returns it to a youthful exuberance. For Western Civilization there is no doubt that this must include a return to forms of Gothic Christianity in both its light and dark senses. This means adherence to the cult of the Virgin Mary, Angelology as well as the whole hierarchy of demonology and medieval folklore and “Devil-myth,” including belief in crusades, witches, werewolves, ghosts, spirits, exorcism, black magic, spells and superstitions of all kinds, which were also perpetuated in Protestantism, however without the cult of Mary and the Saints.¹⁵ New forms of religious syncretism impossible to predict will arise, which Spengler felt would resemble Christian Adventism.¹⁶ “The material of the Second Religiousness is simply that of the first, genuine, young religiousness – only otherwise experienced and expressed. It starts with Rationalism’s fading out in helplessness, then

¹⁴ Ibid., 2, 310.

¹⁵ Ibid., 2, 283-299.

¹⁶ Ibid., 2, 311.

the forms of the Springtime become visible, and finally the whole world of the primitive religion, which had receded before the grand forms of the early faith, returns to the foreground, powerful, in the guise of popular syncretism that is to be found in every Culture at this phase.”¹⁷ The twentieth century would only see the beginning of these developments, although, it would not be until the twenty-first century that the second religiousness would be felt in its full effects, “decline . . . will occupy the first centuries of the coming millennium.”¹⁸

A New Religious Age

Spengler’s predication of a new religious consciousness has resonance for us at the beginning of the twenty-first century especially since the belief of modern secularists since the Enlightenment was that with the growth of secular modern belief traditional religion would decline and eventually fade away. One prominent sociologist of religion Peter Berger noted in 1968 that by “the 21st century, religious believers are likely to be found only in small sects, huddled together to resist a worldwide secular culture.”¹⁹ The new religious sentiments of our times have refuted the secularization theory of religion. Berger later recanted, “That idea is simple: Modernization necessarily leads to a decline of religion, both in society and in the minds of individuals. And it is precisely this key idea that has turned out to be wrong.”²⁰ “For nearly three centuries social scientists and assorted Western intellectuals have been promising the end of religion. Each generation

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid., 1, 107; 2, 310.

¹⁹ Peter L. Berger, quoted in Toby Lester, “OH, GODS!” in *The Atlantic Monthly* (February 2002), 39.

²⁰ Peter L. Berger, “The Desecularization of the World: A Global Over View” in Peter L. Berger, ed., *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 2.

has been confident that within another few decades, or possibly a bit longer, humans will ‘outgrow’ belief in the supernatural. This proposition soon came to be known as the secularization thesis.’²¹

Secularization meant the adaptation of traditional belief systems to modern progressive and Enlightenment naturalism that held to central ideals of progress and technology as found prominently in Liberal Protestantism and most recently in the *aggiornamento* program of Vatican II in Roman Catholicism. Other modernizing programs in non-Christian religions such as Judaism, Islam and Eastern faiths were also attempted. The resurgence of traditional Christian religion, Islam, New Age philosophy, a host of other metaphysical movements including Theosophy, Ufology, the occult, witchcraft, belief in Nostradamus, astrology, the growth of Eastern faiths, belief in the paranormal, pseudoscience and the tidal wave of religious and apocalyptic themes in popular culture, *The Matrix*, *Terminator*, *Star Wars* and *Left Behind* for example, has brought the modernization program of the twentieth century into serious question and leaves its viability for the twenty-first century in doubt.²² Even hardened skeptics admit

²¹ Rodney Stark, quoted in Toby Lester, “OH, GODS!” in *The Atlantic Monthly* (February 2002), 39; Rodney Stark and Roger Finke, *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000).

²² Ronald Hutton, *The Triumph of the Moon: A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft* (New York: Oxford, 1999); Fritjof Capra, *The Turning Point: Science, Society, and the Rising Culture* (New York: Bantam, 1982); Alex Herd, *Apocalypse Pretty Soon: Travels in End-Time America* (New York: Norton, 1999); Daniel Wojcik, *The End of the World as We Know it: Faith, Fatalism, and Apocalypse in America* (New York: New York University Press, 1997); Frederic J. Baumgartner, *Longing for the End: A History of Millennialism in Western Civilization* (New York: St. Martin’s, 1999); Paul Boyer, *When Time Shall be No More: Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 1992); Damain Thompson, *The End of Time: Faith and Fear in the Shadow of the Millennium* (Hanover, NH: University of New England Press, 1996); Eugne Weber, *Apocalypses: Prophecies, Cults and Millennial Beliefs Throughout the Ages* (London: Random, 1999); Eva Shaw, *Eve of Destruction Prophecies, Theories and Preparations for the End of the World* (Los Angeles: Lowell, 1995); Richard Abanes, *End -Times Visions: The Doomsday Obsession* (Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1998); Richard Kyle, *The Last Days are Here Again: A History of the End Times* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1998); Michael Shermer, *Why People Believe Weird Things: Pseudoscience, Superstition, and Other Confusions of Our Times* (New York: Freeman, 1997); Paul Heelas, *The New Age Movement: The Celebration of the Self and the Sacralization of Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1996); James R. Lewis and J. Gordon Melton, eds. *Perspectives on the New*

that society has taken a new religious turn toward belief in the supernatural, paranormal and traditional beliefs. They *agnst* over the negative effects such popular spirituality will have on science and reason as well as technological progress.²³ We live at the edge of a new religious age.

Since the 1970's traditional religion often called "Fundamentalism" has sought to reverse what they believed to be the alienating effects of secularism on faith.

"Fundamentalists do not entirely reject Enlightenment-based modernity, however. They like many of its products – rapid transportation, telecommunications, electricity, medical science – but are wary of the values that seem to accompany these technological and scientific marvels. One such value of secular modernity is the superiority of human reason to all other means of knowledge, including religious revelation (that is, knowledge revealed to chosen people through extraordinary or supernatural means). When people agree that only rational discourse is permissible in a society, something of even greater value is lost say the fundamentalists Fundamentalists would restore spiritual considerations to a central place in public and private discourse and would do so directly, by basing many of the laws and customs of society on the sacred scriptures or traditions which they believe to be the most authoritative guide to the Spirit who inspires all human goodness."²⁴ Fundamentalist belief in special revelation discerned through faith asserts a

Age (State University of New York Press, 1992); Russell Chandler, *Understanding the New Age* (Dallas: Word, 1988); "Apocalypse Now" *Time* (July 1, 2002), 41-48. "Dark Prophecies" *U.S. News and World Report* (December 15, 1997), 64-71. Lee Penn, "Dark Apocalypse" *SCP Journal* (23:4-24:1), 9-31.

²³ Wendy Kaminer, *Sleeping With Extra-Terrestrials: The Rise of Irrationalism and the Perils of Piety* (New York: Pantheon, 1999); Nicholas Humphrey, *Leaps of Faith: Science, Miracles, and the Search for Supernatural Consolation* (New York: Copernicus, 1999); Robert Park, *Voodoo Science: The Road from Foolishness to Fraud* (New York: Oxford Univeristy Press, 2000). Carl Sagan, *The Demon-Haunted World: Science As a Candle in the Dark* (New York: Random, 1996); "Why 'fact' TV Keeps Trotting Out Bigfoot" *The Dallas Morning News* (Monday, September 16, 2002),1, 6A.

²⁴ Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby, *The Glory and the Power: The Fundamentalist Challenge to the Modern World* (Boston: Beacon, 1992), 15; idem, eds., *The Fundamentalism Project*, 5 vols. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991-1995); Gabriel A. Almond, ed. et al. *Strong*

direct threat to the established values of enlightenment rationalism and pluralism. Fundamentalism neatly parallels Spengler's prediction of a new religious consciousness that will sweep over modernity. "Around 1975 this whole process [modernization] went into reverse. A new religious approach took shape, aimed no longer at adapting to secular values but at recovering a sacred foundation for the organization of society – by changing society if necessary. Expressed in a multitude of ways, this approach advocated moving on from a modernism that had failed, attributing its setbacks and dead ends to a separation from God. The theme was no longer *aggiornamento* but a 'second evangelization of Europe:' the aim was no longer to modernize Islam but to 'Islamize modernity.'"²⁵

According to one study the twenty-first century is shaping up to be one of the most religiously volatile ages since the Protestant Reformation. Across the world traditional supernatural religion is growing in popularity and acceptance including Protestant Pentecostalism, Neo Orthodoxy, pre-Vatican II Catholicism, belief in miracles, healing, the cult of Mary and the Saints, as well as beliefs in witchcraft, superstition, spiritism and radical Islam. One scholar noted, "The twenty-first century will be regarded by future historians as a century in which religion replaced ideology as the prime animating and destructive force in human affairs."²⁶ The global return to traditional religion, according to this study, finds itself primarily located in non-Western cultures

Religion: The Rise of Fundamentalism around the World (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003).

²⁵ Gilles Kepel, *The Revenge of God: The Resurgence of Islam, Christianity and Judaism in the Modern World*, trans. Alan Braley (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1994), 2. Benjamin R. Barber, *Jihad vs. McWorld* (New York: Times), 1995; Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster), 1996.

²⁶ Philip Jenkins, "The Next Christianity" in *The Atlantic Monthly* (October 2002), 55; idem, *The Next Christendom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

with Western sentiment lagging behind, still embroiled in secularism. However, this new wave of religious belief will eventually make itself felt in modern Western society, especially with the increase of migration from Latin America and other non-Western countries and will be experienced as nothing less than a return to Medievalism with the dawn of a new Christendom located primarily across Latin America, Asia and Africa. “The parallels to the Middle Ages may be closer than anyone had guessed.”²⁷

With the return of religion in the latter part of the twentieth century Spengler appears to be vindicated. Secularization with its values of progress, science and technicism has begun a retreat for the simple reason that it cannot provide metaphysical satisfaction in the lives of people. Secularism has not been rationally disproved; it has not been demonstrably refuted. Its inherent atheism has laid the seed of its own demise. Modern secularization has failed because it has proven to be untenable and unlivable. People cannot live without a metaphysically satisfying notion of transcendence which modernism denies. Life settles all arguments.²⁸ God’s death was short lived!

What Does the Future Hold?

According to Spengler the machine society of the modern world will eventually be viewed as the antithesis of God’s sovereignty as something Satanic. “And these machines become in their forms less and less human, more ascetic, mystic, esoteric. They weave the earth over with an infinite web of subtle forces, currents, and tensions. Their

²⁷ Philip Jenkins, “The Next Christianity,” 67. Recent articles in prominent newspapers reveal the same analysis of declining Christianity in Europe and North America and an increasing conservative Christianity throughout Asia, Latin America and Africa (“Pope John Paul II’s Legacy: Growing Flock, Widening Rifts” in *The Wall Street Journal* [Friday, October 17, 2003] A1, A12; “Where Faith Grows, Fired by Pentecostalism” in *The New York Times* [Tuesday, October 14, 2003] A1, A10.

²⁸ Spengler, *The Decline of the West*, 2, 482.

bodies become ever more and more immaterial, ever less noisy. The wheels, rollers, and levers are vocal no more. All that matters withdraws itself into the interior. Man has felt the machine to be devilish, and rightly. It signifies in the eyes of the believer the deposition of God. It delivers sacred Causality over to man and by him, with a sort of foreseeing omniscience is set in motion, silent and irresistible.”²⁹

Technological modernity still has some good decades if not centuries left and the world has not yet trembled under the full impact of modern technique. Yet, already in the fields of genetic engineering, cloning, artificial intelligence, war and industry, believers traditional and otherwise sense a terrible foreboding.³⁰ The outline of Mephistopheles has begun to take shape in modern progress. Even scientists themselves warn of impending danger and catastrophe (mass plagues due to scientific error and terrorism) if the problems created by science and technology such as nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, genetic engineering and nano technology are not addressed. This may well mean restricting research in certain areas and not sharing scientific results in others to keep dangerous technology out of the wrong hands.³¹ Such ideas spell the end of a major plank of modern scientism and secularism that *knowledge is power*. Our technology has grown too dangerous we must pull back on the reigns of progress before it’s too late.

²⁹ Ibid., 2, 504.

³⁰ Examples of the rising tide of mistrust toward modern progress are found in many writers to mention just a few: Bill McKibben, *Enough: Staying Human in an Engineered Age* (New York: Holt, 2003); Jacques Ellul, *The Technological Bluff*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990); idem, *The Technological Society*, trans. John Wilkinson (New York: Vintage, 1964); idem, *The Technological System*, trans. Joachim Neugroschel (New York: Continuum, 1980); Lewis Mumford, *The Myth of the Machine: Technics and Human Development* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1966); idem, *The Pentagon of Power: The Myth of the Machine*. Vol. 2. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1970); Neil Postman, *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology* (New York: Knopf, 1992); Paul Tillich, *The Spiritual Situation in Our Technical Society* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1988).

³¹ Martin Rees, *Our Final Hour: A Scientist’s Warning: How Terror, Error, and Environmental Disaster Threaten Humankind’s Future in this Century – on Earth and Beyond* (New York: Basic, 2003); John Leslie, *The End of the World: The Science and Ethics of Human Extinction* (New York: Routledge, 1998).

Even the world's most notorious atheist recognized the importance of limits when Nietzsche said, "there is a great deal I do not want to know – Wisdom sets bounds even to knowledge."³² How can Christians fail to do likewise? According to Spengler progress will leave future generations of the second religiousness with a sense of the machine's evilness and seek their salvation in mysticism instead of rationalism.³³

Jesus and the Second Religiousness

Spengler is forgotten because his prediction of a return to religion predates all current analysis of the phenomenon, but is never acknowledged. Perhaps because he remains unread by intellectuals and is simply written off as too pessimistic and deterministic. He exists as someone once said in a "high profile obscurity." Nevertheless, his accuracy, however flamboyant or exaggerated his style, is undeniable. If secularism is waning and there appears to be a new religious sentiment in society how does this effect our view of Jesus?

French philosopher Gabriel Marcel once noted that there exists an ontological need in human beings;³⁴ or a thirst for the transcendent as someone else pointed out.³⁵ It is this need for transcendence that our high tech modern society has co-opted and left us in a sterile condition. "Modern nonreligious man assumes a new existential situation; he regards himself solely as the subject and agent of history, he refuses all appeal to transcendence."³⁶ The new religiousness was entirely predictable given the highly

³² Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols in Twilight of the Idols/ The Anti-Christ*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Penguin, 1968), 33.

³³ Spengler, *The Decline of the West*, 2, 505.

³⁴ Gabriel Marcel, *The Mystery of Being Volume One* (Chicago: Gateway, 1960).

³⁵ Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, trans. W. R. Trask (New York: Harvest, 1959), 64.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 203.

rational conditions of the modern world. This can be a great boon for Evangelicalism if we can begin to make an adjustment to a greater religious mindset. In the past our apologetics have been oriented around evidentialist, foundationalism and rationalism, in light of the new religiousness we can begin to focus on presuppositionalism.³⁷ However, either in an age of rationalism or religiosity our message should remain consistent. It was Jesus who said, “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest” (Matt 11:28). Jesus liberates from the mechanicalness of rationalism as well as from the burden of a new works salvation that must inevitably come with increased religious sentiments.

³⁷ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2d. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 174.