



# The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics

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Theorists of "secularization" have for two centuries been saying that religion must inevitably decline in the modern world. But today, much of the world is as religious as ever. This volume challenges the belief that the modern world is increasingly secular, showing instead that modernization more often strengthens religion.

Seven leading cultural observers examine several regions and several religions and explain the resurgence of religion in world politics. **Peter L. Berger** opens with a global overview. The other six writers deal with particular aspects of the religious scene: **George Weigel**, with Roman Catholicism; **David Martin**, with the evangelical Protestant upsurge not only in the Western world but also in Latin America, Africa, the Pacific rim, China, and Eastern Europe; **Jonathan Sacks**, with Jews and politics in the modern world; **Abdullahi A. An-Na'im**, with political Islam in national politics and international relations; **Grace Davie**, with Europe as perhaps the exception to the desecularization thesis; and **Tu Weiming**, with religion in the People's Republic of China.

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### Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

In the 1950s and 1960s, Berger, Harvey Cox and others were fearless proponents of "secularization theory." This theory held that as technology improved and modernity advanced upon culture, religion would begin to decline and we would live, according to Cox, in a "secular city." Cox reversed himself in *Religion in the Secular City* (1984), declaring that the future of religion lay in grassroots movements such as fundamentalism, Pentecostalism and liberation theology. Now, Berger gathers a number of essays contending that, far from being in decline in the modern world, religion is actually experiencing a resurgence. In his opening essay, Berger asserts that "the assumption we live in a secularized world is false.... The world today is as furiously religious as it ever was." He points out that religious movements have not adapted to secular culture in order to survive but have successfully developed their own identities and retained a focus on the supernatural in their beliefs and practices. Berger then examines the origins, and ponders the future, of this global religious resurgence. While he acknowledges that he cannot predict the future course, he maintains that the "critique of secularity common to all resurgent movements is that human existence bereft of transcendence is an impoverished and finally untenable condition." Berger argues that the desire for transcendence is an integral part of the human psyche. He also provides a brief overview of the impact of religion on economic development, war and peace, human rights and social justice. Other essayists contribute "Roman Catholicism in the Age of John Paul II" (George Weigel), "The Evangelical Protestant Upsurge and Its Political Implications" (David Martin), "Judaism and Politics in the Modern World" (Jonathan Sacks), "Europe: The Exception That Proves the Rule?" (Grace Davie), "The Quest for Meaning: Religion in the People's Republic of China" (Tu Weiming) and "Political Islam in National Politics and International Relations" (Abdullahi A. An-Na'im). Berger's collection is replete with compelling writing about the relationship of religion and politics. (Aug.)

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Review

### Publishers Weekly

"Berger's collection is replete with compelling writing about the relationship of religion and politics."

### Vidyajyoti

"This is a very useful collection of studies that can help religious leaders to reorient their strategies and political involvement."

About the Author

Peter L. Berger is senior research fellow and founder of the Institute on Culture, Religion, and World Affairs at Boston University. His many previous books include *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics* and (with Anton Zijderveld) *In Praise of Doubt: How to Have Convictions without Becoming a Fanatic*.

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