

God is Dead: Secularization in the West

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Steve Bruce

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Drawing on an international range of examples, Steve Bruce offers a comprehensive and up-to-date defence of the secularisation debate.

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Editorial Review

From Library Journal

Challenging "supply-side" proponents of the enduring vitality of religious belief in the modern world, Bruce (Univ. of Aberdeen; *Religion in the Modern World*) proclaims that religious "decline is not a sociological myth." The stress in the title should go on the word is: the data show that God really is dead, despite God's vestigial survival as a nostalgic relic or nebulous aid to self-realization. Modernization has caused religion to change in such ways that it has lost its social significance. As Bruce argues, "Individualism, diversity and egalitarianism in the context of liberal democracy undermine the authority of religious beliefs," making belief in God a personal option rather than a compelling necessity. Opponents to the secularization argument (chiefly Rodney Stark) point to the strength of religion in America. But under secularization, "It is not self-conscious irreligion that is important," Bruce writes. "It is indifference." Sociological research increasingly points to a growing cultural indifference to the supernatural and the exclusive truth claims of religion.

Bruce's book is a compelling, vigorous, and scrupulously fair defense of what the secularization paradigm means and does not mean. Highly recommended for all libraries. Steve Young, McHenry Cty. Coll., Crystal Lake, IL

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Review

'Steve Bruce's book has all the hallmarks of his work: clarity, verve, graphic illustration and common sense. The argument is Bruce's cumulative statement of the secularization theme, bringing the various elements together in an impressive synthesis, as well as building in counter-arguments, such as those to do with the role of religion in ethnic solidarity. Within its own terms and specific context – western liberal democracies, and especially Europe – it is difficult to refute.'

--David Martin, London School of Economics

"Bruce's book is a compelling, vigorous and scrupulously fair defense of what the secularization paradigm means and does not mean. Highly recommended." (*Library Journal*)

"The sooner churches face up to Bruce's thesis, the better." (*Ministry Today*)

"Readable, debatable, and full of important insights on everything from the failure of New Age religions to a cautious defense of the golden age of religion thesis, it is a book that all libraries should own. No serious (or even casual) student of religion can afford to neglect it." (*Choice*)

"...the pace and style of Bruce's narrative, the crispness and clarity of his argument, and his frequent digs at aspects of the contemporary mood...make *God is Dead* a truly entertaining and enlightening book."

--Michael Rosie (*British Sociological Association Network Magazine*)

"Readable, debatable, and full of important insights on everything from the failure of New Age religions to a cautious defense of the golden age of religion thesis, it is a book that all libraries should own. No serious (or even casual) student of religion can afford to neglect it." (*Choice*)

"This book is exactly what the back cover claims: a robust defense of the secularization thesis...The writing and the presentation are both concise and clear, offering a resource that students will cherish." (*Theology*)

"[T]his volume is a welcome resource for teachers/scholars interested in current theoretical disputes in the sociology of religion as well as students of the religious change in particular cultures of the West." (*Religious*

Studies Review)

"[T]he pace and style of Bruce's narrative, the crispness and clarity of his argument, and his frequent digs at aspects of the contemporary mood...make *God is Dead* a truly entertaining and enlightening book." (BSA Network)

From the Back Cover

Christianity in the democracies of the 'first' world has been declining in power, popularity and prestige for a century. However, many commentators, social scientists as well as church leaders, try and minimize the extent of this change. They maintain that religious sentiment remains strong despite declining levels of church involvement, and insist that secularization is an academic myth.

In this robust defense of the secularization paradigm, Bruce elaborates just what Weber, Durkheim, Berger and Wilson thought was happening to religion in the West, and responds to critics of this concept. Specific topics covered include the significance of New Age spirituality, the influence of eastern religions on the West, the impact of science, the charismatic movement, religion and politics in the USA, and the future of religion.

Bruce concludes the old orthodoxy was right: cultural diversity, in egalitarian and liberal democracies that place the individual above the community, undermines religious belief. Drawing on a diverse range of international examples, and written by one of the foremost sociologists of religion working today, *God is Dead* moves the debate about secularization forward. It will be an invaluable resource for students of sociology of religion, modern religion, Christianity, new religious movements and religion and culture.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Violet Iverson:

The experience that you get from *God is Dead: Secularization in the West* may be the more deep you searching the information that hide into the words the more you get serious about reading it. It does not mean that this book is hard to know but *God is Dead: Secularization in the West* giving you excitement feeling of reading. The author conveys their point in particular way that can be understood by anyone who read that because the author of this guide is well-known enough. This specific book also makes your vocabulary increase well. Therefore it is easy to understand then can go along, both in printed or e-book style are available. We highly recommend you for having this kind of *God is Dead: Secularization in the West* instantly.

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