September 8: “Confessing the Faith in a Secular Age: Engaging the Myth of the Autonomous Self”

September 15: “Confessing the Faith in a Secular Age: Engaging the Myth of Authenticity”

September 22: “Confessing the Faith in a Secular Age: Engaging the Myth of Time and Opportunity”
Confessing: To publicly agree on what God has been doing in and through the crucified and Lord Jesus Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, to submit one’s life to this endeavor and commit one’s future to what God continues to work out for the sake of the world.

Skinner, Mark W. Reclaiming the Triune Life of A Congregation: Shared Missional Characteristics of MN ELCA Congregations. 2015
“Why was it virtually impossible not to believe in God in say, 1500 in our Western society, while in 2000 many of us find this not only easy, but even inescapable?”

1. “The natural world ... testified to divine purpose and action ... storms, droughts, floods, plagues, as well as years of exceptional fertility and flourishing, were seen as acts of God, as the now dead metaphor of our legal language still bears witness.”

2. “God was implicated in the very existence of society ... polis, kingdom church, or whatever ... one could not but encounter God everywhere.”

3. “People lived in an ‘enchanted world.’ The enchanted world in this sense is the world of spirits, demons, and moral forces which our ancestors lived in.”

from Charles Taylor, A Secular Age
How did we arrive in the secular age?

The search/quest for authenticity...

That which is authentic is more important than that which is holy, good or righteous ... (Root, FFSA)
Some History from 1900-2000

- **1910** “The Fundamentals” published
- **1914** Formation of the Assemblies of God
- **1914** Beginning of WW I
- **1919** Formation of the World Christian Fundamentalist Assn.
- **1925** Scopes Monkey Trial
- **1929** Beginning of Great Depression
- **1933** Hitler becomes chancellor of Germany
- **1941** Japan invades Pearl Harbor
- **1946** End of WW II
- **1949** Beginning of Graham crusades
- **1963** President JFK assassinated
- **1965** MLK leads Selma, AL March
- **1969** Apollo Moon Landing/Woodstock
- **1973** Invention of the Cellular Phone
- **1974** Formation of Seminex
- **1975** Fall of Saigon
- **1979** Beginning of Soviet-Afghan War
- **1980** Hewlett Packard releases the HP-85 computer
- **1988** Berlin Wall comes down/birth of the ELCA
- **1990** Saddam Hussein invades Kuwait
- **1993** US/UN forces enter Somalia
- **1999** Columbine High School shooting
The Rise of Christian Fundamentalism

“The Bible is God’s word. God being perfect cannot err. Therefore the Bible cannot err. It cannot err either in matters of geography, history, and science. It offers an alternative account to evolution’s. But one must believe, as liberals did not, in an errorless Bible, one which in its original manuscripts could not be in error.”

WW II through early 1960’s

• Faith lived out because of duty and obligation (conformity)

• Rise of the Cold War – how to confront? Consumerism (Keynesian economic theory) and Conformity

• Keep up with the Jones’

• Church membership vs atheistic stance of communism

• Rise of suburbia – childhood to be a protected and even honored period of life, free from all duty, free to play and have fun. (Root, ffsa)
The Modern Sunday School

- The Post-War Baby Boom
- The Emergence of Mega-Church (age segregated programs pandering to Boomers)
- Today
Sigmund Freud

The id, the ego and the superego.

How do we release the “id” – the inner child?

Answer: Resist the superego (conformity and pursue youthfulness the “authentic” self)

“...duty and obligation in any form were deeply suspect, for they were interpreted as tools of neurotic repression of authentic desires of the id; conformity, then, was interpreted by these teachers of the young to be a neurotic system of facists.” (Root, FFSA p. 43)

How does this praxis live out in the 60’s?
1960’s and into the 90’s

- Rise of the Bohemians and the hippie culture
- Sex, drugs and rock and roll
- It’s praxis ... resist conformity and embrace authenticity of the self. The result the unending quest for youthfulness.
- What happens when a bohemian culture mixes with the bourgeois? The rise of the “bobo.” (David Brooks, *Bobos in Paradise; The New Upper Class and How They God There*)
- Youthfulness, *then is a spirituality without transcendence or divine action*
- MTD (Moralistic, Therapeutic, Deism) Christian Smith, *The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Teenagers*
1960’s and into the 90’s

MTD (Moralistic, Therapeutic, Deism) Christian Smith, *The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Teenagers*

Moralistic: an *ethic of individualism*

Therapeutic: *anthropology of self-pursuit*

Deism: *Youthfulness* is a *spirituality without transcendence* or divine action

*Our conceptions of faith become chained to the pursuit of authenticity through youthfulness.* (Root, FFSA)
Renewal and Relational Revolution
The 1960’s to Mid-1970’s

“Taken together, these proposals were driven by a conviction that if you could bring together a mixture of (a) the moods, music, and ethos of contemporary (that is Baby Boomer) culture with (b) the essential, Biblical form of the church, and (c) invite the Holy Spirit to stir the mixture, then (d) the churches would be fixed and could return to their previous status at the center of society.”

• First Disestablishment
  • 1618 to 1648 Thirty Years War
  • separation of church and state

• Second Disestablishment
  • Turn of the 20th Century, rise of Catholicism
  • Parochial school movement in the US

• Third Disestablishment
  • Post World War II and the rise of pluralism

Church Growth: The 1970’s and 1980’s

The Church Growth Movement

“Growing churches were studied (again with little reference to their socio-geographic-political-ethnic contexts) to determine best practices that could be universalized to work in any church, anywhere” Roxburgh (p. 17)


Congregational Studies Effort

“... focused on assessing the inner workings of a congregation in order to help them to become effective again. It applied social science ... enhance self-understanding and health.” (p. 18 Roxburgh)
The Corporate Approach: 1980’s and 1990’s

Natural Church Development

“... they reflect the standard default of turning within the church both to name characteristics of health and to seek strategies for fixing it.”

Roxburgh (p.19)

“Emergent church was a broad coalition of younger leaders seeking to frame a ‘new kind of Christianity’ with new forms and practices of church life that claimed to link earlier forms of Christianity” (Roxburgh p. 20)

“Missional church ... the word missional however, is now an adjectival modifier for practically everything congregations and denomination do.” (Roxburgh, p.21)

### Change in Congregations by Average Worship Attendance 1990 to 2010

**Number of Congregations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type and Average</th>
<th>1990</th>
<th>1995</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>Change</th>
<th>% Change</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mission (0)</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>-29</td>
<td>25.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Small (1-50)</td>
<td>1,957</td>
<td>2,198</td>
<td>2,269</td>
<td>2,602</td>
<td>3,063</td>
<td>1,106</td>
<td>56.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pastoral (51-150)</td>
<td>5,301</td>
<td>5,207</td>
<td>4,995</td>
<td>4,809</td>
<td>4,558</td>
<td>-743</td>
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<tr>
<td>Program (151-350)</td>
<td>2,916</td>
<td>2,736</td>
<td>2,625</td>
<td>2,329</td>
<td>1,837</td>
<td>-1079</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Corporate (351-800)</td>
<td>717</td>
<td>645</td>
<td>691</td>
<td>581</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>-307</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mega (801 or more)</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>-9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>11,069</td>
<td>10,940</td>
<td>10,770</td>
<td>10,489</td>
<td>10,008</td>
<td>-1,061</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number of Sunday School Pupils
Trend: 1990–2010

The Rise of the “Nones”

Shock: 1960’s; Sex, Drugs and Rock n’ Roll and “God is Dead”

First aftershock: the rise of religious conservatism (1970s and 1980s).

Second aftershock: youth disaffection from religion (1990s and 2000s).

Who are the “Nones”?

1. Men, whites, and non-southerners are most likely.

2. Spiritual, not religious.

3. Disproportionately raised in non-religious backgrounds.

4. Heavily drawn from the center and left of the political spectrum.

Relativism  Objectivism
Figure 4.10
EMPTYING PEWS AND INCREASING NONES (1973–2008)

SOURCE: GENERAL SOCIAL SURVEY; DATA LOESS-SMoothed.
Taylor’s three understandings of “secular”

Secular 1: Sacred versus Secular Planes

Secular 2: Religious versus A-religious Spaces

Secular 3: The Negating of Transcendence
Taylor’s three understandings of “secular”

Secular 1: Sacred versus Secular Planes
Taylor’s three understandings of “secular”

Secular 2: Religious versus A-religious Spaces

“No longer is the struggle between the planes of eternity and time, but it is a struggle for cultural and societal space.”

Root, FFSA
Taylor’s three understandings of “secular”

Secular 3: The Negating of Transcendence

Faith need not be defined because faith has been stripped of transcendence and has little to nothing to do with mystery, transformation, and ontological encounter.

MTD is a form of faith where the actuality of a personal (ontologically other) God is unbelievable and transcendence is impossible.

Root, FFSA
Reclaiming

Reclaiming: To critically reflect upon claim what the triune God *has been* doing in a particular missional context, in such a way, that leads to confessing.