

Keeping Sacred Time against the Speed of Modern Life

the
congregation
in a secular age

Andrew Root

LLN Yearly Intensive Series

Session #1 2021.2022

The Congregation in a Secular Age

experience the Reign

Luke 21:31

Bethlehem Lutheran Church 2021-2022

“Modernity is the constant process of speeding things up...” p.14 (CISC)

- Change seeks to catch up and possess time. Transformation is an experience of encountering the fullness of time. (p.15)
- The faster you prime, and prime again, the faster you win, increase and grow – master of prime (p.16)
- Burnout is a depression imposed by the inability to keep pace. (p.17)
- Speed sickness (*Zeitkrankheit*) is infecting congregations today. (p.17)
- Does fullness come from busyness? (p.38)
- The church is constituted to keep sacred time. (p. 53)
- Technological acceleration tied to social change to pace of life (Hartmut Rosa p. 60)
- Who are the timekeepers in our society today?

Realm	Secular 0	Secular 1	Secular 2	Secular 3
General Definition	Secular is not conceivable	Sacred vs secular “planes”	Religious vs a-religious spaces	The negation of transcendence
Understanding of the <i>self</i>	Self <i>is</i> because God <i>is</i> . (Skinner)	Self is “porous”	“Buffered” self	All reality is understood and evaluated through the self.
Definition of <i>secular</i>	What is secular?	“The ordinary earthly <i>plane</i> of domestic life.”	“A particular space where the willing of human minds promises to be absent religion.” p. 107	“The immanent frame is <i>the</i> constructed social space that frames our lives entirely within the natural order (rather than the supernatural order).” p. 110
What is <i>faith</i> ?	Ongoing relationship with the living God who is <i>both</i> immanent and transcendent. (Skinner) “To actually enter into Christ.” p. 120	<i>Seeking and trusting</i> the transcendent power and presence of God. pp. 104-105 “Faith is the glue that bonds the heart to the Word.” <i>Luther, Hebrews commentary</i>	“... willful affiliation with religious institutions; choosing to locate yourself in the cultural space of institutional religion.” p.108	“... church participation and the willful decision to believe certain things ... faith is stripped of all transcendence ... ” p. 111

Time:

What is the relationship between God and time?

What happens when we *remove* God from our understanding of time?



Notes:

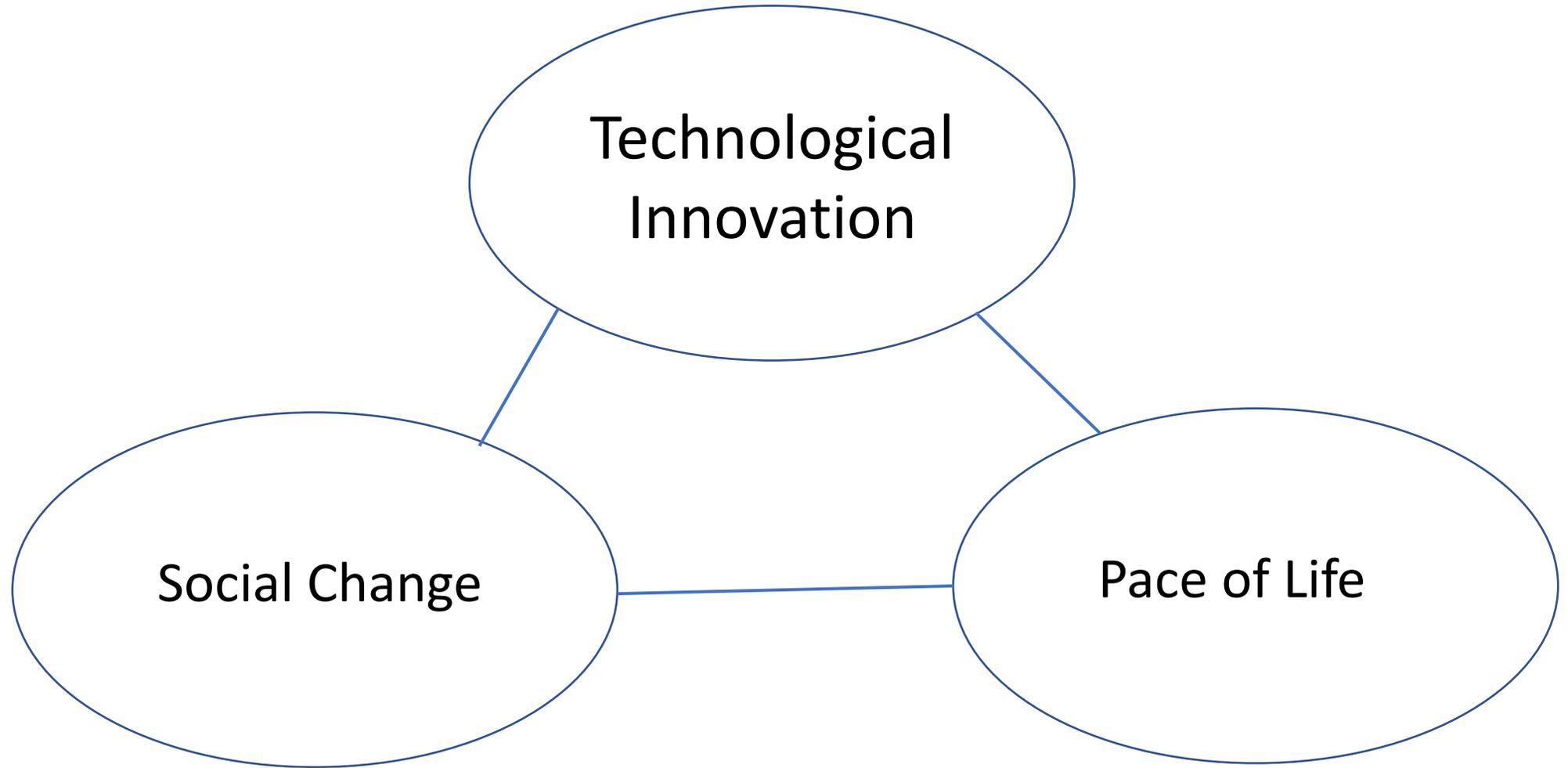
Ecclesiastes 3:1-20

Psalms 25

Luke 3:1-6

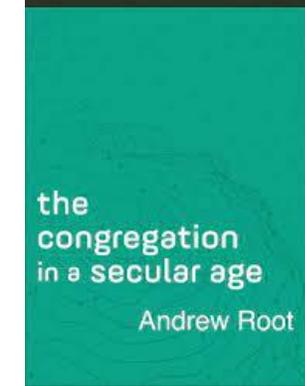
Luke 21:29-33

Hartmut Rosa



and

Sept 14, 2021 7:59 am ET



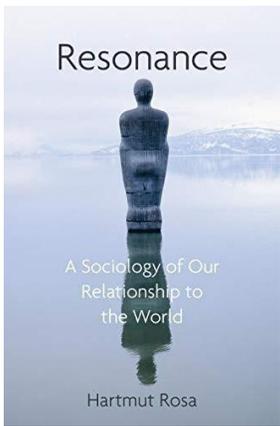
Facebook Knows Instagram is Toxic for Teen Girls, Company Documents Show

Its own in-depth research shows a significant teen mental-health issue that Facebook plays down in public

The Wall Street Journal (September 14, 2021)

By Georgia Wells, Jeff Horwitz and Deepa Seetharaman

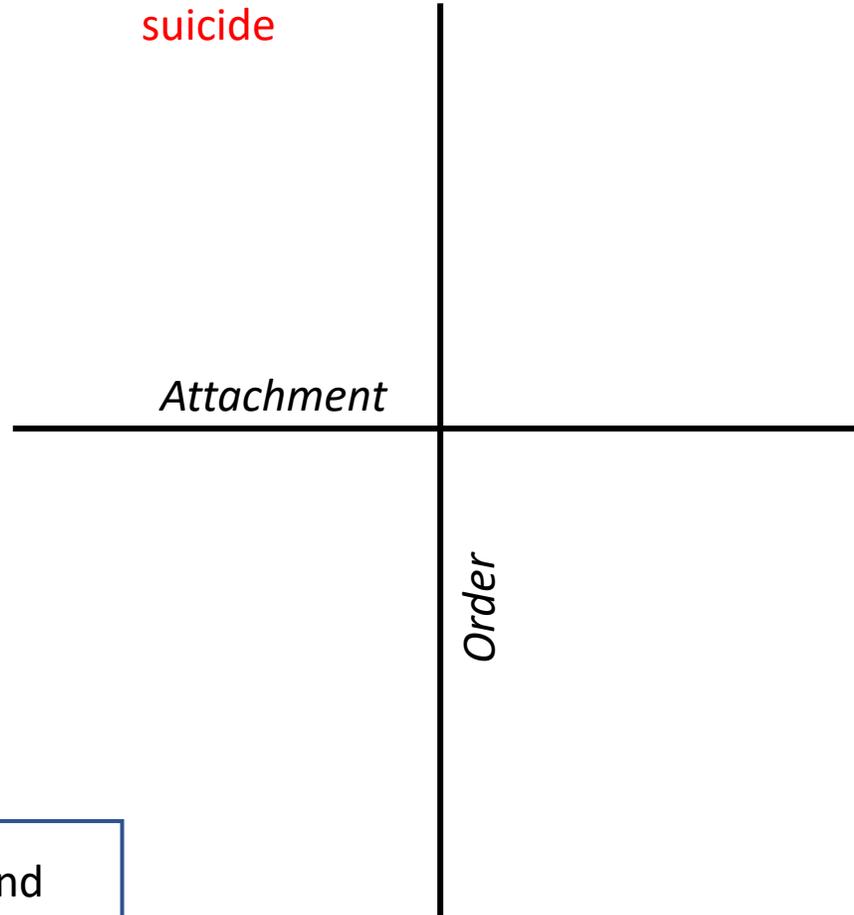




Rigid Self: Fear of isolation/loneliness
/ Depressive Personality/
Anorexia/ **egoistic suicide**

Rigid world: Fear of ossification/suffocation/Hysterical personality/bulimia/ **fatalistic suicide**

Shapeless self: Fear of loss of self and being “absorbed” into the world/
Shizoid Personality/
Obesity/**altruistic suicide**



Shapeless world: Fear of chaos, loss of control/
Compulsive Personality/
Orthorexia/**anomic suicide**

Four basic forms of anxiety and personality – Fritz Reimann

Emile Durkeim – social causes of suicide

Homework between sessions #1 and #2

Take a moment and read both assertions below (answer for yourself and invite others to respond). Which assertion (a or b) more adequately describes the culture/predominant mode of thinking and acting within your congregation currently? What are some stories or vignettes that help illustrate your point? (From *Reclaiming the Triune Life of a Congregation: Shared Missional Characteristics of Minnesota ELCA Congregations*)

1a. Congregations need to focus primarily on understanding what God has already done.

1b. Congregations need to focus primarily on understanding what God is leading them to do.

2a. Congregations need to focus primarily on learning traditions from the past.

2b. Congregations need to focus primarily on learning new things.

3a. My congregation was more vibrant and effective in the past.

3b. My congregation is more vibrant and effective now.

Homework between sessions #1 and #2 (continued)

Name some ways that your congregation experiences fullness as “business”.

Where do you see signs of fatigue and/or burnout in your congregation as a response to trying to keep up and or curate a distinct identity?

Pastoral leaders – idea: take your pastor/deacon out for coffee and conversation

Board/council members – idea: sit in a council meeting and ask for some time to present

Church staff – idea: bring donuts, good coffee, and have a conversation

Congregational members

Community partners and visitors

Can you name some initiatives/programs within your congregation that seem to take an enormous amount of energy/time/money or other resources, and don't seem to yield the same results that they used to? Why do you think that is the case? What is going on?

Root asserts that, “Being the church is about transformation, not change.” How would you characterize where you see evidence of *change efforts* in your congregation (i.e. internally speeding up to keep pace or recreate identity) and where you see evidence of an openness to *transformation (i.e. embracing fullness as external to us)* ?