

danger of cynicism in the interpretation of Leo XIII's famous encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*. It is, however, part of a historian's task to raise questions about people's motives in attempting to understand the past; this is equally true of the history of the papacy as it is of everything else. Massaro rightly comments on Pope Leo's enthusiasm for the theology of Thomas Aquinas. Is it not therefore proper to ask, which Massaro does not, why in the opening sections of the encyclical the Pope departs from the Angelic Doctor's approach to ownership, or to consider the background of the participants in the Union of Fribourg, and how they may have influenced the doctrinal content of the *Rerum Novarum*? One could go on.

Charles Gallagher's contribution, entitled 'The perils of perception: British Catholics and papal neutrality, 1914–1923' struck me as the most original piece, perhaps the only one of genuine research. As he remarks, the attitude of members of the Church of England to the Great War has been examined, but not that of the RCs – though a fair amount of work has been done on Catholic attitudes to the Spanish Civil War. John Pollard is

excellent on the papacy's use of the media over the past half century, while Linda Hogan's 'Mixed reception: Paul VI and John Paul II on sex and war' suffers from having been written before Pope Benedict remarks about the use of condoms in limited situations. As to war, Papa Wojty³ proved to be against it, despite not being a pacifist. Professor Hogan remarks that the just war theory has been 'dislodged' by the techniques of modern warfare. It has struck me, however, that when people argue this way they are using an element of just war theory – proportionality – to say that just war theory no longer applies – which seems somewhat paradoxical.

The book ends with a standard piece by James Corkery on the pontificate of John Paul II. Corkery and Worcester round off their volume by saying that it demonstrates how 'the papacy evolves in large measure through how it responds to historical events and through how its responses are received' (p. 251). I suspect that most if not all the likely readers of these pages already knew that.

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A Secular Age. By Charles Taylor. Pp. x, 874, Cambridge, MA, The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2007, \$39.95.

Many words or phrases have been used throughout history to describe a particular age or period of time. Historians and social scientists have employed terms as 'age of imperialism', 'age of materialism', and 'age of revolution' to characterize eras which seem to possess certain distinguishable characteristics. Broad, sweeping terms and generalizations may not capture all the distinctive elements of an epoch or movement, the contributions of the leading personalities, or the effects of a so-called 'age' on future generations, but they do supply a term which summarizes the prevailing spirit of a movement or era. Our current period in history has been characterized as an age of secularization or secularity, and some, including Pope Benedict XVI, have described this development in pejorative and even sinful terms. Recently, books by Richard Dawkins and Christopher Hitchens that question the relevance of God and religion, have become popular. In this climate of searching and questioning, Charles Taylor, an emeritus professor of Philosophy at McGill University and winner of the 2007 Templeton Prize, has written an insightful and stimulating account of the manner in which our secular age developed. Moreover, he discusses the predicament and challenges which people encounter in the seemingly godless world.

Taylor, a Roman Catholic, has addressed similar issues before, but *A Secular Age* is a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of the phenomenon of secularism. Taylor begins his book, based on his 1999 Gifford Lectures, by acknowledging a drastic change has taken place in society. Where it was once inconceivable, and dangerous, for one to disavow the existence of God, faith and belief today is an acceptable option or choice for many. In other words, 'One way to put the question that I want to offer is this: 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?' (p. 25) These five hundred years hold the key to understanding the apparent absence of God in today's life.

Taylor's historical approach begins with a description of the world of Christendom, when the marriage between church and state was firm, and the subsequent disruption and chaos caused by the Reformation. His discussion of pre-Reformation Europe, a world of enchantment where external powers had an effect on the 'porous self', sounds familiar to earlier studies by Keith Thomas and Eamon Duffy. The consequences of the Reformation, which created what Taylor calls the independent 'buffered self', initiated the process of secularization. The author's analysis

of pre-Reformation popular religion and beliefs of the Catholic Church, the attacks leveled by the Reformers, and how the break with Rome altered the world view of European men and women are superb. Theologians and historians will marvel at the author's synoptic skills and insights. Taylor next examines Enlightenment thought and how it shaped the religious outlook of the eighteenth century, its critiques of religion and the place of God in the universe and one's personal life. Deism, not surprisingly, occupies center stage.

An exciting aspect of the author's story is his discussion of the nineteenth century, which some commentators see as the beginning of the age of unbelief. Taylor's remarks about the Romantic Movement and the ethos of the Victorian culture are important in the story of secularity and also serve as a bridge to twentieth century development with its two world wars and culture of materialism. The result of this long history of secularism, beginning with the Reformation's emphasis on individualism, is the current Age of Authenticity where freedom, self-expression, and personal choice are the encouraged and promoted. Taylor examines the cultural revolution of the 1960s and its gospel of individual freedom and shows how it challenged accepted religious beliefs. His comments on the nature of violence, especially in today's climate of global brutality and bloodshed of a religious and ethnic nature, is noteworthy for people searching for value and meaning in life and society.

It is hard to do justice to Charles Taylor's *A Secular Age* in a brief journal review. Not only its length, 776 pages of text and an additional 72 pages of notes, but Taylor's numerous insights and the scope of his study, from the pre-Reformation enchanted world to today's secular atmosphere, demand at least an article-length review article or a series of essays devoted to this book. But it is not difficult to state that Charles Taylor has written an important book which studies the development of secularism from many angles. Taylor has a unique grasp of the intellectual developments which have contributed to the growth of the secular age and has presented his findings in a concise manner. For the individual looking for clear cut or simple answers,

this book might be a disappointment, since the author does not pursue a simple or straightforward approach to the development of the secular mindset. Taylor draws on the contributions of numerous theologians, philosophers, and other intellectuals to present his case. He adroitly studies multifaceted and complex historical events such as the Reformation, the Enlightenment, the Romantic movement, and the counter culture of the 1960s to show how Western culture has arrived at the secular age. In spite of this wealth of information and insights, Taylor's methodology ensures that the reader never wanders from the main arguments of the book.

Charles Taylor excels as a teacher or mentor presenting new material to an audience of eager listeners. There is some repetition of important concepts, especially his frequent references to the lost enchanted world of pre-Reformation Europe and the emergence of the buffered self, but this is essential so that the reader never loses sight of Taylor's logic and method. He introduces terms to explain his main points, such as axial revolution, the nova effect, and the immanence/immanent categories, but he always explains each and then uses this terminology to clarify his main ideas. Finally, as any excellent lecturer does, Taylor summarizes his chief arguments and conclusions throughout the book. With careful reading, therefore, Taylor's arguments are presented in a clear, understandable, and entertaining manner.

Charles Taylor's *A Secular Age* is a penetrating and provocative study of the rise of a secular culture in Western Europe. Well-written and based on a solid foundation of research, this book allows the reader to explore the origin and development of secularism from numerous points of view. People have always searched for meaning in life, and religion has traditionally played a major role. But the ideas of the sacred have changed since the rupture of the sixteenth century. Taylor's book shows that religious beliefs have survived critiques throughout the centuries, still thrive today, and can offer comfort and solace for people in a secular age.

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The Secular Outlook: In Defense of Moral and Political Secularism. By Paul Cliteur. Wiley-Blackwell, 2010, £19.99/€24.00/\$29.95.

One image Paul Cliteur likes to employ here is that of Humpty Dumpty (from *Through the Looking Glass*). For Cliteur the inevitably fractured wall-sitter represents theists who maintain the Bible or Qur'an's sacredness but still support multiple and still-to-be-discerned meanings despite clear immoral passages in the text. Cliteur's main aim is to

advocate the merits of a private atheism characterised by a secular, free-thinking, morally-autonomous approach to ethics and human rights which can critique religion and fully support free thought and speech. Such an approach is called 'The Secular Outlook' (interestingly, the book is not titled *Secular Outlooks*).

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