

RELIGION, CULTURE, AND MODERNITY: SOME MISSIOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROCESS OF SECULARIZATION IN EAST ASIA

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This study investigates the outcome of the process of secularization in three modernized urban Chinese societies in East Asia and seeks to describe the resultant patterns of change and continuity. Some missiological implications are drawn from the findings of the investigations.

Chapter 1 is an account of the historical development of secularization in Western societies and the effects of secularization on religion, society, and the individual. The focus in chapter 2 is on worldview and worldview change and the functions of these in the process of secularization. A five-part theoretical paradigm of the traditional Chinese worldview analyzed vis-a-vis the themes, hierarchy, antiquity, particularity, harmony, and practicality is presented in chapter 3. In chapter 4 the impact of modernization and secularization on these Chinese societies and the emergence of a new hybrid worldview in which elements of both the traditional and modern are synthesized, are examined. Some aspects of the traditional Chinese worldview, such as affinity for hierarchy and antiquity, have gone through radical and perhaps irreversible change, whereas the Chinese esteem for particularity, harmony, and practicality has largely remained intact. Chapter 5 focuses on the implications of continuity and change, and seeks to show how these dynamic patterns of change have created new conditions conducive to mission.

The missiological conclusions of the study are spelled out in categories: mission, conversion, and church.

1. The process of secularization has opened up a degree of freedom from family and historical tutelage. This signals new opportunities for mission.

2. The Chinese group consciousness calls for a rethinking of the evangelistic process to include a more family and group oriented approach.

3. The sense of unease induced by change has created an atmosphere in which the church as the Body of Christ needs to function as a socially supportive and meaning reifying community.