

37

Mission to Nominal Christians

Andreas Isaak

There are millions of nominal Christians in the world today. They can be found in any denomination or church in our secular society. For example, last Sunday we had a special church service in a public building with somewhat different music, drama, and a sermon based on secular movies. Over two hundred people attended the event, of whom about a hundred do not usually attend a church. One person, who is a physician in town, mentioned on the side that he is a Christian, does not believe in the existence of God, and does not see the Bible as having any relevance for his personal life. Jesus was a good man but nothing more. However, he believes in the institution of the church, and also in life after death as a Christian, and likes the religious rituals that a church does. He refuses to make any real spiritual progress, because that would demand denying oneself and following the commands of Christ, which he does not like at all. If this is the case, where does this lead us? Who is a Christian or “nominal Christian”?



Andreas Isaak (M.A., Theology; M.Div., Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary; D.Min. candidate, Columbia International University) has been pastor of the MB church in Burghausen, Germany since 2002. In this area, 90% of the population belong to the church and call themselves Christians, yet only 5% of them attend church regularly.

A Definition of “Nominal Christian”

The *Lausanne Committee for World Evangelism (LCWE)* defines a “nominal” Christian as “a person who has not responded in repentance and faith to Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and Lord.” The person might give intellectual assent to basic Christian doctrines, be faithful in practicing the Christian tradition of faith, attend worship services, be an active member in church affairs, and yet never experience a conversion or personal relationship with Jesus Christ.¹ The *LCWE* also suggests that nominal Christianity is more often found wherever the church is more than one generation old.²

Patrick Johnstone and Jason Mandryk suggest that “nominalism” is a major issue in our secular society today. They assert that “many traditionally Christian populations know nothing of a personal faith, true repentance, and a trust in the finished work of Christ for their salvation,” and estimate that 1.2 billion people are “nominal and non-practicing ‘Christians.’”³ According to Rommen, a nominal Christian may even participate in religious activities in the church on a weekly basis, and participate in fellowship with followers of Jesus, but in their hearts and minds they demonstrate apathy or even unbelief towards Scripture, and the divinity and sovereignty of Jesus Christ.⁴

The *LCWE* notes that a nominal Christian is someone who, within the Christian tradition, would call himself a Christian. This is how they are also regarded by society, but they have no authentic commitment to Christ based on personal faith. The conversion or commitment of a person involves a transforming personal relationship with Christ.⁵ This relationship is characterized by the “fruit of the Spirit” whose qualities include love, faith, hope, joy, and peace; by a desire to have fellowship with God, to study the Bible, to pray, to have fellowship with other Christians, to witness faithfully; by a deep love; by a concern for God’s will to be done on earth; and by a living hope of heaven (Gal. 5:22-23; 1 Cor. 13; Rom. 2:28-29, 10:8-10; Rev. 2:3-5, 3:1; Matt. 28:18-20; Heb. 10:25).

Essentially, a nominal Christian is one who does not really believe in the Bible and that Jesus should be the lord of his or her life. They would actually rather share the lordship over their life between Christ and themselves. One paraphrase quotes Jesus’ warning:

“Knowing the correct password—saying ‘Master, Master,’ for instance— isn’t going to get you anywhere with me. What is required is serious obedience—*doing* what my Father wills. I can see it now—at the Final Judgment thousands strutting up to me and saying, ‘Master, we preached the Message, we bashed the demons, our God-sponsored

projects had everyone talking.’ And do you know what I am going to say? ‘You missed the boat. All you did was use me to make yourselves important. You don’t impress me one bit. You’re out of here.’” (Matt. 7:21-23 from “The Message” by Eugene H. Peterson).

Therefore, we are challenged in secular society to reach nominal Christians with the gospel of Christ and to having a living personal relationship with Jesus. Our approach must be suited to the culture and the type of nominal Christian we are dealing with in our environment. What has caused such a dilemma? How can we reach a secular culture populated with nominal Christians?

The Causes of Nominal Christianity

Historical Causes

Christendom began in the fourth century A.D., when the Western church picked up the pieces of a fallen Roman Empire and the church established the vision of God’s purpose in the world. The church “attempted to create a Christian civilization, to shape laws consonant with the biblical teaching, to place kings and emperors under the explicit obligation of Christian discipleship”.⁶ The church defined the purposes for each area of life so that government, education, art, architecture, literature, music, personal morality, community life, and even economics marched to Christianity’s drum”.⁷ From this period on, the church became the source and center of Western culture and influenced every area of Western life, thoughts and activity. This was the beginning of “nominal Christianity” - either you were in the “Christian environment” or you were out of the “Christian society.”

Western culture and Christian civilization are characterized by a host of artistic, philosophic, literary, and legal themes and traditions from the Christendom era up to our present day. Christianity has played an important part in the shaping of Western civilization since at least the fourth century and has been influenced by the tradition of rationalism in various spheres of life. Culture in general has been developed by Christian influence, Hellenistic philosophy, humanism, secularism, scholasticism, the scientific revolution and the Enlightenment. This has led to a society of free thought, human rights, and the need for equality and democracy. These in themselves are not bad but they prepared the ground for an environment of “nominal Christianity.”

The Christendom church has proclaimed for years and even up to this day that infant baptism, taking the first Communion, getting married, and being buried in the church are the key sacraments for someone to be saved. This has definitely led towards a “Christianity” that is based on rituals or tradition yet often far away from

a personal encounter or relationship with Jesus Christ. It is strange that many such Christians are convinced that if you live a good life, be nice to people, do good deeds, and attend church once or twice a year then you are a Christian. Is this what Christianity means?

The state-church has played a key role of distinguishing between who is part of the Christian culture and who is out of the Christian circle. According to Hunter there are two causes of how the church alienated the people: “the first cause of Christianity’s loss of influence upon Western people and culture was such a series of events – Renaissance, Reformation, Nationalism, Science, Enlightenment, and Urbanization ... the second cause was the church’s pathological pattern of responses to these events – responses that undermined the church’s credibility and distanced the people from her witness.”⁸ This has often led people to be part of rituals or tradition with their mind and actions, but not to be involved in Christian faith with their hearts or be convinced it is the truth.

In regular interactions with people in Germany, it becomes apparent that many people have never read the Bible, or heard the Gospel, and have never had a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. In our Western society today it is a strange reality that many people believe they are Christians, but do not believe in the fundamental convictions of Christianity and the Bible. According to the German magazine *Focus* (April 10, 2012), there are even representatives of the church who neither believe that Jesus was the Son of God, nor that he had been resurrected. When the Christian faith is reduced to the principle “be nice to each other,” then one can be converted even though one does not believe in God. However, there are other reasons that have led toward a society of nominal Christians.

Theological Causes

The secularization of the mind of our society over the last few centuries has led the church into a theological dilemma and into nominal Christianity. According to Rommen, secularization led to a critical questioning of the biblical text, the historical Christ and tradition common to the church. As a result, a number of common biblical truths were thrown overboard in Western society.⁹ With Strauss, Bauer, Feuerbach, and Nietzsche, Western society left behind theological and religious thinking about orthodoxy, revelation, and miracles, and ceased to believe in absolute truth. This led Western society to strip God, theology, and the church of its relevance¹⁰. One might say that nominal Christians hate the doctrine of truth but love the “fellowship,” yet therein is a big contradiction. One cannot have true spiritual fellowship without agreeing on true and essential biblical doctrines.

What is biblical truth? If Jesus is the truth, the way and the life, and the means of eternal life, then yes, he is the only truth. The teaching of Jesus is therefore the truth for every Christian. If a person who claims to be a Christian begins to argue that Jesus is only one way, and that His commands, the plain teaching of Scripture, are only one truth among many and regards their own opinion on anything to be higher than Scripture, then the person without doubt proves that he/she is a nominal Christian. There are people who oppose God on earth, disregard his commands, and still think that they will one day have a place in heaven. “You are my friends if you do what I command you” (John 15:14 NASB).

Only Jesus’ friends will be with him in heaven for all eternity. However, nominal Christians fail to recognize that Jesus said we can be his friends only if we do what he says. When true Christians stand up for the truth of Christ and Scripture, they will undergo persecution from the world and even from other nominal Christians. That should not be surprising because the nominal Christian will very often take sides with the world, and would rather save face than admit he is wrong when he is confronted with the truth of God. Secularization, social change, and rationalistic interpretation of scriptural truth in society have been major factors that have led to nominal Christianity.

Sociological Causes

The early religious motivations of the community have broken away through industrialization in society. Under great pressure from secularization, religious convictions based on the solid theology of Scripture in the church have slowly disappeared from the universities, society, community, and finally also from the church¹¹. Such factors as industrialization have led to the development of cities and the breakdown of traditional communities, and have caused changes in people’s behavior. The multiple choices of people, individualism, and anonymity of city life have led to the breakdown of communities and, finally, the family unit.

The secularization of society led to the social process of neutralizing the culture and opened the way for the breakdown of the religious traditions in culture.¹² It has also conspired with the intellectual atmosphere of post-enlightenment thought in a way that reinforces the drift into nominal Christianity.¹³ The high rate of mobility due to industrialization in many countries also has led to the breakdown of old loyalties toward Christian traditions and Scripture, and was also a major cause of nominal Christianity.

Philosophical Causes

The Enlightenment period created an atmosphere hostile to the acceptance of revealed absolute scriptural truth. The philosophical thinking in the last centuries has progressively undermined personal conviction and singular commitment within society and the church tradition. This has led toward pluralism which, with its evenhanded tolerance of rational alternatives, has sapped the enthusiasm for the demands of total commitment.¹⁴ In our society, it has become acceptable to say that all religions are equally valid paths to God. Cultural thinking firmly demands that there is not only one truth. So it is a shame that many church institutions or those nominally Christian have adopted this view and lost their biblical convictions. Weber mentions that materialism has also played a great part in increasing the number of nominal Christians, since religion became secondary; the growth of material prosperity in one's personal life has affected the level of commitment in church life.¹⁵

Ecclesiological Causes

We can also see ecclesiological factors that have encouraged nominal Christianity. Post-Enlightenment thought has pervaded much biblical theology and created intellectual atmospheres within universities that affect the thinking of Christians and non-Christians alike. The preaching and teaching of many pastors in the churches today does not come from an understanding of the Bible as "God's written Word." In some Western societies more than half of the state church pastors do not believe in the physical resurrection of Jesus. This leaves the people without hope of life after death. There has been an emphasis on grace, yet no sin or the need for repentance and without the counterbalancing message of costly discipleship. While our salvation can never be earned, but only received by faith as God's gracious gift, it must be worked out through lives dedicated to God (Ephesians 2:8-10).

Nominal Christianity has been tolerated in our culture, if not encouraged, by pastors for reasons of prestige and even financial advantage for church work. According to LCWE, some churches have preached an undisguised message of justification by works, leading the congregation either to feel pride in their religiosity or a sense of hopeless inadequacy. The churches have too often failed to give help and support to those who have professed conversion.¹⁶ In many churches, there has been a lack of concern for those without Christ being eternally lost. The prayer life has been reduced to the "Lord's Prayer", and every other prayer has been crowded out of the lives of individuals and out of church fellowship. The nominal Christian would rather be a people pleaser than a God pleaser and rather save face than admit he/she is wrong when confronted with the truth of God in Scripture.

Many nominal Christians once had an active faith, but have “de-churched” themselves as a result of some injury, to their pride or their feelings, or some legitimate grievance against the church or its members. People in society have been put off by the failure of the church to answer their most pressing questions with regard to everyday life. Young people have often disowned their parents’ faith because it lacks credibility and social awareness. A major cause of nominal Christianity may be a lack of church discipline over admissions to baptism and the Lord’s Supper. The biggest and most tragic aspect of nominal Christians’ thinking is that they think that they are truly good and accepted by the Lord and will spend eternity with God in heaven. Therefore, a dead orthodoxy or church life can mislead people as much as a lifeless heresy.

We might recognize the complicity of organized churches that has led toward nominal Christianity, and therefore need to seek repentance and find new ways to reach out to secular people. We need a new awareness of God and a new openness to his Holy Spirit, who alone is able to break through to nominal Christians. It is the work of the Holy Spirit alone who can revive and renew our churches so that they can become instruments to reach people today.

The Need for Renewal in Churches

There is a great need for renewal in today’s Christianity. But how do we reach the nominal Christian? One might think about the need for great strategies or smart tools and many other things. However, I believe as people of God that we mostly start with an earnest cry to God in our prayers. Only then will we be blessed and become a blessing to the world. We must repent, seek forgiveness, equip and be empowered by God’s Holy Spirit as his people to complete our tasks in the world. In our society today, there is no need for more programs and good speakers; what we really need is more people who are more Christ-like in the way they live.

The early church that is described in Acts 2 was one where new members were added daily. It was a church marked by Christ-like behavior, prayer, following Jesus, worshiping God, close fellowship, and sacrificial sharing of their property. This provided a great loving relationship towards those outside the church, which gave rise to much good will in return. Jesus has called us to follow his pattern, to live alongside those who are lost and be deeply concerned about their salvation. Jesus says in Luke 19:10 that he “came to seek and to save those who are lost,” and this should also be our deep desire in following Christ.

Churches have often failed in the past to gather the people of God into His presence and to release its members to be the light in the world. There is a great need

for worship that is based on Scripture and Christ-like in its expression. The ministry of the church in the world needs to be holistic in preaching and serving the Gospel to the people. Our lifestyle must be indigenous in its expression as we practice our faith through “everyday evangelism” to our neighbors, coworkers, and family. The churches we need are those that place Christ, the work of the Holy Spirit, worship, prayer, discipleship, passion for the lost, serving, and evangelism at the center of their existence and practice. The church must encourage every member to practice his/her gifts given by God and to live a holistic Christ-like life in everyday contexts. However, the growth of the Kingdom of God throughout the world is part of spiritual warfare in which we are all involved and must be skilled to fight against as a church. Therefore, we continue to ask ourselves: how can nominal Christians be reached?

How does one Evangelize Nominal Christians in a Secular Society?

Recently a regional newspaper in Bavaria revealed that 89% of the population are members of the state church. A day later I asked the pastor of a local church: how many people attend the church? Of the 3600 members of the church who believe that through baptism they have received the grace of God unto eternal life, about 30 people had been at the Sunday service. Yet all would call themselves Christian even though they have not been to church for years or even possess a Bible. Is the church becoming lost and in need of salvation? If the church will not prayerfully prepare evangelistic projects that are rooted in the culture of the society and start to witness in a natural way through the lives of the individual members, it is lost. The Gospel needs to be preached and lived. In Acts 2 we see that the members of the church were embedded in the culture, which provided an authentic witness to the people and then led to daily conversions. Therefore, all true Scripture and church-based evangelism starts in natural “personal evangelism” through the lives of individual church members.

The Great Commission in Matthew is given to all believers in every situation in life and is not only applicable on Sunday at the church services. Therefore, there is a call for the church to perform “everyday evangelism” from Monday through Friday, where each member lives a holistic Christ-like life by witnessing the Gospel to the people in their own cultural setting. One might talk about personal witness/evangelism of the individual Christian and the cooperative witness/evangelism of the Christian’s church family life.

The Personal Witness of the Individual Christian

The personal witness of the individual Christian is the key for reaching our secular society, where thousands call themselves Christians yet never have a personal experience of conversion. The individual Christian is more likely to have good contacts with nominal Christians at work, in social clubs, organizations, and in the neighborhood. The church is therefore obligated to nurture its members in sharing their faith in a personal witness or at a personal relationship level. Having contact with nominal Christians is definitely the most effective and authentic way to witness.

The members of the church will only be effective in sharing their faith and commending Christ in the world if they are helped and can draw nurture from the church that we have been envisioning above. A follower of Christ is more likely to have confidence to witness to secular people or nominal Christians if they have had personal contact and are rooted in small groups, such as home fellowship. The church is therefore obligated to give its members opportunities in small fellowship groups and to equip its members in performing their duty of witnessing to others.

As mentioned in Acts 8, all witness must be sensitive to the prompting of the Holy Spirit and the aspiration of the unbeliever. Practical tools and training can, however, make people more effective in explaining their faith and leading others to a personal relationship with Christ. Often Christians do not feel sufficiently equipped at crucial points in helping someone to respond to Christ. Therefore, programs of evangelism or witnessing could provide confidence, experience, and are to be commended by the church. However, people mainly respond to personal witness in everyday evangelism.

The Witness of Christian Family Life

Inviting nominal Christians to church might be an option for evangelism, yet the key will be a personal relationship witness. Hospitality and personal friendship are a vital ministry in the home and also in church settings. Sharing food around a table is a tradition dating back to New Testament times. Today it remains the most effective tool to reach people in a dialogue during dinner or over coffee, where one shares life, activities and, in a natural way, one's faith and the gospel. The lesson that we clearly get is that we must be prepared to meet people where they are. We can then seek in a gentle and natural way to take them onwards into activities that might help them to discover a living faith in Christ and live as dedicated Christians.

Does the church practice hospitality and provide a personal and family atmosphere to the visitors? If so it will open up the possibility in the church for a ministry that is based on relationships. Churches need to plan services of worship that are personal,

familiar, joyful, and creative in celebrating Christ. They also need to be sensitive to the needs of those who are seeking Christ. The life of the church mostly takes place in the world, but is not part of the world – just as Jesus prayed to the Father, “I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.”(John 17:14-18 NIV).

The true Christian, unlike the nominal Christian, desires spiritual maturity instead of being worldly and getting along with this world or participating in worldly amusements, activities, and conversations. If the Christian outlook is not radically different from the world's, and if people cannot see you as different because you really are sold out to love Jesus Christ, the church will not reach out or witness to nominal Christians.

The regular life of the church must be a place for a family, where people experience love, hope, joy, care, and friendship through the services. This will be a powerful witness by itself. A Christian home, where conversation takes place at a personal and friendship level, which builds trust and confidence within the relationship, might be an ideal place for small groups and be a powerful witness of Christian family life. A personal relationship of family to family or person to person will build trust and confidence. The church must emphasize the everyday personal evangelism and witness of Christ of its members, which is rooted in the context of the society.

The Witness of the Congregation: Understanding and Meeting Needs

Everyday evangelism through personal individual witness, in Christian homes, small groups and the outward-looking life of the local church within the cultural setting must be prayerfully prepared. The outcome of evangelism is shown in the quality of the relationships that Christians build up with their neighbors and nominal friends at work and organizations. Such friendship must be constantly encouraged by church leadership and cannot be “turned on” when required by church activities. Churches are the main platform for evangelism and mission work, but it must be developed and equipped at a personal, individual, everyday witness level in a natural way through friendship in order to be effective in reaching nominal Christians.

A nominal Christian might attend church for different occasions such as marriages, baptisms, and sickness, and also want their children to be religious. These are often vital times for contact with church members, and these moments in life give rise to openness from the Spirit, which may be the best opportunities for the Gospel to be shared. Again, we see the local church as the main platform for this kind of

evangelism, but the church needs to be present and rooted in the social contexts of the community in order to reach the people in an authentic way with the Gospel. One cannot reach people unless one understands them first. How do we reach the community and the unchurched nominal Christians? The nominal see the church as irrelevant to their lives, and have no connection between church and their daily life, work, family, and relationships. For many the church is perceived as a waste of time. The church is therefore obligated to find ways to get the attention of the unchurched.

According to Hunter, the great communicators to secular people today -- like Rick Warren, Jim Harnish, or Bill Hybels -- argue that one needs to understand the needs of the people before we will can communicate to their hearts and reach their needs. Warren's emphases are (1) that God is a personal God, who cares about your life and wants a personal relationship with everyone; (2) that God is in control over all things -- even if things are out of our control they are not out of His control; (3) we cannot control the things that happen to us, yet with the Holy Spirit's guidance and power we can control our response.¹⁷ Harnish speaks about five affirmations for secular seekers: "(1) God is good. (2) God understands you. (3) God has already won the victory in Christ. (4) God is involved in this world. (5) The church has a role in this, as the Body of Christ and the community of faith with a mission in the world."¹⁸ Hybels argues the essential message within two affirmations: (1) every one matters to God, no matter how far one has fallen. (2) The Christian's life is not just a preparation for death; God has a purpose in life for everyone that will bring satisfaction and fulfillment, even if life is very challenging along the way.¹⁹

The above arguments and perspectives show us how communication and faith is expressed through interpersonal witness. Therefore, the Christian faith and the Gospel need to be communicated by the church in a way that (1) shows a commitment to Christ and God's will, (2) can be experienced for everyone in their everyday lives and (3) emphasizes living in a new relationship with Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and God; others in the church; the world around us; and ourselves.

Churches might also hold an introduction to Christianity course, family services, or many kinds of programs or projects that use modern Bible translations and language more likely to be understood by nominal Christians, and be part of the local culture.

Integrating Converts into the Church Family

The task of the church will then be to integrate the new converts into the Body of Christ. The challenge is to move the converts from nominal Christianity into the worshipping community of Christ. Yet, this should not be a problem for the church if it models itself on the early church in Jerusalem (Acts 2:42-47). However, too many

churches and Christians have become very egocentric in their thinking and live a very individualistic Christian life. This creates the challenge for today's churches of being authentic towards Scripture and the model of the early church. The requirements of such a church have already been noted above: vital patterns of worship, letting the Holy Spirit work, regular Bible teaching, fellowship and caring groups, ministries involving every member and utilizing all the gifts of the Spirit, a sense of God-consciousness, expectancy that God will work, and a constant measure of joy.

Unfortunately, a great problem that continues to occur is that many individual Christians find that when they have led a friend to Christ, they have failed to introduce the new convert to the local church, since churches are not open to new people and have become comfortable with their programs. This problem is especially painful for those who are active in everyday evangelism. There is a need for churches that are always open both for those Christians who have supported their local church for years, and for those who are new converts that will suffer if they are not nurtured carefully.

The best solution to this dilemma will probably be for strong, mature Christians to take clear responsibility for the nurturing of new converts. This will require regular mid-week sessions like home Bible groups, while still encouraging loyal support for Sunday worship at the local church. Such sessions could be at the personal relationship level on a one-to-one basis, or in the setting of a small group meeting.

Conclusion

The mission of the church is to fulfill Christ's Great Commission and preach the gospel to all peoples. One might acknowledge that there are many other issues involved in the problem of nominal Christianity. Therefore, there is a great need to understand more clearly the current philosophical, theological, eschatological, and sociological issues that influence people to become nominal Christians. There are many issues that lead to nominalism. Ways to reach those who lose their way over the years will be an ongoing challenge to the church, particularly in the West, in this generation.

Many local churches have immediate access to the huge "people group" of secular people and nominal Christians. Therefore, I believe it is the task of the local church, as the Body of Christ, to take ownership, and to live out its God-given gifts through the work of the Holy Spirit. Only if the gifts of the Holy Spirit are being lived out by the Body of Christ can the reconciling and transforming love of God reach these lost people. It was Christ who came to seek and to save those who are lost (Lk.19:10). The concerns of Christians are to be regularly present in society, praying for God's blessing and seeking to exercise Christ-like influence wherever they can

in the world. For this task, we as mature Christians are called to use our hands and invite all those in similar situations to join us in unity, love, and expectation through the work of the Holy Spirit.

Notes

- ¹ Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, *Christian Witness to Nominal Christians Among Roman Catholics, Lausanne Occasional Papers 10* (Pattaya: Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, 1980), accessed February 8, 2014, <http://www.lausanne.org/en/documents/lops/55-lop-10.html>.
- ² Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, *Christian Witness to Nominal Christians Among Protestants, Lausanne Occasional Papers 23* (Pattaya: Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, 1980), accessed February 8, 2014, <http://www.lausanne.org/en/documents/lops/66-lop-23.html>.
- ³ Patrick Johnstone and Jason Mandryk, *Operation World: 21st Century Edition* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2001), 13–14.
- ⁴ Edward Rommen, *Namens Christentum: Theologisch-sociologische Erwägungen* (Bad Liebenzell: Verlag der Liebenzeller Mission, 1985), 85-87.
- ⁵ LCWE, *Protestants LOP 23*.
- ⁶ Lesslie Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1986), 129.
- ⁷ George G. Hunter III, *How to Reach Secular People* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992), 23.
- ⁸ Hunter, *Secular People*, 29.
- ⁹ Edward Rommen, *Namens Christentum: Theologisch-sociologische Erwägungen* (Bad Liebenzell: Verlag der Liebenzeller Mission, 1985), 23.
- ¹⁰ Martin Marty, *Three Paths to the Secular* (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), 47.
- ¹¹ Max Weber, *Soziologie-Weltgeschichte-Analysen* (Stuttgart: A. Kröner, 1968), 375.
- ¹² L. Shiner, "The Concept of Secularization in Empirical Research," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 6 (Fall 1967): 220.
- ¹³ LCWE, *Protestants LOP 23*.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁵ Weber, *Soziologie*, 374.
- ¹⁶ LCWE, *Protestants LOP 23*.
- ¹⁷ Hunter, *Secular People*, 127
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁹ Hunter, *Secular People*, 128

Recommended Reading

Hunter III, George G. *How to Reach Secular People*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992.

Johnstone, Patrick and Jason Mandryk. *Operation World: 21st Century Edition*. Carlisle: Paternoster, 2001.

Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, *Christian Witness to Nominal Christians Among Roman Catholics, Lausanne Occasional Papers 10*. Pattaya: Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, 1980. Accessed February 8, 2014, <http://www.lausanne.org/en/documents/lops/55-lop-10.html>.

Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, *Christian Witness to Nominal Christians Among Protestants, Lausanne Occasional Papers 23*. Pattaya: Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, 1980. Accessed February 8, 2014, <http://www.lausanne.org/en/documents/lops/66-lop-23.html>.

Marty, Martin. *Three Paths to the Secular*. New York: Harper and Row, 1969.

Newbiggin, Lesslie. *Foolishness to the Creeks: The Gospel and Western Culture*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1986.

Rommen, Edward. *Namens Christentum: Theologisch-sociologische Erwägungen*. Bad Liebenzell: Verlag der Liebenzeller Mission, 1985.

Weber, Max. *Soziologie-Weltgeschichte-Analysen*. Stuttgart: A. Kröner, 1968.

Study Questions

1. It might be said that the church needs to go to the nominal Christian, rather than invite them (to programs, events, etc.) – an Incarnational model. If so, how are you preparing and encouraging people in your church for this? Is everyone responsible for themselves or have you devised ways for people to connect to nominal Christians together with others – so they don't do it alone?
2. What insights or new ideas can you derive from the article? Spend some time thinking quite openly together. Encourage any and all ideas to surface – no matter how impossible to conceive – for a period of time (allow 10 to 15 minutes). Record them where all can see. Then sit back and reflect together to see if concrete, doable ideas and plans can develop.