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Editors' Notes

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Mike Casey

When **The Worldly Church** was published about three years ago it immediately provoked lively discussions both pro and con. The whirlwind which blew through the Churches of Christ caught me by surprise, for we have had numerous calls against worldliness in the churches in the past. As a youth growing up in Kentucky, I can remember numerous sermons on many of the themes the authors of **The Worldly Church** elaborate. These calls in the past hardly created a ripple. We seemed vigilant in rooting out any sign or sense of worldliness or secularism.

However, change is always the order of the day for any religious tradition or organization. Even since my days as a teenager in the late 1960's, I have seen profound changes in the Churches of Christ. The language we use, the sermons we hear, the buildings in which we worship, and the way we live our daily lives have undergone some profound changes, and often our vigilance against worldliness seemed muted. Clearly, the changes have not been uniform, for there are very distinctive perspectives within the Churches of Christ. As Shaun Casey notes, pluralism is present. What we are to make of these changes and how we are to deal with this pluralism will be a preoccupation of our churches in the next decade and into the next century.

Many of the questions that need to be addressed are raised here and some answers proposed. Is "secularism" the best way to understand the change that is happening? If we are secular, then how secular? or how secular are we? How can we be both "in the world" and "not of the world?" What are the causes of our change, however we label it? How do we deal with the diversity in our churches? Should we participate in the wider culture in which we find ourselves, or should the church simply be the church? How does one preach the gospel in today's culture? How does our past inform the present and our future?

Having a civilized but spirited conversation about these questions is the place to start. Most will quickly see that there are sharply different perspectives presented by these articles in **Leaven**. Even the three authors of **The Worldly Church** do not give the same assessment of what is happening and what should happen. However, the spirit of all the authors is one of friendly disagreement. All of us hope that the issues raised here will be contemplated, wrestled over, argued about, and taken seriously by elders, bible class teachers, preachers, leaders, and yes, even scholars. This issue of **Leaven** continues the conversation started by **The Worldly Church** and moves it into important new areas.