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JOY TO THE WORLD!

This Christmas season, an astonishing number of people worldwide are singing “Joy to the World, the Lord has come, let earth receive her King.” Yet, most of them do not know that they are announcing the hottest news story of the 21st Century! It’s the story of the Good News winning hearts, minds, and nations worldwide, while secularism is failing.

Christianity thrived largely in Europe and America until only a few centuries ago. But in the 17th century the modern missionary movement began in England, Scotland and the United States. The fire of the liberating gospel was spread by pioneer evangelists throughout unreached regions of Africa, Asia and South America.

Since the end of World War II the Christian faith has grown exponentially around the globe. Amazing statistics of this growth have been documented by authors such as Peter Jenkins, David Aikman and Dinesh D’ Souza. For example, in 1900 there were approximately 10 million Christians in Africa. By 2000, there were 360 million African believers—about one half the total population on the continent. By 2025, missiologists estimates that number will climb to over 600 million!



Other continents have experienced similar, sweeping transformations. There were only a few million Bible-believing Christians in the 1940s in Asia. But that number is growing dramatically and will reach an estimated 480 million believers by 2025. This phenomenon is and

will continue to transform nations like China and Korea. South America is seeing similar growth with estimates of 640 million Christ followers by 2025.

Some may ask, “But what about the secularized West?” Haven’t Americans and Europeans been taught by the media and educational establishments that Christianity is in major decline? Aren’t the old values of 1,700 years of Western Civilization outmoded? Not true!

Sociologist Peter Berger has been a militant proponent of the secularization theory since the 1960s. But Berger recently said, “I think that what I and other sociologists of religion wrote in the 1960s about secularization was a mistake...I think it is basically wrong. Most of the world today is certainly not secular. It is very religious.” Bestselling author Dinesh D’Souza agrees and says, “Peter

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Berger writes about what he calls the ‘myth of secularization.’ He means that the thesis of inevitable secularization has now lost its credibility. In fact, it is going the way of Zeus and Baal... Ultimately secularization may be reversed even in Europe.”

As the failure of secularism is becoming evident, the people of Europe and America are rebelling against the wholesale abandonment of the biblical foundations of their nations. For example, the British voted to leave the European Union on June 22, 2016, reasserting their nation’s sovereignty. It was called BREXIT and it may be the death knell of a global Europe controlling the world. The English have a deep heritage of Christian faith and biblically-based, common law government. They shocked the world by refusing to give up their sovereignty and freedoms to an unelected bureaucracy in Brussels. Other European nations appear to be on the verge of leaving the E.U., including France, Italy, Holland, Denmark, and Poland.

On November 8, 2016 millions of Americans voted to defeat a secular/progressive agenda that they believed was unraveling their nation. The largest evangelical voter turnout in history was a critical factor in this election. They defied the pollsters. They voted their principles. Many came off the cultural sidelines. They knew their economic, educational, and religious freedoms were at stake. Millions of believers stormed the gates of heaven in prayer asking the Lord to restore our nation. They elected representatives whom they believed would not dismantle our U.S. Constitution or religious liberties.

What caused this fundamental re-engagement of Christians in society? Perhaps the most overlooked reason is that for the last several decades huge numbers of Christian parents, pastors, teachers and ministries have been teaching Americans the biblical roots of our nation’s his-

tory and liberties. Our ministry has been dedicated to teaching these truths since 1976!

As we face 2017 with all its challenges, we can be greatly encouraged that our loving Savior and Redeemer is guiding His people in forwarding His Kingdom to liberate lives and nations.

Be encouraged! The great Christian leader of the 4th century, Athanasius, lived through one of the most severe persecutions of Christians in history. But in spite of his trials he saw the progressive victory of Christ’s Kingdom. During very tumultuous days, he wrote one of the classics of Christian faith, *On the Incarnation of the Word of God*. This is, after all, the real purpose of Christmas. Athanasius says: “[W]hile [all] that opposes the faith of Christ is daily dwindling and weakening and falling, the Savior’s teaching is increasing everywhere! ... When the sun has come, darkness prevails no longer; any of it that may be left anywhere is driven away. So also, now that the Divine epiphany of the Word of God has taken place, the darkness of idols prevails no more, and all parts of the world in every direction are enlightened by His teaching.”

Athanasius’ biblical optimism was proven out during his lifetime. He lived to see Christianity permeate the entire Roman Empire and begin to spread Christ’s gospel around the world.

This Christmas, as we reflect on our Savior’s mighty, loving transformation of His world over the last 2,000 years, let us sing the great Christmas songs with faith, conviction, and thanksgiving. As *Joy to the World* continues: “He rules the world with truth and grace and makes the nations prove the glories of his righteousness and wonders of his love.” Merry Christmas!

— Marshall Foster



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