



The Turn to Transcendence: The Role of Religion in the Twenty-First Century

Glenn W. Olsen

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Especially concerned with the public nature of religion, Glenn W. Olsen sets forth an exhaustively researched and persuasive account of how religion has been reshaped in the modern period. Though ancient and medieval western writers used various metaphors to express the idea that humans are aligned to the universe, they also believed that humans are oriented toward something "above" or transcending themselves. In recent centuries, however, the sense that humans, while living in nature and history, are oriented to transcendence has seemingly diminished. For many, God or the gods have all but disappeared from secular life.

In this important and timely book, Olsen demonstrates with powerful insight that there are alternatives, and that religion can and should play a role in restoring a cultural openness to transcendence. He considers such questions as how we should understand God's presence in the universe, what form religion should take in the public square, what role liturgy plays in orienting us toward God in the universe, and what it means for religion to be in but not of the world.

Olsen examines proposals for recovering an adequate sense of transcendence for the future. These range from an appreciation of certain forms of contemporary art and music specifically concerned with transcendence, through discussion of the forms of Christian life and worship most likely to prosper in and shape the modern world. He proposes a contemporary way of expressing the ideas that God is to be found in all things and that all is to be done to the Glory of God.

Glenn W. Olsen is professor of medieval history at the University of Utah, with a Ph.D. in the history of the Middle Ages. He is a frequent contributor to journals such as *Communio*, *Logos*, and *Faith and Reason*, and is the author of the book *Christian Marriage: A Historical Study*.

PRAISE FOR THE BOOK

"Glenn Olsen's book could hardly be more pivotal or insightful. Confronting the growing amnesia regarding culture's religious origin and transcendent purpose, Olsen proves both a masterful cartographer of modernity and a visionary of a culture that encourages and enables us to seek beyond ourselves."?Carl A. Anderson, Supreme Knight, Knights of Columbus

"This is an immense work, the fruit of a passionate mind. The profundity of analysis, argumentative coherence, and all-embracing knowledge will fascinate those who, like the author, are convinced that a 'Second Enlightenment' is needed."?Enrique Banús, Dean, Facultat d'Humanitats, and Director, Institut Carlemany d'Estudis Europeus, Universitat Internacional de Catalunya, Barcelona

"A brilliant book. It rests on an amazing amount of scholarship that is wide-ranging in history, literature, art, science, music, theology, and philosophy."?James Hitchcock, professor of history, St. Louis University

"Olsen offers a unique combination of political, economic, artistic, literary, and liturgical evidence to delineate what went wrong with the rise of modernity and modernism and what needs to be done about it."?Dennis D. Martin, associate professor of theology, Loyola University Chicago

"Olsen's argument raises many important questions. . . and hints at some troubling answers." ?Timothy Kelly, *National Catholic Reporter*

"Demonstrating such theses is no small task, but Olsen performs it virtuosically and with the sure-footedness of long study and careful thought. This is a rich and learned book the rewards of which will more than adequately repay the effort of reading." ?S. M. Hutchens, *Touchstone*

"Olsen is a historian, and a good one, and the text is a vast labyrinth of thickly descriptive expositions of an amazingly wide collection of thinkers. But Olsen is not content to simply exposit the thought of others, and he moves easily from exposition to analysis to application in a d

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