

R **BOOK REVIEW // THE GATHERING STORM**
SECULARISM, CULTURE AND THE CHURCH
R. ALBERT MOHLER JR. // REVIEWED BY **KOH SAITO**

As we study history, we can quickly be astonished by the blindness of those who lived in the past. To that end, my mind is transported to Europe in the 1930s: “how could Winston Churchill’s pseudo-prophetic warnings about the rising threat of Nazism be so accurate and yet dismissed for so long?” The benefit of history is hindsight, but how can we ensure that we are not likewise blinded to the ever-growing threat that looms in our culture today? Albert Mohler, in his book, *The Gathering Storm*, outlines the pervasive rise of secularism in the West. The title of this book is borrowed from Winston Churchill’s first volume on WWII, which covered Europe’s long denial about Nazi threat amid the undeniable storm that was gathering in the public spectacle. In Mohler’s own words, “I have borrowed Churchill’s title, for I see a gathering storm that already presents itself as a tremendous challenge to the faithfulness of the Christian church... This is the gathering storm of the secular age.” Mohler, by way of historical analogy, is urging people to first see the gathering storm of secularism, and then to live faithfully without capitulating to the storm.

As for the structure of this book, Mohler delineates the impact of secularism in ten areas of society: the church, the sanctity of human life, marriage, gender and sexuality, the upcoming generation, to name a few. Each chapter (and the appendix) provides an informative but concise analysis of one of those domains in relation to the gathering storm, filled with rich historical and theological rigour, as well as an abundance of (mostly American) contemporary

examples drawn from newspapers, articles, polls, and the like. Although the book is situated in the American context with predominantly American citations, this can be an advantage to Australian readers, as the dissimilarities of cultures amplify the common trajectory of secularism. The slight difference stimulated my thinking to apply the overlapping principles in my context, thereby forcing me to contemplate practical implications of secularism with greater intensity.

As for the primary practical applications of the book, it does not come in the form of instruction—though there are some instances of it—but rather, Mohler embeds a cognitive framework that is predicated on a Christian worldview. He equips readers to understand reality and discern between wisdom and folly by unpacking the assertions, aims, and presuppositions of secularism which can sometimes sound compatible with biblical Christianity. Moreover, due to Mohler’s commitment to the biblical view of God’s sovereignty and Lordship, he instils courage: steel in our backs to stand firm on the Word of God in the midst of this gathering storm. This is vital because a preliminary confrontation of society’s swift downward trajectory of secularism can tempt us to wallow in self-pity and be left in a state of utter despair and hopelessness. However, a biblical understanding of God’s sovereignty can amend such tumult: we know that Christ is Lord, seated at the right hand of the Father. To quote Abraham Kuyper, a Dutch Reformed Theologian, “Christ is presently ruling, and there is no square inch in the

whole creation over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry: 'Mine!'" The Christian must therefore not be left with hopelessness, for we have a living hope that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for us (1 Peter 1:3-4). We must also remember that Jesus himself promised that he will build his church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it (Matthew 16:18). Therefore, we must not downplay the significant gathering storm over our culture, but we must simultaneously hold to the fact that God is sovereign and is in the process of redeeming all things in creation (Romans 8:18-24).

That being said, there is a legitimate place to mourn over our sin, the culture, and the world at large. If

anything, we (I include myself here) must learn to lament over the corruption in our own hearts and churches, as we daily fall short of being the salt and light of the world. But we do this with the full assurance that God's wisdom and providence are far greater than our own—that he is even using our inadequacies to glorify himself. So, may we be challenged and renewed to understand the reality of our culture for what it is, and as a result, faithfully walk into the gathering storm proclaiming that Christ is Lord. May we be courageous in declaring that Jesus is our only hope in life and death. I hope that you will read this book and be strengthened in your courage as you navigate the ever-changing culture in which we live.

Praise for *The Gathering Storm*

"Al Mohler has written an essential read. . . . [A] compelling book."

—Ryan T. Anderson,
St. John Paul II Teaching Fellow in Social Thought, University of Dallas

"A timely warning that can help Christians and their allies understand and overcome some of the menacing forces increasingly surrounding us."

—Michael Medved,
radio talk show host, author of *God's Hand on America*

"Be worried. Be very worried. But don't be paralyzed. Read. Think. Pray. Start with this book and with everything Al Mohler has to say."

—Hugh Hewitt

"[Mohler] is a prophetic and unapologetic Christian voice speaking truth to power. In every corner of the Christian community his words should be heard and heeded."


—Robert P. George,
McCormick Professor of Jurisprudence, Princeton University

"The stakes are high. Read this book to the end, give it to your pastor, share it with your friends."


—Don Sweeting, president, Colorado Christian University

"Essential reading for pastors, Christian educators, and laypersons across the land. Highly recommended!"

—David S. Dockery, president, International Alliance for Christian Education


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