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## Communications

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Editor:

I was sorry to see that C. H. George's review of my book on *The Secularization of Early Modern England: From Religious Culture to Religious Faith* was off on the wrong foot from the start (*Albion* 25, 1 [Spring 1993]: 96-97). "Secularism" was in his first and his last sentences, and he even mistitled my first chapter as "The Study of Secularism." Had my subject been secularism, a concentration on intellectuals would have been appropriate. I don't blame myself for this confusion, my first chapter was clear on what "secularization" entails. And while I had read some of the scholars whom Professor George recommends to me, such as Stephen Greenblatt, I sometimes concluded that they were plowing a different field. (Remember, not every change in religion, or in "Christianity," is secularizing. For instance, the more pagan a humanist is, the more *religious* he is by my generic definition.) Professor George thinks I should be "developing the thesis" around "great and daunting intellectuals." But I was trying the approach of a cultural rather than an intellectual historian, because this was the part of the story that had never been attempted.

I freely admit that I do not exhaust *any* of the many subjects I touch on, some of them I barely sketch. The point of the book was to map an enormous territory that historians have never seen in its entirety. After all, we have had a hundred books on the growth of the modern state, another hundred on industrialization, a hundred on capitalism, a hundred on the development of modern science. Secularization, as a social historian would define it (something much bigger than secularism), is as big as any of these other topics. Someday, after another hundred books on secularization and secularism, someone will write the definitive, magisterial work on the subject, and Professor George's recent work on the changes within art (*Albion* 23, 3 [Fall 1991]: 409-37) will find its place in that comprehensive history. I was satisfied to write the seminal work.

But I would not be satisfied with my effort if I found that others finished the book without noticing that the chapter on the intellectual developments which challenged Christianity (which is what George is concerned with) and religion more generally is at the *end* of my treatment. Critics might fault my suggestions of how changes in material life laid the basis for changes in intellectual life, and that would be engagement with the book that I wrote. I freely admit that there can be an "internalist" history of secularization as well as my "externalist" one. I was just denying that it could stand alone.

Beyond all this, I object to Professor George's irresponsible abusiveness. As an example, how else would one explain his complaint that the book was only 150 pages long when he quotes from page 186?

C. John Sommerville, *Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, N.J.*

Professor George replies:

I do apologize to Professor Sommerville for my careless errors ("irresponsible abusiveness" may be a bit strong for characterizing 187 pages as "some 150 pages"—in fact, I wrote the review from notes because I had loaned the book to a student; the error was probably typographical, but my point was that it was much too short to make his argument in so ambitious an undertaking); the error in reproducing his first chapter title is entirely the result of not having his book before me. However, I don't believe my inadvertent substitution of one anachronistic word for a very similar one did in fact get me off "on the wrong foot": his introductory chapter declares his intention to describe "the sense of a separation of almost all aspects of life and thought from religious association..." surely one sufficient definition of secularism! Whether this is indeed "the seminal work" on the subject of the secularization of English culture his readers will be able to judge.

C. H. George, *Northern Illinois University*