

Secularization



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Historically, "secularization" first referred to the process of transferring property from religious jurisdiction to that of the state or other non-religious authority. In this organizational sense, "secularization" still means the decline of formal religious authority for example; in education, prisons, and hotel room bedside tables. Institutional secularization has been fueled by the breakdown of a unified Christendom since the Reformation, on the one hand, and by the increasing validation of society and culture from the Enlightenment to modern scientific society, on the other.

Some political analysts prefer the term "laicization" to describe this institutional secularization of society, that is, the replacement of official religious control by non-religious authority. [1][2] It is clear that these two forces represent opposite tendencies of thought. To insist upon the principles of traditional Christianity is to rob modern views of its very life; it opposes pessimism to the optimism of modern thought. And yet reconciliation between the two is not absolutely impossible. It can take place, however, only as the result of a modification of the current view of Christianity.

A new conception of religion must make itself felt, and this change can be readily effected. It must center on the person of Jesus and must abandon its dogmatic system. In the person and in the preaching of Christ, as an historical phenomenon, we have the basis for an understanding between Christianity and the culture of our day. Jesus himself never accepted the total corruption of man as the basis of his preaching. Rather it was an ideal of moral perfection that he held up to his believers--of life in God and activity according to his will. 2]

Secularism has also influenced Western art since the Classical period, while most art of the last 200 years has been produced without suggestion to religion and often with no particular ideology at all. On the other hand, Western art has often been influenced by politics of one kind or another, of the state, of the benefactor and of the artist. While institutional and ideological secularization have been preceded at the same time over the past few centuries, the relationship between the two is not exact or necessary.

Even in a medieval, Constantinian setting, formally religious in character, men and women were not untouched from having their life, thought, and work shaped by secular influences. In an institutionally secular (laicized) society it is possible for individuals and groups to live, think, and work in ways that are motivated and guided by God and religion. [1] With a great deal of emphasis on contemporary discussions of Christianity and secularism the confrontational Letters and Papers from Prison penned by writer, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, because the work is incomplete leaves much to the imagination and not enough fact.

Bonhoeffer's notions start heavy debates on the meaning and implications starting with titles like: " Christian worldliness," " man-come-of-age," the world's arrival at " adulthood," and the need for a " non-religious interpretation of Biblical terminology. " Other writers Friedrich Gogarten (The Reality of Faith, 1959), Paul van Buren (The Secular Meaning of the Gospel, 1963), Harvey Cox (The Secular City, 1965), Ronald Gregor Smith (Secular Christianity, 1966), and the " death-of-God": all leave little to the imagination just as Bonhoeffer's does.

These are examples of those who have shadowed one possible course.

Kenneth Hamilton (Life in One's Stride, 1968) denies that this is the best way to interpret Bonhoeffer and argues that these writers hesitated in his indispensable, orthodox attitude. [2] Of course, the differences between the sacred and the secular is an undeniable gap; In the same way that God speaks and acts Christians must speak and act inventively and full of redemption for their actions.

In all cases, Christian life in the secular world is to be carried out under the Lordship of Jesus Christ and in compliance to the will of God rather than the will of the world. Christians may work to ensure that the Word of God is heard and is given room among the many other voices which will constitute the diverse whole. To insist that the Word of God be imposed on all without exception is to fall once again into an unbiblical oppression. To fail to articulate the Word of God in the saeculum, however, is to give in to a secularism which, by excluding the Creator, can lead only to death.

Deliverance from sin and forgiveness of sin were indeed emphasized in his preaching; but his dominant thought was that of struggle toward an ideal moral life. This is the idea that must take possession of modern Christianity, if it is to be reconciled with modern views and civilization and to win for itself the educated classes. Not as a dogmatic system, but as a moral power, based on the powerful personality of Jesus, must Christianity be proclaimed to the thinking people of our times?