

The Secularization Project

28 April 2021

Brothers,

We publish below all the definitions and descriptions of *secularization* that were received through the recent survey of the province or that we were able to glean from the various letters to *Inforum*. We list them in order of reception. Guardians are asked to print and distribute this report to friars who don't use email.

Our next goal is to strive for a consensus on which definitions and descriptions are most striking to members of the province. This part of the process will occur in two steps.

We ask you to consider all the submissions below. Perhaps you can meet in small groups of friars or in community meetings to discuss the options, helping everyone to explore the variety of insights found in the submissions. A way to do this might be to ask each participant to share the three definitions or descriptions that strike him the most and why. In a second round of sharing, ask each participant to note what observations by other participants seemed important to him. Then allow any final comments.

Around May 8th, we will issue another survey via email. You will be asked to list by the attendant numbers the three definitions or descriptions you most favor.

The results will be published to the province. While this process will hopefully identify the most striking definitions and descriptions, no attempt will be made to refine them to a single text.

Thank you for participating in the process thus far. We are especially grateful for friars who wrote to *Inforum* and encourage more letters. Let's keep the discussion going!

The Secularization Project
Steering Committee

1	Secularization is a humanistic view of life which leaves the experience of an Immanent or Transcendent God out of its purview. The sole referent is the human being, 'the noble savage' of Romanticism.
2	A theological view proclaims God's intimate presence and action in our world and our history. Secularization denies God idolizes science; it aggressively promotes atheism.
3	The Gospel of Jesus is not reaching into the lives of people. I'm not sure what people are looking for. I guess the more we serve the poor and live with them can be our way to preach the gospel and draw people to Christ.

4	A decrease and decline in religious values and concerns. People will say they are not "religious" but are "spiritual." (These descriptions aren't particularly original but I agree with them and find them useful.)
5	Secularization is a social process through which God and faith become increasingly invisible.
6	It is a change or transformation of people from identifying themselves and their religious values. Religion loses its social and cultural significance, and faith lacks the authority and social power needed for the common good. A decline of religion, like creeds and doctrines, takes place as well as spiritual needs. Science becomes more important than religion, and no absolutes remain like truth and beauty.
7	I tend to think of secularization in two related ways: the turning from the religious to the secular (denying of religious) or the turning of the religious into the secular (following secular concerned with religious zeal)
8	Secularization for me is summed up as the faithful becoming less faithful and not believing in God as they used to. This leads them away from attending Church and being less mindful of the presence of God in their lives. Some people have totally lost their faith and consider themselves atheists .
9	Secularization is a process in which the influences of explicitly or traditionally religious or spiritual values, symbols, structures, institutions, and leaders in a given society are supplanted by scientific, humanist, or other non-religious or spiritual influences, although there may be some substantial intersection in some areas.
10	Worldly values replace spiritual, religious values.
11	I think secularization is when people don't consider God or the Church in their everyday life decisions. They just do what they want to.
12	I am concerned with religious living a life of material comfort with minimal ministry.

13	The driving forces of secularization are many: human potential movement, consumerism to have many things always updated, self-determination of gifts, work, life style, wholesome relationships with men and women; concern with mental and physical health; many choices for service to others; professional skills; meditation to relieve stress without transcendence, etc. All these have values for human flourishing but they are engaged in without reference to God, Church, spiritual life.
14	Secularization is the change from identification with religious/spiritual values toward non-religious/spiritual values resulting in the gradual diminishment of religious/spiritual influence in all aspect of society, including among church attenders and members of religious communities.
15	Generally, the social process whereby religious thinking, practices, and institutions have less influence on people. Specifically, a process in which less people identify themselves with religions institutions, less have a deep belief in realities that philosophy and rationality don't provide, and less people live according to any religious belief.
16	Secularization is a consequence of the lack of fluidity/openness from the institutional Church to the lived tensions between its own tradition and the ongoing movements of the Holy Spirit (and in the words of Rahner) to become a truly global Church rather than just a European/Roman church with global outposts.
17	A decline in the influence of, emphasis on, and priority placed upon religion, faith, and God in a person's life and in society at large.
18	Secularization is the inevitable movement of humanity away from organized religion in light of the "Enlightenment" and greater access to education, inevitable failure of religious leadership, and trust in the individual to know. Ultimately it is a process of dying and rebirth... a paschal moment.

19	In my view, secularization is shifting our attention away from the values and traditions of our religious faith and turning more to what the world holds as important. We allow the societal influences to chip away at what we once held as sacred and turn it into something that is just old fashion and out of step with the world.
20	The process of elimination of the Transcendental in Everything.
21	In my understanding, "secularization" is the elimination of a spiritual component from any aspect of life. It precludes the presence, action or influence of God (or any higher power) in the thought or behavior of human beings.
22	The trend of diminishing religious identity and life within a culture or society. In our US context, this includes the relegation of religious belief and action to a merely personal and subjective level; making it no longer a viable power or reason for action in the public square.
23	For me, secularization seems to be defined these days as "You live your truth and I'll live mine." As a result, secularization leaves God out of the equation. This type of philosophy seems to be directed by the popular thinking of society rather than the dictates of moral law.
24	I would describe secularization as one turns his or her mind away from religious and pious practices such as prayers, reception of the sacraments etc. It creates problems in one's relation with other; one's own family members and others in the society. There is no fear of God and one is not conscious of one's own sinfulness. Christian charity and brotherly concern has no place in such person's life. He/she develops an attitude of security and self-contentment.
25	I see secularization as part of a global shift in consciousness as humans evolve with an ever expanding knowledge of HOW nature and humans work simultaneously making the question WHY we exist ever more challenging? This is asking our religious and cultural TRADITIONS to evolve with out losing their heart and soul. As a Franciscan, I imagine the first book of revelation is creation, which is evolving. The first revelation of God to me is me. My self

	<p>understanding drives my behavior. It drives all human behavior. The revelation of Jesus, the Human One, has yet to be understood in its height and depth. But we are on our way. Jesus, the Christ, has much more to tell us (John 16:12). Now, to listen?</p>
26	<p>Secularization is the slow process of a culture of people drifting away into the peripheries of faith. It is sometimes a conscious, but oftentimes an unconscious migration of people from viewing faith as a cultural pillar to viewing faith as nothing more than a memory of bygone times. In place of faith, reason and science are upheld as the bastions of truth.</p>
27	<p>Secularization is the movement towards a world view that focuses on the human without need of (and at times rejection of) reference to any fundamental sacred or religious reality.</p>
28	<p>Excluding the sacred dimension from life.</p>
29	<p>The movement from being a religious society, where the religious institutions predominantly shape the values of that society to one that enshrines humanistic values. Therefore, religion no longer has the political, societal, or financial power that they once had. Also church attendance becomes more infrequent or non-existent and religious leaders have less influence.</p>
30	<p>I think it is problematic to think of secularization as the Other to Religion. This view sets up the binary between secularization and religion, and therefore excludes the complexity of countless factors in the temporal world. I would like to see secularization as an orientation, a way of being and thinking, that is different from the dominant perspectives.</p>
31	<p>Secularization is a personal, social and societal historical process by which people direct their lives progressively without reference to the transcendent, to the spiritual, to commonly held beliefs. It received its biggest boost in Western society in the Enlightenment, and has flourished ever since to become a defining characteristic of most of Western society. It affects all of us in countless ways, including having my own computer in which the events and</p>

	<p>thoughts of the whole world are open to me. The most comprehensive work on secularization and religion I have found is Charles Taylor's <i>A SECULAR AGE</i> (2007, 874 pages) which I have read several times, as well as many subsequent articles he has written.</p> <p>The book is controversial: his position is understanding and compromising with secularity.</p> <p>This is opposed by the people of the Benedict Project: withdraw from the world into religious enclaves. (Think of, for the older friars, our novitiate and to some extent our clericate. We definitely left the world and later had to get back into it.) Secularization promotes individualization, which is why individualism is such a defining trait of American culture. I hope this project leads to a defining of the ways in which we have all been secularized, and what it does to religion, religious life, community, recruitment, and the rest of the defining characteristics of religious life.</p>
32	<p>My definition of secularization is the movement from organized religion to societal trends and non-religious theories. It is a shift in ones mentality of doing for the church and God to doing for one's self.</p>
33	<p>Secularization is the idea/thought that people are turning away or walking away from God and/or religions and focus on what the world can give/provide for them.</p>
34	<p>Secularization is a process of erosion of external religious authority. Its results are not always bad, however, it can lead to relativism. Perhaps the only consistent external authority remaining would be science, which, without values for guidance, can lead to materialism and reductionism. Could cause a reduction in human dignity.</p>
35	<p>Secularization is a condition of our society and environment in which attention to the material more than the spiritual is dominant and may even become exclusive. Particular discernment and choice needs to be taken by members about how a balance between the material and spiritual will be achieved.</p>
36	<p>Moving away from God and everything connected to God and placing human being as the ONE.</p>

37	<p>It is the way people seem to be wanting to organize both public and private life without the support of God or religion.</p> <p>Agnostics, atheists, pragmatists, materialists, scientism-people, those believe-in-God-but-not-in-religion and those who want to keep their faith private are part of the spectrum.</p> <p>I think it is the new way of humanism. Not too bad or negative.</p>
38	<p>An LA Times recent article defined secularization as " the waning of religious faith, practice and affiliation."</p>
39	<p>Secularization is a theoretical principle and/or way of living that proclaims: "What you see is what you get."To search for anything deeper, for some religious or sacred meaning/purpose/presence is irrelevant and outdated.</p>
40	<p>Secularization is a state of society in which any idea of God or a spiritual realm is set aside and which focuses on the personal needs and desires of individuals. It places pursuit of material things over and above care for the social needs of people.</p>
41	<p>Secularization is the removal of the forceful religious authority or figures in one's life or society. Sometimes, it is also removal of the spiritual aspects human life and society. It is also the loss of trust, faith and respect for Church and its leaders because of clergy scandals and abuse. Christianity by its betrayal of Gospel have caused secularization, to some extent.</p>
42	<p>My experience with the secularization of contemporary culture is the decreasing relevance of religious institutions and their lack of influence in the public square. Religious' beliefs become more private and subjective in nature. They generate personal meaning and worth, but do not have any authority upon other people or institutions.</p>
43	<p>"Some rely on chariots, others on horses, but we on the name of the LORD our God. They collapse and fall, but we stand strong and firm." Secularization describes a life or culture which omits, denies, or ignores the truth expressed in this quatrain's second line, thereby generating spirals of relativism.</p>
44	<p>A view of life without reference to God or formal religion.</p>

45	It is the process through which what belongs to the temporal realm is no more simply distinguished from the sacred and eternal, but completely separated from it. In our days, the reach of what enters the separated secular realm is constantly increasing putting the religious or sacred realm in an identity crisis.
46	To me it is the influence of the world and its values on religious life. It is the struggle we have of taking the values of the world and christianizing them. We need to allow the good things in our secular to enrich our religious journey.
47	The transformation of a society from close identification with religious values and institutions toward nonreligious values and secular institutions.