



God Driving the Devil Out? NY Times Writer Predicts a Religious Revival

“This is the end of marriage, capitalism and God. Finally!” a 2016 *Salon* title jubilantly proclaimed. Religion *has* been in decline in the West, too. But “This Christmas Seems Different” (yes, it’s still Christmastime), says a writer — at *The New York Times*, no less. That writer, man of faith Ross Douthat, senses a religious revival, though one of an unusual flavor.

Douthat opens his [recent article](#) discussing a March trip his family took to Italy, during which they visited a community of Benedictine monks. Interestingly and apropos here, he mentions what I did in [my last piece](#): How Italy, whose Roman Empire once spread Christianity throughout much of Europe, now doesn’t even abide by the biblical injunction “Be fruitful and multiply.” That its cratering fertility rate means [Italians are disappearing](#) could seem a sort of cosmic justice, too. After all, statistics show that the world’s religious people are its fecund ones; secularists extinguish their bloodlines via childlessness. So is the message, deviate from God and you disappear?



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A religious resurgence being nigh certainly is counterintuitive for many Westerners. For they may take it as a given that modernity and its “science” obviate and refute religion. (“Follow the science” to faithlessness?) Moreover, while secularists aren’t big on having their own kids, they’re rather adept at converting other people’s to secularism. Yet there’s more to the story.

Faith-filled Future?

Douthat cites just a bit of statistical evidence that the waning of faith is itself waning. That is, he [mentions a study](#) of “nones” — people describing their religion as “nothing in particular.” While their number had risen markedly for a decade, it has hit a plateau the last four years.

Of course, though, one study citing one quadrennial trend could be an anomaly. Yet in reality, professional demographers have long predicted that religiosity will actually *increase* worldwide during the next 35 years. As the Pew Research Center [reported](#) in 2017:

In coming decades, the global share of religiously unaffiliated people is actually expected to fall....



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on December 30, 2024

To be clear, the total number of religiously unaffiliated people (which includes atheists, agnostics and those who do not identify with any religion in particular) is expected to rise in absolute terms, from 1.17 billion in 2015 to 1.20 billion in 2060. But this growth is projected to occur at the same time that other religious groups — and the global population overall — are growing even faster.

These projections ... forecast that people with no religion will make up about 13% of the world's population in 2060, down from roughly 16% as of 2015.

The reason why relates to what I mentioned earlier. As Pew continued:

This relative decline is largely attributable to the fact that religious “nones” are, on average, older and have fewer children than people who are affiliated with a religion. In 2015, for instance, the median age of people who belong to any of the world's religions was 29, compared with 36 among the unaffiliated. And between 2010 and 2015, adherents of religions are estimated to have given birth to an average of 2.45 children per woman, compared with an average of 1.65 children among the unaffiliated.

Will the Last Secularist Turn Out the Lights?

So with population replacement level being 2.1 children per woman, this means that theists are a bit more above it than secularists are below it. Who wins that race for the future?

This said, it doesn't mean the Church of England shall rise again. (In fact, its bishops [just claimed](#) that Christmas carols “saying Jesus is [the] ‘true Messiah’ are ‘problematic.’”) As Douthat writes, making the case that establishment religions will continue leaking oil:

For instance, Catholic Poland, one of Europe's last hubs of intense national religion, seems to be following the same de-Christianizing path as Ireland and Quebec and Italy. The American Protestant Mainline isn't about to leap up from its sickbed, nor is an all but expired Anglicanism in Britain. Likewise, groups such as the [Southern Baptists](#) and the [Mormons](#), fast growing a few decades ago and struggling today, aren't going to automatically rebound or boom again.

Instead, any growth is likely to be [nondenominational](#), subcultural (think [Latin Mass Catholics](#) or converts to [Eastern Orthodoxy](#) or communally oriented Protestants), mystical and sui generis, with notable flowerings in places where traditional faith has rarely grown before (like in the [tech industry](#), say).

Douthat's citing of Poland brings us to a point. Having spent much time in that nation, I can say that “intense national religion” wasn't a reality there even 25 years ago. Rather, they've had relative to Western Europe a stronger tradition of *going to church*.

No, this isn't what's so fashionable today: the impugning of organized religion. Instead, the point is that Poland lacks what the entire West (and the world, really) does: belief in Truth. Our civilization is pervaded by moral relativism/nihilism.

Religious Reality

Truth, simply put, means “God's answers to all of life's questions.” It is absolute and objective and



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transcends man. And don't wonder why Christian faith has been declining in the West. Why would people believe that Jesus is "the Way, and the Truth," as He said, if they don't believe in Truth in the first place?

Grasping Truth's existence also brings sophistication to another matter. To wit: Is it good or bad that religiosity will, apparently, be increasing worldwide in the next 30 years? Answer: not enough data.

"Religion," as with "ideology," is a category, not a creed. Just as there's good and bad (e.g., Marxism, Nazism) ideology, so are religions qualitatively different. A study of 45,000 youths in Germany, released in 2010, seemed to bear this out. It found that with increasing religiosity, Christian youths became less violent, but Muslim youths *more* violent.

In other words, not all faiths uphold Truth to the same degree.

Lastly, belief in Truth reveals the folly of dismissing organized religion. After all, Truth is not "personal" — there's no such thing as "my truth" — but is for *everyone*. And when a large number of people perceive Truth, it only makes sense that they'll organize around what it is: the ultimate commonality.

Besides, would you want disorganized families or soccer leagues? Do you desire disorganized charitable organizations, transportation systems, supermarkets, or mail delivery services?

So why should we want disorganized religion?

The point is that no, it doesn't appear "religion" is dying. But "belief in God" is not quite enough. After all, you know who else believes in God?

Satan.

We also need to seek, know, love, and live that inerrant yardstick for goodness God has bestowed: Truth. For if anything is worth organizing and uniting around, that is it.



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