



Study: Young Americans Dumping Religion at Rapid Rate

According to a recent study, religion is dying in America. And it's a trend that has grave implications for our politics, culture, and the fate of our civilization. Ben Fearnow of CBS News reports on the story, [writing](#):



The number of Americans who do not identify with any religion continues to grow at a fast pace. One-fifth of the U.S. public — and a third of adults under 30 — are religiously unaffiliated today, the highest percentages ever in Pew Research Center polling.

In the last five years alone, the unaffiliated have increased from just over 15 percent to just under 20 percent of all U.S. adults. Their ranks now include more than 13 million self-described atheists and agnostics (nearly 6 percent of the U.S. public), as well as nearly 33 million people who say they have no particular religious affiliation (14 percent).

The study also found that the “lower the age group, the less likely people are to be affiliated.”

The study also posits some theories for this burgeoning irreligiosity, which, writes Fearnow, “run the gamut from a backlash against the entanglement of religion and politics to a global relationship between economic development and secularization.” Now, I don't know if that “gamut” includes the obvious, but these two theories miss the mark.

Question: Do we wonder why Pakistan is spawning jihadists when we know that 10,000 madrassahs (Muslim schools) pepper its lands? In the same vein, American schools, along with the media and popular culture, instill secular dogma (I discuss one dimension of this [here](#)), and faith and her institutions are continuously discredited via specious documentaries and biased news reportage. Put simply, our culture preaches a secular-fundamentalist message. So is it any wonder that Americans are thus influenced? But more about the cause in a moment.

Having said this, some traditionalists will note that there's also good news. As the study indicates, not all the “unaffiliated” are atheists; in fact, 68 percent claim to believe in God and 21 percent pray every day. The question is, To whom?

I'm not just being snide. The unaffiliated's behavior reflects the now common position, “I'm spiritual, but not religious,” and this is in fact a claim 37 percent of them make. Yet while it sounds enlightened and cool to modern ears to profess spirituality, it's a meaningless statement.

Why? Because like politics, spirituality is a category, not a creed. And in these categories you find everything: the good, the bad, and the ugly. Just as the political realm includes creeds ranging from libertarianism to communism to Nazism, that of spirituality includes everything from Catholicism to Hinduism to human-sacrificing pagan religions. Winston Churchill was political, but so was Adolf Hitler. Likewise, Mother Teresa was spiritual and one may consider himself so, but so is the Devil. In fact, he is pure spirit.

The point is that just like different political ideologies, different conceptions of spirituality involve



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different values. Thus, they cannot all be equally valid unless all values are so (the error known as moral relativism). But if this is the case, then how can spirituality be better than religiosity? How can atheism be better than either? How can anything be morally superior to anything else? If moral relativism is valid, then we can have no moral standard for behavior, and everything is reduced to the pleasure principle: If it feels good, do it.

This gets at the single most significant force — and the most pernicious lie spread through the media, academia, and popular culture — undermining faith. Let's start like this: Would you search for a treasure if you didn't believe one existed? So why would we expect the young to search for Truth if they believe it doesn't exist?

The notion that there's no Absolute Truth is the message of relativism, and it has swept our civilization. It's evident in our dismissive mantras, such as "Everything is a matter of perspective," "That's *your* truth; someone else's may be different," and "Don't impose your values on me!" And what happens when people are instilled with this idea? Well, if no "belief system," to use that soulless term, can be better or worse than any other because all values are equal, why should we bother with intellectual inquiry? Moreover, why should I sacrifice for a faith, why should I govern my instincts with it, when it can have no greater moral status than hedonism? Again, I might as well just do whatever feels right.

A discussion I had with a teenager a couple of years ago illustrated this mindset well. After he espoused some relativistic sentiments, I pointed out that if everything is relative, he couldn't rightly say that "racism" or "sexism" was wrong. He actually agreed, saying (I'm paraphrasing), "It sometimes scares me that there's no Truth, and sometimes I wish there was, but that's just the way it is." He ended the conversation shortly thereafter, before I could marshal further arguments. And the real tragedy is that this wasn't done out of anger — but ennui. But how culpable was he for his indifference? He had been taught that there are no treasures to be found, no answers — only preferences. Thus, searching for them made no more sense than laboring long and hard to discover whether chocolate, vanilla, or strawberry is the "best" flavor. A quick taste tells you all you need to know because it's whatever works for you, man. So from his relativistic perspective, his intellectual incuriosity was entirely logical.

Because of this, relativism strikes at the very heart of faith. Just consider Christianity. Jesus not only told us there is Truth, His message is that He *is* the Truth. So why be surprised that the young aren't "finding" Jesus when they don't believe Truth exists?

Moreover, relativism renders Christianity's central tenet — Jesus' substitutionary sacrifice on the cross — incomprehensible. After all, the idea is that He died for our sins. But if "morals" are relative, then there is no sin, only opinion. And then there was no reason for Jesus to be crucified in the first place. Remember, He never said His blood would be shed "so that opinions may be forgiven."

This is why the situation is even bleaker than the Pew study suggests. While many still profess belief in God, they also subscribe to relativism (even 62 percent of "Christians" polled didn't believe in moral absolutes). In other words, God to them is some *laissez-faire* creating force, some cool, flower-child, hippie type who couldn't care less how we behave. Thus, they live without awareness of a transcendent moral standard and are functionally no different than atheists.

This is why the United States is experiencing a moral crisis reflected in an embrace of emotion-driven leftist ideology. Remember that there's a strong correlation between the decline of traditional Christianity and the rise of what we today call the Left. We have seen this in Western Europe, which is both more irreligious and more liberal than we are. We see it today in our nation, where churchgoers



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[tend to vote](#) Republican while secularists cast ballots for Democrats. And unless we reverse this cultural decline, tomorrow is something we may not want to see.



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