

Why Are So Many Young Americans Irreligious?

The Secular Brainwash is the First Reason

Dennis Prager, Aug 9, 2022

Fewer young Americans affiliate with any organized religion than ever before in American history. This means, therefore, that the children — and certainly the grandchildren — of millions of faithful Christians have abandoned Christianity. The same holds true for Jews, but that decline began somewhat earlier. Until the 20th century, nearly all Jews were religious (which nearly always meant Orthodox). Today about 15% of Jews are Orthodox, while most Conservative and Reform Jews have the same values as the secular Left, and very few of their children attend synagogue.

Why have so many Jews and Christians abandoned religious commitment and even a religious identity (many Jews retained an ethnic identity, an option not available to those who abandoned Christianity, as there is no Christian ethnic identity, Christianity being a religion, not an ethnicity as well as a religion)?

Two reasons predominate: the dominant secular culture and the failure of religious Jews and Christians to explain their respective religions.

Contemporary Western countries (and countries such as Japan whose identities are not Western, but which are culturally part of the West) are the most secular societies in recorded history.

In America, every public institution has been rendered God-free, that is, devoid of God. From the age of 5, and sometimes before that, children attend schools that make no reference to God or the Bible. Indeed, schools generally hold God and the Bible in intellectual and moral contempt.

American children are told at school that neither God, nor the Bible, nor religion is necessary — in fact, these are held to be impediments to moral progress. For example, virtually every student is taught the secular mantra that “more people have been killed by religion — or ‘in

the name of God' — than by anything else." The implied reference is, of course, to Christians alone. (Examples of historic Islamic violence are ignored, and mention of them is deemed bigotry, and the same holds true of Native American and non-Western violence.)

This secular doctrine regarding more violence by Christians than by anyone else is intellectually dishonest and, with regard to the 20th century, patently false.

It is intellectually dishonest insofar as it ignores the fact that prior to the Enlightenment, virtually everyone in the West was Christian. Therefore, by definition, virtually all violence was committed by Christians. Who else in the West could commit violence? The tiny number of Jews? The tiny number of atheists?

It is also intellectually dishonest in that only evils committed in the Christian world are mentioned — evils, such as slavery, which were nearly all universal. But the moral achievements of the Christian world — all unique to the Christian West — are ignored. Where else were countries committed to universal human rights — i.e., equal rights for every individual of every ethnicity, race and religion? Where else was the status of women elevated to the status of men? Where else was liberty achieved to anywhere near the extent it has been in the Western world? What other civilization figured out ways to elevate billions from poverty or to eradicate diseases?

And the charge is patently false in that the bloodiest century in history was the 20th century and nearly every one of the more than 100 million civilians — that is, noncombatants — who were murdered were killed by non-Christian, usually anti-Christian, secular regimes. Assuming your secular child or grandchild even knows about the genocides of the 20th century, ask him or her this question: "Who is responsible for the genocides of the 20th century — religious or secular regimes?"

In American life, the only national holiday with religious meaning is Christmas, and that has not only been largely secularized, but even in its secular form has increasingly been removed from the national vocabulary. Americans are expected to say the word "Christmas" as

rarely as possible. No more “Merry Christmas,” but “Happy Holidays.” Companies no longer have “Christmas parties,” but “holiday parties.” Schools no longer have “Christmas vacations” or a “Christmas break,” but “winter vacations” or a “winter break.”

Anyone who derives his moral values from the Bible is essentially forbidden from using those values to shape societal norms. You can cite Ibram X. Kendi or “White Fragility” or your heart as the source of your social values, but if you cite a biblical book, you are told that violates the alleged “separation of church and state.”

So, then, for about 60 years, the entire world outside of the home (and increasingly inside the home) of most young Americans has been secular and anti-religious.

That the post-Christian age has been the bloodiest in history, that the French and Russian Revolutions, both fiercely anti-religious, produced bloody despotic regimes, while the pro-religion, God-based American Revolution produced the freest country in the world – both these facts are unknown to most young Americans. So, too, young people don’t know that religious Americans are happier, commit less suicide, give more charity and volunteer more time than irreligious Americans.

Swimming in a secular sea and ignorance of the disparate moral records of secular and Judeo-Christian regimes and institutions constitute one of the two reasons for the religious apathy among young Americans. The other, as I’ll chronicle in a future column, has been the failure of religious institutions to explain themselves.