



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on July 23, 2018

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Christianity in the Crosshairs: Why the West Is Losing Its Faith

“On this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hell will not prevail against it.” This promise, made by Jesus himself, assures Christians that their faith will endure till the end of time. The standard secular perspective, however, is that religion is dying in the world, slain by science and rationality. Yet demographers and data show that faith will infuse the future — whether the West will share that future is another question.



When philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche proclaimed in 1882 that “God is dead,” he, of course, meant that our idea of God had died. This may seem a strange conclusion to have drawn in the 19th century, a decade before the Supreme Court would declare that there are a “mass of organic utterances that this [the United States] is a Christian nation.” It’s not just that Nietzsche was a European, however, and occupied a continent where Christianity was already more sclerotic, after having once been more robust. During the Middle Ages, for instance, European knights would confess horrible sins and be told to walk to Jerusalem barefoot as a penance, and would actually do it. We may part company with certain aspects of their conception of faith, but their devotion to it cannot be questioned. Moreover, the godless relativism now permeating the West would have been as alien to medieval men as “transgenderism” (which is relativism applied to biology).

This Western phenomenon has inspired the echoing of Nietzsche, with, for example, University of Michigan professor Jeff DeGraff triumphantly proclaiming in a 2016 *Salon* article title “This is the end of ... God. Finally!” Alluding to young Americans’ irreligiosity (among other things), he asks in his subtitle, “My fellow boomers might mock millennials, but what if the new generation has the big questions absolutely right?” But DeGraff has a big trend absolutely wrong. From the Everything You Know Isn’t So File, Pew Research Center told us last year:

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

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.

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



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2.45 children per woman, compared with an average of 1.65 children among the unaffiliated.

For sure, it's only religious people — be they Christians, Jews, or Muslims — who reproduce in significant numbers. And the more religious they are as a group, the more children they tend to have. The result? Even Catholicism, mocked by atheists as a dying religion, is growing worldwide at a rate slightly higher than that of population growth.

But not in the West, a realm increasingly dominated by barren secularists. As Pew reported in 2016:

The share of Americans who do not identify with a religious group is surely growing: While nationwide surveys in the 1970s and '80s found that fewer than one-in-ten U.S. adults said they had no religious affiliation, fully 23% now describe themselves as atheists, agnostics or “nothing in particular.”

... While the overall decline in the country's religiosity is driven partly by modest declines [in belief] among Baby Boomers and those who are part of the Silent and Greatest generations, generational replacement appears to be an even larger factor. In other words, Millennials, who make up a growing share of the population as they reach adulthood and older Americans die off, are far less religiously observant than the older cohorts. Whether Millennials will become more religious as they age remains to be seen, but there is nothing in our data to suggest that Millennials or members of Generation X have become any more religious in recent years. If anything, they have so far become less religious as they have aged.

Of course, why this is happening is more complex than the “what.” Pew explored this in another 2016 piece, “Why America's ‘nones’ left religion behind.” Since the results are derived from polling, they don't generally touch on the deepest reasons, things of which people often aren't consciously aware. Yet the report is a good place to start, so let's consider some of the claimed reasons for dispensing with religion (all quotations are Pew's unless otherwise indicated).

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- “*Learning about evolution when I went away to college*”: This is tragic but not surprising. As New York University law and philosophy professor and avowed atheist Thomas Nagel put it in an essay entitled “Public Education and Intelligent Design,” evolution's defining element is the claim that life began and developed “as the result of the appearance of random and purposeless mutations in the genetic material followed by natural selection due to the resulting heritable variations in reproductive fitness. It displaces [intelligent] design by proposing an alternative.”

Often overlooked, however, is that “evolution” merely proposes a theory as to *how* life became more complex, not why or even how it began; it says nothing about first cause. In reality, far from being “random and purposeless,” it could have been the vehicle through which God created life. As for the point that evolution, assuming it did occur, took a “very long time,” note that theologians and scientists both tell us that time is an illusion (Albert Einstein called it a “handy illusion”); God is *outside of time* and to Him everything is “now.” Considering this, ponder what I related in “Intelligent Design and Evolution”:

We have all seen that accelerated video footage of a flower blooming before our eyes or clouds racing across the sky.... Let us assume for argument's sake that life evolved, that beasts ascended from the muck and man from beasts. If you then took all the Earth's history from the time it was a



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lifeless orb to now (some 4.5 billion years according to expert opinion), and accelerated it so that the “evolution” would have occurred in the blink of an eye, what would you see? Among other things, would you not behold man rising from the muck and instantly coming to flower? For the human eye would not perceive the stages, only the end result. Now, isn’t this at least vaguely reminiscent of Genesis’ description? Could it not be said that the main difference is that the creation story provides fewer details about the process but the answer as to what — or who — initiated it?

The point here isn’t to make a definitive statement regarding the validity, or lack thereof, of evolutionary theory, but to point out that evolution (albeit not Darwinian evolution) does not necessarily contradict intelligent design.

- *“Too many Christians doing un-Christian things”*: Hmm, do we dispense with medical science because some doctors commit malpractice? Do secularists (generally leftists) reject women’s rights because approximately 90 percent of the men who have been outed as guilty of sexual misconduct and brought down by the #MeToo movement are women’s-rights-advocating liberals?

Moreover, central to Christianity is the truth that all are sinners — in other words, people who sometimes do “un-Christian things.” In fact, if Christianity were a standard of perfection, how could any person, imperfect by fallen nature, live up to it? It would be an indictment of the faith if he could, because then it could not be that perfect standard. As philosopher G.K. Chesterton put it, “The Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting. It has been found difficult; and left untried.”

- *“Religion is the opiate of the people”*: Well, thank you, Karl Marx. Perhaps better than instinctively issuing a denial here is to ask, “So what?” In his 1976 book *Positive Addiction*, common-sense psychiatrist William Glasser propounded the thesis that negative addictions (e.g., drugs) can be eliminated by replacing them with positive addictions (e.g., exercise). And what’s a more positive addiction than God?

The reality is that people never really vegetate, mainly because they’re not vegetables. Their minds will be active, and they will always have a focus — and a primary focus. And being “high on God,” as some believers put it, is far better than being high on drugs or government.

- *“Lack of any sort of scientific or specific evidence of a creator”*: Some would say that life having a design is evidence of a designer. Yet the implied demand in the quotation is unreasonable and illogical. Science involves study of the physical world, but God occupies the spiritual world. One can disbelieve in the latter. But claiming that science’s failure to prove God’s existence disproves it is like being told that frozen precipitation exists, searching the tropics for it thoroughly, and then claiming that ice is a myth.

- *“I see organized religious groups as more divisive than uniting”*: We could say the same of organized political groups, yet this would be making the same mistake: ignoring that it takes two to tango. Of course, there are those who intentionally try to create division, such as demagogic politicians. But to the point here, if everyone agreed with the supposedly “divisive” entity, there’d be no division. People generally label something divisive merely because it happens to part company with their passions or prevailing fashions. It is in their eyes the nail that sticks up, so it gets hammered down.

- *“I think that more harm has been done in the name of religion than any other area”*: Usually cited here are wars, most of which weren’t caused by religion but by a lust for power, land, resources, or glory. In a word, evil is caused by sin. What also should be noted is that man’s default is not to be



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angelic but to be devilish — beset by all the Deadly Sins — unless some civilizing agency enters the equation.

The above claim also reflects prejudice, given that Marxism's adherents murdered approximately 100 million people during the 20th century alone. Should we condemn all "ideology" — ignoring that it's not a creed but a category containing the good, the bad, and the ugly (liberalism, libertarianism, etc.) — and dispense with it? We could, but this would ignore the simple truth that people will believe *things*; and whatever we label those things, some will be good, bad, and ugly. Thus is the religious/secular distinction, at bottom, a *false one*.

In the sense of "exclusion of belief in God," the term "secular" dates in English from only the 1850s. Well prior to then, in the Middle Ages, people viewed matters more sanely: There was not the "secular" and "religious," "liberal" and "conservative" — only the true and untrue. Today, though, the prevailing prejudice states that something being labeled "secular" or "religious" determines its status, whether it can be in schools or the public square, even though this standard allows Marxism to be present there but not the word of God. But what's more significant, that we call Marxism "secular" or that it's false? That we call belief in God "religious" or that it's true? Quite perversely, our current cultural and legal standard can advantage the false over the true based only on label.

• *Another complaint Pew found among the fallen away in 2016 is "The church's teachings on homosexuality":* This is interesting. Note what I wrote in 2015 in "Christians Need Not Apply" about how the homosexual agenda is a dagger aimed at the church's heart: "Once people accept that calling homosexual behavior sinful is 'hateful' and 'bigoted,' they will consider Christianity a hateful religion. And 'Voila!': At this point you have successfully placed the faith and its churches in the same category as hate groups, such as the Nazis, Aryan Nations, or the Ku Klux Klan." And who would remain part of a "hate group"?

Yet this reflects prejudice, too. While Christianity is accused of singling out homosexuality, the prohibition against it is merely part of a human-sexuality model that also proscribes adultery, fornication, self-gratification, watching pornography, and even impure thoughts. Yet Sexual Devolutionaries never complain about these prohibitions. The reality? It's not Christianity but its opponents who single out homosexuality — for special treatment.

So with the special condemnation of Christianity that all of the above reflects, we can use a play on Chesterton's line: Christianity has not been tried and found guilty; it has been found difficult, and chased by a lynch mob.

Just as mobs run on emotion, so do people in general. And the deepest reasons people leave religion are not intellectual ones of which they're aware, but emotional ones of which they're usually oblivious. As to this, an interesting reason was propounded by Brian Holdsworth, a young Christian with a fairly popular YouTube channel. In a 2017 video he asks, "Have you ever noticed that there's a correlation between the amount something has cost you and the value you place on it?" He then related a story about how he bought two pairs of identical shoes, one for \$20 on sale and the other (after realizing how great they were) for \$80 weeks later. But he discovered something: He treated the more expensively acquired pair like the cat's meow and the other one like something the cat dragged in. He couldn't get over the irrational but very real sense that the \$20 pair wasn't as valuable.

Likewise, practicing faith has been made so easy — it "costs" us so little — that we don't value it. Where



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people once walked to Jerusalem barefoot as penance, wore hair shirts, fasted for long periods, and even engaged in self-flagellation (no, I'm not recommending that!), now they sometimes don't even feel compelled to dress up for church — or go at all.

The last phenomenon is partially driven by the rejection of “organized religion,” skepticism about which was also reflected in the Pew research. Yet we well understand why we have organized soccer leagues, schools, charitable organizations, social clubs, lobbying groups, and political parties, and, of course, organized government. Obviously, people get together and naturally organize when they have a common cause. Should organizing around faith be any different? And what should be a more common and a greater cause than that universal thing called Truth?

Ah, and therein lies the rub, doesn't it? With moral relativism/nihilism having swept the West, most today don't believe in Truth, only perspectives, and are thus imbued with religious-equivalence doctrine. The idea is that no faith can be a matter of Truth (absolute, universal, and eternal by definition); that is, can be *exclusively true*. This, in fact, is considered the open-minded, enlightened position. Yet there's a word for a matter not that of Truth: taste.

Now, were our emotions perfectly aligned with Truth, we'd naturally love true faith. Yet our fallen nature ensures that we generally find religious devotion burdensome or boring. And do we indulge matters of taste we don't enjoy? Do we organize around them? “If everything is perspective and ‘all philosophies are equal,’ I may as well be a hedonist,” says the modern. And then he may only go to the trouble of organizing an orgy — or a college.

Yet it must also be pointed out that moral relativism strikes at Christianity's very foundation. For if right and wrong are merely “perspective,” there's no sin. If there's no sin, we don't need a savior, and then there was no reason for Jesus to die on the cross. Thus are Christian commentators and clergy remiss when not tackling our society's characteristic philosophical disorder, relativism, head on. Relativism obviates Christianity.

But its enabling of sinners explains its popularity. For my sins cannot be sins if all is perspective. It's the ultimate justification and a plague of rich civilizations, where there's great time and opportunity to indulge pleasures of the flesh — where idle minds that are the Devil's playgrounds are common. Loosely speaking, just as there are no atheists in a foxhole, there are no devout theists at an orgy.

This brings us to an ominous question, one that will be scoffed at most by those who most need to ponder it: Must we be brought to our knees to look up and find God? For if the foxhole is necessary for faith, the foxhole we just may get.

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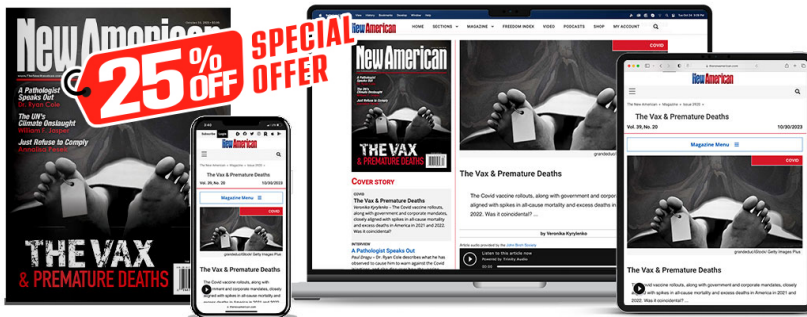
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