

ARE DEMOCRATS PHOBIC ABOUT RELIGION? NO, IT'S WORSE

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A new Pew Research Center survey, "How Americans Feel About Religion's Influence in Government and Public Life," reveals that Republicans and Democrats seriously disagree on the public role of religion. What the survey does not disclose is why. Before addressing this issue, it is important to recognize areas of general agreement.

Most Americans (8-in-10) think churches should not endorse political candidates, and most (54 percent) think government should enforce separation of church and state (only 13 percent want government to *stop* separation of church and state). Despite media reports to the contrary, only 10 percent of Americans have a positive view of "Christian nationalism" (6-in-10 never heard of it).

Is religion's influence gaining or losing influence in America life? The poll found that 37 percent say it is gaining while 61 percent say it is losing. But is it a good thing or a bad thing that 37 percent say it is gaining influence? This matters because this figure is the highest share since 2002.

More than half of Americans (55 percent) have a positive view of religion's influence on American life; the rest are split between those who are neutral and those who are negative. Republicans and Democrats vary considerably: 7-in-10 of the former believe religion has a positive impact while less than 4-in-10 of the latter agree.

Similarly, 7-in-10 Republicans think the Bible should have a great deal, or some, influence on U.S. laws, as compared to only 3-in-10 Democrats. Had respondents been asked if the Bible should have a great deal of influence on American

society, as opposed to its laws, the figure would likely be higher.

It is no secret that Republicans believe that the teachings that mark our Judeo-Christian heritage, e.g., the Ten Commandments, are a positive guide to the good life. Why don't Democrats? Why are they skittish on the question of religion? To be blunt, are they phobic?

The issue of phobia deserves to be raised because we constantly hear about the nefarious influence of "Islamophobia." New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani, and many academics, never tire of rolling out this canard. Now if some Americans are wary of the effects of Islam on American society, it is because of the illiberal beliefs and practices of many of its adherents.

What is behind the Democrats negative view of religion, which in America largely means Christianity? Fears of a Christian theocracy may be prevalent among some Democrats, but this concern is not supported by any survey data. So what is it that is bugging them?

If there is one thing that liberals prize (most Democrats are liberals), it is autonomy. "It's my body," "I have my own moral compass," and the like, reflect this value. Accordingly, they regard "Thy Shalt Not" to be violative of their precious embrace of autonomy. Worse still, they reckon, is the fact that the author of these three dreaded words is God. The match has been lit.

A close cousin to autonomy is narcissism, and at the collective level, namely society, it manifests itself as nihilism. That is not a prescription for the good society.

This condition may not be true of all Democrats, but it is true of too many of them. A hostility to Christianity, properly understood, is not in anyone's interest. Unfortunately, that explains what's driving so many Democrats

these days—it is less a phobia than it is an animus.