

CHRISTIAN BASHERS INVENT CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the latest attempt to invent Christian Nationalism:

Scholars rightly take umbrage when pundits and activists exploit their work for political purposes. The latest example, at least in religious circles, is the way in which a new book, *Secular Surge: A New Fault Line in American Politics*, is being received by militant secularists.

The authors, David Campbell, Geoffrey Layman and John C. Green—all of whom have distinguished records—maintain that the number of Americans who no longer claim a religious affiliation is growing quickly, accounting for a secular surge. The data support their thesis.

Their volume becomes somewhat more controversial when they attribute some of the exit from religious institutions to the more conservative members of the Republican Party. The authors say that many Americans have an “allergic reaction” to mixing religion and conservative politics. They further note that “a secular-religious divide” may lead each side to view the other “with suspicion and perhaps even hostility.”

As I have recounted in reviewing their work in the past, these authors are well aware of the fact that the secularization of American society has been going on for decades. Layman previously cited 1972 as the pivotal year when secularists took over the Democratic Party. Twenty years later he wrote that “The Democratic Party now appears to be a party whose core of support comes from secularists, Jews, and the less committed members of the major religious traditions.”

In 2004, Green directed a survey by the Bliss Institute at the University of Akron on this subject and found similar results.

Campbell's work in this area is consistent with these findings.

Unfortunately, those who are more interested in propaganda than scholarship are using their work to advance their own agenda. The latest to do so is Adam Gabbatt, a reporter for The Guardian; it is being flagged by Yahoo.

In his news story of April 5, Gabbatt offers a fair presentation of *Secular Surge*, but then descends to politics when he says that "Christian nationalists" are "thrust[ing] their version of religion into American life." He finds support for this view by citing Alison Gill, vice president for Legal and Policy at American Atheists. She cites a report by the organization, "2020 State of the Secular States," that claims Christian nationalists are at the forefront of this movement.

To begin with, Layman, Campbell and Green never use the term "Christian nationalists" in their book. More important, although this label is mentioned 12 times in the report by American Atheists, never once is it defined. It's just bandied about, the way it always is.

"Christian nationalists," according to the report, are those who believe in such things as religious exemptions, pro-life legislation, school vouchers, homeschooling, and our national motto, "In God We Trust." Fairly common stuff. In other words, American Atheists thinks that a very large swath of the American public qualify as "Christian nationalists."

To be sure, there are Christian extremists, but I hasten to add that they are far less influential than their secular counterparts. A militant brand of secularism has gripped the country, and this includes many of those in elite positions of power.

We don't have to worry about "Christian nationalists"—we have to worry about those who are promoting this fiction as a

weapon to assault our Judeo-Christian heritage.