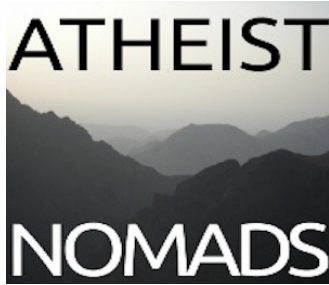


NO RELIGIOUS IDENTITY IS A BAD OMEN



Bill Donohue assesses the survey data on religious affiliation published today by the Pew Research Center:

In the last five years, Americans who are unaffiliated with any religion have grown from approximately 15% to 20%, the largest single block of which are young people under 30 (one-third of young people fall into this category). But the atheists have nothing to celebrate: only 6% of Americans identify themselves as atheist or agnostic, while 14% reject those labels. Indeed, almost seven in ten (68%) of all the unaffiliated overall say they believe in God. One statistic that has not changed since 1987 is the percent of Americans who pray daily, 76%.

The spike in the ranks of the “nones” (those who say they do not identify with any religion) is particularly noticeable among white, affluent, college grads who are single. It is not without significance that two-thirds of the “nones” say churches “focus too much on rules.”

Young and single. White and affluent. These are the demographic characteristics we would expect from those who have an aversion to rules. Which explains why they favor abortion rights, gay marriage, and the Democratic Party.

The tendency toward self-absorption among the “nones” is a social liability. We know from the work of Arthur C. Brooks, and more recently from Robert D. Putnam and David E. Campbell, that the most charitable Americans are the religiously affiliated; the most miserly are the “nones.” Those who

ascribe to a religion are more generous with their time (voluntarism, blood drives, etc.) and money than the unaffiliated. To this extent it does not bode well for the dispossessed that the “nones” are on the rise.

A more religiously affiliated nation, then, is in the best interest of everyone, especially the poor and the needy.

RELIGION POLL PROVES REVEALING



Bill Donohue comments on some of the findings from the latest Pew Research Center survey on religion and politics:

The poll results released yesterday show that fewer Americans today say that President Obama is a Christian than was true four years ago when he was a presidential candidate; 55 percent said he was a Christian in October 2008, but only 49 percent say he is today. On the other hand, the more people get to know Mitt Romney, the more they identify him as a Mormon; since November 2011 to today, the percentage who say Romney is a Mormon has jumped from 48 to 60.

Among those who know that Romney is a Mormon, those who are most uncomfortable with his religion are those who have none; it's not the unaffiliated who are the most uncomfortable—their numbers are not very different from the rest of the population—it's the atheist/agnostic category that shows the most unease. Indeed, less than half of non-believers say they

are comfortable with Romney's religion.

The American people do not like to have agendas imposed on them. For example, 45 percent say that "Christians have gone too far to try to impose religious values on the country." But that number pales in significance to the 65 percent who say that "liberals have gone too far trying to keep religion out of schools, government."

These findings raise some interesting questions. What is it about President Obama that the more people get to know him, the less likely they are to believe he's a Christian? What is it about agnostics and atheists that makes them uncomfortable with Mormonism, or, for that matter, any religion? Why do two-thirds of Americans believe liberals want to censor religious speech?

The president has a perception problem that only he can change. As for non-believers and liberals, they need to work on nurturing the virtue of tolerance.

OBAMA'S RELIGION PROBLEM



Bill Donohue comments on President Obama's religion problem:

The more people get to know the president, the more they disbelieve him when he says he's a Christian. It does not exaggerate to say there's never been anything like this in presidential politics.

In March 2008, a Pew Research Center poll showed that 47 percent of the public said presidential-candidate Barack Obama was a Christian; 12 percent said he was Muslim and 36 percent said, "Don't Know." More than two years later, in August 2010, when asked about President Obama's religion, only 34 percent believed he was a Christian; those thinking he was Muslim grew to 18 percent, and 43 percent said, "Don't Know." The latest Gallup poll, released June 22, finds that he's still regarded by only 34 percent as a Christian; 11 percent say he's Muslim, and 44 percent say, "Don't Know."

The comparison with Mitt Romney is striking: a 2007 Pew Research Center survey found that 42 percent identified the Republican as a Mormon; in 2011, the number jumped to 48 percent; and a poll from March 2012 reported that 58 percent said he was a Mormon.

In other words, the more the public learns about Romney, the more likely they are to identify him as a Mormon. Education works. But education has no effect on the public's perception of Obama's religion. The fact that two-thirds of the public do not believe the president when he says he's a Christian—and his claim has been reported over and over again—suggests there is something about his persona, and/or his policies, that give people pause.

Could it be that President Obama's war on religion explains why the public distrusts him when he says he's a Christian?

DO CATHOLICS OPPOSE THE OBAMA

MANDATE?



Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments as follows:

Survey research was pioneered by Columbia University sociologists during World War II. By the time I was studying for my doctorate in sociology at New York University in the 1970s, the scientific nature of survey research had made great strides. But much depends on the methodology, as well as the questions asked.

The *New York Times* is reporting today that a majority of Catholics (it does not cite the percentage, either in the article or on the *New York Times*/CBS Poll website) “are at odds with the [Catholic] church’s official stance.”

A survey by the Pew Research Center’s Forum on Religion and Public Life reports that 55 percent of all Catholics, and 63 percent of those who attend church weekly, are opposed to the Obama mandate.

A Rasmussen survey found that 77 percent of Catholics oppose the Obama mandate.

What’s going on? The *Times* asked respondents, “Do you support or oppose a recent federal requirement that private health insurance plans cover the full cost of birth control for their female patients?” Notice there was no mention of the religious liberty implications, nor of the issue of exemptions. It’s just about free services for women.

Pew asked whether there should be an exemption for religiously affiliated institutions that object. Similarly, Rasmussen

asked whether “individuals should have the right to choose between different types of health insurance plans.”

In short, how the question is framed affects the answer. I will leave it to the reader to decide whether the *Times* asked about the real issue.

CATHOLIC CHURCH IS BOOMING

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on new survey data profiling Catholicism:

All we ever hear from the wild-eyed critics of the Catholic Church, including the dissidents within, is that the Church had better “get with it” and change its teachings on abortion, homosexuality and women’s ordination. Yet it is precisely those religious institutions that are the most liberal on these issues—the mainline Protestant denominations—that are collapsing. Not so the Catholic Church. Indeed, its numbers are going north while the mainline denominations are going south.

The latest findings by the “Emerging Models of Pastoral Leadership” project, a collaborative effort with Georgetown University’s Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, are illuminating. In the last 40 years, the Catholic population has increased by 75 percent; it has grown by 50 percent since 1990. More important, Catholic attendance at Mass is up 15 percent since 2000. And in the last five years, contributions have increased by 14 percent. It is also important to note that there has been a 40 percent increase in Latinos in the Church over the past five years.

Shedding more light on the statistics is a study released a

few months ago by the Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion. Its "Landscape Survey" found that of those Catholics who have left the Church, roughly half became unaffiliated while the other half became Protestant. Regarding the latter half, only 23 percent did so because of the Church's teachings on abortion and homosexuality; only 16 percent left because of the way women are treated. Importantly, two-thirds of these Catholics elected to join a Protestant evangelical church.

In other words, disaffected Catholics who left for another religion opted to join a more conservative church. That they did not run down the block in search of a mainline denomination—one that entertains the liberal agenda on issues governing sexuality and women—is telling.

It's time some people took a hard look at the data and made some hard choices. This is great news for the Catholic Church.

ANGLICAN LEADER WRONG ON MUSLIMS

Catholic League president Bill Donohue addresses remarks published today by Rowan Williams, the Archbishop of Canterbury:

The Archbishop of Canterbury says that Shahbaz Bhatti, Pakistan's Minister for Minorities, who was killed for protesting the nation's blasphemy laws, died "not simply for his Christian faith, but for a vision shared between Pakistani Christians and Muslims." Indeed, he says that Bhatti's "courage and steadfastness of purpose was nourished in the political culture of Pakistan," and that only a "faction in Pakistan" supports injustice. What is needed, he adds, is "a

rational debate in Pakistan” about the blasphemy laws.

Bhatti was murdered for the same reason another Pakistani government official was, Salman Taseer: they protested the invocation of the blasphemy law that sentenced Aasiya Bibi to death. Bhatti’s fight for justice had nothing to do with the “political culture of Pakistan”—it was a reflection of his devout Catholicism.

It is precisely the political culture of Islamism that is the problem, not some faction. Here’s the proof: in a major survey published by the Pew Research Center, over 80 percent of Muslims in Pakistan favor stoning people who commit adultery and say the proper punishment for theft is whipping and cutting off of hands. Most important, 76 percent favor the death penalty for Muslims who convert. Moreover, it is ludicrous to say “a rational debate” about the blasphemy laws should take place: Bhatti and Taseer were murdered for discussing it! And now Sherry Rehman, a member of the ruling party in Pakistan, was forced to withdraw her bill to amend the law. One wonders what planet Williams is from.

Not until Muslims renounce the sharia—the totalitarian legal system that justifies oppression—will Christians be safe in Muslim-run nations. We’re not talking about a fringe group of fanatics, we’re talking about a large swath of the Muslim population. See the section on our website, “Christian Persecution,” for recent stories of Muslim barbarism.