

America Became a Lot Less Christian During the Presidency of Barack Obama

In 2006, Barack Obama famously said that “we are no longer just a Christian nation,” and after the last eight years, that is now more true than ever.

The Pew Research Center has just released a major report entitled “How America Changed During Barack Obama’s Presidency,” and what struck me the most about the report was the fact that it showed the United States became a lot less Christian while Obama was in the White House. Of course, this trend did not begin under Obama, but it seems to have accelerated during his presidency.

In particular, the percentage of Americans who have no religion at all is growing rapidly. According to the report, “nones” now make up nearly a fourth of our entire population:

When it comes to the nation’s religious identity, the biggest trend during Obama’s presidency is the rise of those who claim no religion at all. Those who self-identify as atheists or agnostics, as well as those who say their religion is “nothing in particular,” now make up nearly a quarter of the U.S. adult population, up from 16 percent in 2007.

Christians, meanwhile, have fallen from 78 to 71 percent of the U.S. adult population, owing mainly to modest declines in the share of adults who identify with mainline Protestantism and Catholicism. The share of Americans identifying with evangelical Protestantism, historically black Protestant denominations and other smaller Christian groups, by contrast, have remained fairly stable.

And these numbers don't just reflect a growing dissatisfaction with organized religion. The truth is that Americans are becoming less "spiritual" overall. Compared with 2007, fewer Americans believe in God, fewer Americans consider religion "to be very important in their lives," fewer Americans pray daily and fewer Americans attend religious services.

These trends are evident in all age groups, but the biggest shift is with millennials. According to the report, 11 percent of the Silent Generation are "nones," with 17 percent of the baby boomers, 23 percent of those in Generation X and an astounding 35 percent of all millennials included in this category.

As the older generations die off, America is changing, and not for the better.

The numbers are even more dramatic when you look at church attendance. According to a different Pew Research Center report, only 27 percent of all millennials attend religious services on a weekly basis.

Millennials—especially the youngest millennials, who have entered adulthood since the first Landscape Study was conducted—are far less religious than their elders. For example, only 27 percent of millennials say they attend religious services on a weekly basis, compared with 51 percent of adults in the silent generation. Four in 10 of the youngest millennials say they pray every day, compared with 6 in 10 baby boomers and two-thirds of members of the silent generation. Only about half of millennials say they believe in God with absolute certainty, compared with 7 in 10 Americans in the silent and baby boom cohorts. And only about 4 in 10 millennials say religion is very important in their lives, compared with more than half in their older generational cohorts.

And remember, that 27 percent figure includes all religions.

When you take out all Muslims, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, Wiccans and others, you probably have less than a quarter of all millennials attending a church of some sort on a regular basis.

The implications this has for church leadership in America are absolutely staggering. To a very large degree, we are failing to reach an entire generation of Americans, and we are in great danger of being transformed into a “post-Christian society” as so many countries in Europe have become.

Of course, these young adults who aren’t going to church still have a spiritual hunger, and they are often trying to fill that hunger in unusual ways.

For example, interest in witchcraft among young adults is absolutely soaring:

The witching web world carries over into mortal life, too. Stores are popping up across the country selling crystals, spell kits and tarot cards. And K-Hole, the trend-forecasting firm responsible for inserting “normcore” into the pop culture lexicon, has anointed “mysticore” the zeitgeistiest of current zeitgeists.

*And its popularity isn’t just growing: It’s levitating. Alex Mar, author of the 2015 book *Witches of America*, estimates there are up to one million practitioners of witchcraft today around the U.S. in big cities, tiny towns and in the countryside. In other words: Witches are everywhere. “I started to feel that you could toss a pebble in this country and hit a witch,” she says.*

Even if they don’t understand the spiritual hunger inside them, most people will instinctively try to fill it in some way. And most of our young adults have decided church is not the answer, which means those in charge of leading the church in America need to start asking some hard questions.

It seems clear that much of what the church in America is doing is simply not working. Often we get so caught up with our plans and our programs that we miss the bigger picture. An entire generation that desperately needs Jesus Christ is slipping through our fingers, but most church leaders seem to think conducting business as usual is the answer.

And as our young adults move away from the Christian faith, that has tremendous implications for our political future as well. Today, 50 percent of millennials consider themselves to be Democrats, and only 34 percent of them consider themselves to be Republicans.

If millennials had been the only ones voting in the recent election, Donald Trump would have been defeated in a historic landslide.

But Hillary Clinton would have never been the Democratic nominee in the first place because millennials greatly preferred Bernie Sanders over her.

Unless something changes, this is where America is going.

Because one thing is absolutely certain: Older generations of Americans will continue to die off, and younger Americans will take their places as the future leaders of this country.

It has been said that history belongs to those that are courageous enough to change it.

We desperately need a spiritual renewal in this nation, because right now we are heading for a very bleak future.
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