

Christianity is not leading America into a steep decline

by Randy Bright <http://www.tulsabeacon.com/?p=5907>

I read an interesting, albeit insulting, article on the Atlantic Cities website written by Richard Florida, entitled “The Real Boundaries of the Bible Belt,” about the results of the Gallop Religiosity Index. The index maps where the most religious people are in the United States.

Not surprising, the index indicates that the most religious people are in the southeastern states that include Oklahoma, Texas, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Tennessee, Kentucky, Georgia, South Carolina and North Carolina. The only state not contiguous with those “Bible Belt” states was Utah, who earned its place in the index because of its high Mormon population.

According to Florida, the Gallop poll indicated that the most religious people tend to be Republicans and voted for McCain in 2008. That conclusion could have been easily reached without the poll.

Florida then attempts to convince us of the negatives of being religious. He wrote, “Religiosity is higher in lower income states where poverty is prevalent. The share of state residents who say religion is very important to their daily lives is correlated with the poverty rate (.60) and negatively associated with state income levels (-.55).”

“Education plays a role. Religiosity is higher in less educated states, and negatively associated with the share of state residents that are college grads (-.56).”

“Religion is also associated with the types of work people do. Religiosity is positively associated with the share of working class jobs (.61) and negatively associated with the share of workers doing knowledge, profession, and creative work.”

Reading his article conjured up memories of a scene in Monty Python and the Holy Grail where a rabble of peasants bring a woman to the local constable claiming that she was a witch. There was one fellow who shouted, “she turned me into a newt!” but upon realizing that he was clearly not a newt, said, “Well, I got better.”

Articles like this are nonsense, and betray Florida’s ignorance and prejudice against religion. Having been a Christian all of my life, I’d like to set the record straight about what religion means to Christians, or at least to this one.

Foremost is that I don’t consider myself to be religious. It is not important to God that we create a lot of rules for ourselves to demonstrate our piety. What God wants is for us to have a relationship with him. That is what makes Christianity unique in comparison to all other religions in the world.

By the title of the article, Florida clearly wants his readers to associate Gallop's poll with Judeo-Christian beliefs, not people of all religions, and he also wants you to believe that our "religiosity" is the cause of people being poor, uneducated, unemployed and underemployed. Joel Kotkin (an author that I enjoy reading but with whom I don't always agree) wrote an article on the NewGeography website that appeared at about the same time as Florida's.

Kotkin argues that organized religion is losing ground in America, stating that "over the past 40 years the percentage professing no religious affiliation has grown over 140 percent while the percentage of the deeply faithful dropped 15 percent." But he has a different take on the statistics.

"Many in the pundit class identify religion as something of a regressive tendency, embraced by the less enlightened, the less skilled, intelligent and educated. Yet some scholars, such as Charles Murray, point out that religious affiliation is weakening most not among the middle and upper classes but among the poorer and less educated who traditionally looked to churches for succor and moral instruction."

I agree with Kotkin's statistics because I have heard others that bear out the same result: Christianity is on the decline in this country.

The truth is that this entire country is getting poorer, less educated and jobs are getting harder to find every day. Who is at the helm of state in this country? Christians? The decline of this great nation is actually the result of the gradual rejection of God at the direction of secular government and academics.

Correlation is not causation, as Florida would like for you to believe. Christianity is not leading this country in a downward spiral and it is not producing sub-standard citizens. Quite the opposite; I believe that Christians are the ones who can lead it back to greatness.

In conclusion, I can say this with absolute certainty and without the corroboration of a Gallop survey: no Christian has ever turned anyone into a newt.

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