



protecting the constitutional principle of the separation of state and church

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One Out of 5 Americans Nonreligious! A Gradual Awakening?

Downward, Christian Soldiers: Godless Americans Become an American Force

Statement by Annie Laurie Gaylor & Dan Barker
Co-Presidents, Freedom From Religion Foundation

March 9, 2009

Maybe the United States' new motto should be "In God We Distrust," if we go by the latest findings of the definitive American Religious Identification Survey: 15%, or 34 million adult Americans--that's one in five of us*--are now nonreligious. The "Nones," as researchers are calling nonreligious Americans, have more than doubled our numbers since the 1990s.

In this bicentennial year of Darwin's birth, it is welcome news to see that "none of the above" is a natural selection. It may not rival the "Great Awakening," but the United States is clearly in the midst of a "Gradual Awakening," and catching up with Europe's embrace of secularism.

"The challenge to Christianity in the U.S. does not come from other religions but rather from a rejection of all forms of organized religion," said ARIS principal investigators Barry Kosmin and Ariela Keysar, working through Trinity College.

We may be seeing the first secular generation, according to these heartening findings. Some 29% of Nones are ages 18-29, and 41% are 30-49.

The ARIS' third survey, updating major academic surveys released in 1990 and 2001, was released yesterday, on the same date that Pres. Obama lifted the embargo on embryonic stem cell lines, making it a very good week for reason!

The "largest net increase" since the first ARIS survey in 1990 goes to the Nones. Also good news for freethought was this ARIS finding: "Less than 70% of Americans now believe in the traditional theological concept of a personal God."

The nonreligious were the fastest-growing segment of the U.S. population, according to the 2001 ARIS results, which showed the nonreligious climbing from 8.2% in 1990 to 14.1%. We are holding our own at 15% in 2008, since the Nones is the only group which did not show a decline since the last survey. The religiously-affiliated have declined overall, but since 2001, more than 4.7 million Americans have joined the ranks of the Nones.

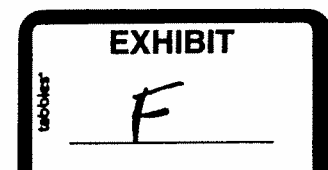
"The most significant influence on American religious geography over time has been the increase in the Nones, or No Religion bloc . . . Moreover, the Nones increased in numbers and proportion in every state. Census Division and Region of the country from 1990 to 2008. No other religious bloc has kept such a pace in every state," write the researchers.

The United States of America started as a proudly rebellious nation. We are now turning our prized disrespect for authority to religion. It's "Downward, Christian Soldiers" and "Forward, Godless America!"

Recap of survey results

Read the report: check out your state's religious identification

* The authors of the study added the "don't know" (0.9 percent) and "refuse to answer" (4.1 percent)--which "tend to resemble 'Nones' in their social profile and beliefs"--to the "Nones" (15.0 percent), coming up with 20 percent, concluding "one in five adults does not identify with a religion of any kind compared with one in ten in 1990."



The Freedom From Religion Foundation, based in Madison, Wis., is a national association of freethinkers (atheists, agnostics) that has been working since 1978 to keep church and state separate.

Freedom From Religion Foundation • PO Box 750 • Madison, WI 53701 • (608) 256-8900 • [contact us](#)
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