

The Decline of the Christian Worldview in the Culture and the Church

Michigan Christian Convention – April 8, 2016

Seminar Webpage: www.worldvieweyes.org/MCC16.html

Richard A. Knopp, M.A., M.Div., Ph.D.
Professor of Philosophy & Christian Apologetics
Program Director, WorldViewEyes (www.worldvieweyes.org)
Project Coordinator, Room For Doubt (www.roomfordoubt.com)

Email: rknopp@lincolnchristian.edu
Lincoln Christian University

Room For Doubt: A grant-funded program that provides learning experiences and resources to strengthen the faith of committed Christians, address the questions of those who have doubts about their Christian heritage, and represent the Christian message to those who are skeptical about its claims.

Introduction

A. The Christian Worldview Consensus

B. Christian Worldview Convictions

1. Truth (Eph 6:10–20; 1 Tim 2:4; 2 Tim 2:15–19).
2. Certainty, confidence and boldness (Acts 1:3; 2:36; 4:29; 17:31; Rom 1:16; Eph 3:11–12; Jude 3).
3. Reasonable faith (1 Pet 3:15; Acts 17:2–3,17; 18:4,19; 19:8–9; 24:12).
 - a. A “reasoned defense” (1 Pet 3:15 - *Apologia* > apologetics).
 - b. Paul *reasoned* repeatedly with his audience (Acts 17:2–3,17; 18:4,19; 19:8–9; 24:12).
4. “Dangerous” doubt (Matt 14:30–32; Matt 21:21; James 1:6).

I. Describing the Decline of the Christian Worldview

A. “Biblical Worldview”

1. “Born again” adults? _____%.
2. “Biblical worldview”:¹ All Adults? _____%. All Teens? ia _____%.
3. “Biblical worldview”: Those 18-23? _____%.

B. LCU Anecdotal Data (see “worldview test” at www.worldviewweekend.com).

C. Churched Doubters and “Dropouts”

1. Significantly doubted their faith? _____%.
2. Can’t ask their most pressing life questions at church? _____%.
3. At some point, felt like rejecting their parents’ faith? _____%.
4. “Churched Teens”: No longer active in church in their 20s? _____%. [Barna]

¹ For the Barna Research Group, the criteria for having a “biblical worldview” are as follows: Made a personal commitment to Christ with belief in salvation from Jesus; acceptance of absolute moral truth, biblical moral standards, Satan’s existence, and Jesus’ sinless life; and trust in Christ for salvation.

“As we have examined other research, our conclusion is that 40 to 50 percent of kids who graduate from a church or youth group will fail to stick with their faith in college” (*Sticky Faith: Everyday Ideas to Build Lasting Faith in Your Kids* (Kindle Locations 96-97; emphasis added).

D. The Rise of the **NONES**—the religiously detached (see Pew Research surveys.)

1. **Adults:** 1990 = 8.1%; 2007 = 15.3%; 2012 = 19.3%; 2014 = _____%.
2. **18-29 year olds:** 2007 = 22%; 2012 = 32%.
 - a. 2014: **Older** Millennials (25-33): _____%.
 - b. 2014: **Younger** Millennials (18-24): _____%.
3. From “**religious homes**”? _____%. (Data from the “2009 American Religious Identification Survey”)
4. Religious “**de-converts**”? _____%.

“The most frequently mentioned role of Christians in de-conversion was in amplifying existing doubt.’ De-converts reported ‘sharing their burgeoning doubts with a Christian friend or family member only to receive trite, unhelpful answers’” (Drew Dyck, “The Leavers: Young Doubters Exit the Church,” *Christianity Today* [Nov. 19, 2010]; citing a report at a 2008 meeting of the American Sociological Association).
<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2010/november/27.40.html>.

5. 2007 vs. 2014: “2014 Religious Landscape Survey” (Pew Research)

	2007	2014	Increase/Decrease
Religious Unaffiliated	36.6 m (15.3%)	56 m (22.8%)	19 million MORE
“Christian”	178.1 m (78%)	173 m (71%)	5 million LESS
Mainline Protestant	41.1 m	36.0 m	5 million LESS
Catholic	54 m	51 m	3 million LESS
Evangelical Protestant	59.8 m	62.2 m	2 million MORE

II. Factors for the Decline of the Christian Worldview

A. General Considerations

I. Prominent **popular skeptics**

- a. Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (2006).
- b. Christopher Hitchens, *How Religion Poisons Everything* (2007).
- c. Bart Ehrman (Professor of Religious Studies, Univ. of North Carolina)
 - (1) *How Jesus Became God: The Exaltation of a Jewish Preacher from Galilee* (2014).
 - (2) *Forged Writing in the Name of God—Why the Bible’s Authors Are Not Who We Think They Are* (2011).
- d. Lawrence Krause (atheist cosmologist, Arizona State): “Change is always one generation away. So if we can plant the seeds of doubt in our children, religion will go away in a generation, or at least largely go away. And that’s what I think we have an obligation to do” (*Salon* [Nov 4, 2014]).

2. Internet Accessibility

Larry Taunton, "Listening to Young Atheists: Lessons for a Stronger Christianity": "When our participants were asked to cite key influences in their conversion to atheism—people, books, seminars, etc.—we expected to hear frequent references to the names of the 'New Atheists.' We did not. Not once. Instead, we heard vague references to videos they had watched on YouTube or website forums" ("Listening to Young Atheists: Lessons for a Stronger Christianity," *The Atlantic* online [June 6, 2013]).

3. Greater number of "**High-Information Seekers**" (see Larry Barnett's Next Generation Project at <http://www.projectnextgen.org/>).

"We found that the presence of doubt much more strongly predicted leaving Christianity for high information seekers [H]igh information seekers with doubts are about two to four times more likely to disconnect from Christianity than other doubters who are not high information seekers.... According to our research, high information seekers are not intrinsically more difficult to disciple, but only when they have unanswered questions or unresolved doubts about Christianity's truth claims."

- a. Over _____ of Millennials go to college.
- b. Only _____ of their parents did.
- c. Only _____ of their grandparents did.

B. Why Church Kids Leave: Specific Studies

1. Self-imposed change (e.g. need a break from church; work; college) [2007 Lifeway Research Study]

"The most frequent reason for leaving church is, in fact, a self-imposed change, 'I simply wanted a break from church' (27%)."

"The path toward college and the workforce are also strong reasons for young people to leave church: 'I moved to college and stopped attending church' (25%) and 'work responsibilities prevented me from attending' (23%)."

2. Intellectual skepticism and doubt.

Christian Smith, *Soul Searching*: Students leave faith behind primarily because of intellectual doubt and skepticism (page 89). "Why did they fall away from the faith in which they were raised?" This was an open-ended question there were no multiple-choice answers. 32% said they left faith behind because of intellectual skepticism or doubt. ("It didn't make any sense anymore." "Some stuff is too far-fetched for me to believe." "I think scientifically and there is no real proof." "Too many questions that can't be answered.")

David Kinnaman (*You Lost Me*) says that 12% says it's "completely true" and 23% says it's "completely or mostly true" that they have significant intellectual doubts. (Kindle, 3045-3047).

3. Brian Housman, "Why are Teens Leaving the Faith?" Lifeway (June 17, 2013). [<http://m.lifeway.com/Article/ministry-family-Why-are-Teens-Leaving-the-Faith>]
 - a. Shallow belief system
 - b. No room for doubt
 - c. Exclusive faith
 - d. No answers for opposition (philosophy & science).
 - e. Church is intolerant

f. Church is against science. (See Kinnaman, *You Lost Me*)

- 32% of Nones: “Modern science proves religion a superstition.”
- About 25% of NONES say this is an “important reason” why they became unaffiliated.
- Only _____ of youth pastors addressed *any* topic related to science within the past year.

g. Church not relevant (personally and professionally)

C. Discipleship Deficiencies

“After more than a decade and a half of research into American faith, I believe that the Christian church in the United States has a *shallow faith problem* because we have a *discipleship problem*. Moreover, diagnosing and treating shallow faith among young adults is urgent because we have a *shallow faith problem among all adults*.... The *dropout problem* is, at its core, a faith-development problem; to use religious language, it’s a *disciple-making problem*” (David Kinnaman, *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving Church...and Rethinking Faith* [Kindle locations 1873, 216]; emphasis added).

1. Contentment with the “_____” of the word (Hebrews 5:12–14)—a “shallow” faith.
2. _____ Christian faith.
3. A _____ between professed beliefs and behavior.
4. A _____ between “sacred” and “secular.”
5. Don’t know _____ we believe the Christian way and *WHY* we _____ believe something else.
6. Missing the _____ picture.

I Chronicles 12:23–38

“... the sons of Issachar, men who _____
_____, with knowledge of what Israel
should do”