

Have We Outgrown Biblical Religion?

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By Rev. Tim White

Do you think we still need God and the teachings of the Bible today (i.e., "Religion")? Should we treat "Religion" as a set of "guidelines" that we occasionally consult when making decisions about life and what is best? Some would say that it was good for people in past generations (like the disciples and our founding fathers), but we have matured as a human species to the point that we have 'outgrown' our need for those archaic religious codes and standards.

In general, I think you would agree that the presence of Religion in a society should improve the human condition and create a better society. Therefore, if we claim to have outgrown our need for God and His commands, we must have found a way to be good without God. Point of fact, "Good without God" is the rallying cry of the Union of Rationalist Atheists and Agnostics (UAAR) and Humanists International.

Statistically, each new generation is less likely to attend church services, pray, and believe in God. Based on these facts, it appears that many believe God is less relevant today than He once was. But has this religious downward trend with each new generation made us better human beings? Has it created a more agreeable society? I think not. Many wonderful people and organizations are doing good work today, but our society's growing division and immorality are reaching levels that threaten us as a nation.

How do we return to a more civil and, yes, moral society? Let's look at two significant American Christian men to point us the way back, or should I say "up"?

The first is Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. One of many immortal phrases from his "I Have a Dream" speech on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial was that his children "...will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character." Let's focus on those last four words and think of "character" as a container; then, the quality of one's character is determined by what it "contains." Jesus put it this way:

"The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks" [Luke 6:45].

The "abundance of the heart" is another phrase for "the content of one's character." Jesus says that what comes out of a person is determined by what goes in. Today we say, "Garbage in, garbage out." When we lessen or stop receiving God's Word and Spirit into our hearts and lives, the more the world's lies and godless ways take their place to fill the container of our character. As they say, "We become what we eat." Our first President, George Washington, would suggest a new menu.

On September 17, 1796, George Washington gave a farewell speech in which he stated: "Of all the dispositions and habits, which lead to political prosperity, Religion and Morality are

indispensable supports.” By “political prosperity,” he refers to the benefit to the nation as a whole when elected officials serve the people as they are guided by these two inseparable pillars of Religion and Morality.

Washington then warns his hearers that a true Patriot must never attempt to remove or vilify these “firmest props of the duty of Men and Citizens” and that it is impossible to “trace all their connexions with private and public felicity” that come from this dynamic duo. Sadly, sixty years ago, we removed prayer, Bible reading, and later the 10 Commandments from our schools, and in their place is extreme sexual health material similar to pornography and other atheistic political activism that teaches students to hate America.

Should we be surprised by the deterioration of social morals, public safety, government integrity, students’ test scores, and the family unit when so many have worked so hard to remove religious principles and prayer from our schools, legislation, human relationships, and politics?

We have not become “good” without God. Quite the opposite. Washington warned us of that very fact when he said: “And let us with caution indulge the supposition that Morality can be maintained without Religion...reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national Morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle.” Religion (faith in God and obedience to His Word, the Bible) gives Morality its form and definition.

Our national history over the last century demonstrates that when these “firmest props of the duty of Men and Citizens” permeate all levels of society, our nation has been blessed in many ways that promote all that is good and desirable in society. To prove this point, let us compare two generations spanning a century.

The “The Greatest Generation” (born between 1901 and 1924) was called “Greatest” for they fought and won World War II. The current up-and-coming young adult generation is “Gen Z” (1997-2012). As we note how these two generations’ societies differed drastically in levels of morality, intact families, crime, student scores, and public safety in general, we must note the role religion played in their lives. Of the former generation, 83% identified as Christian (54% Protestant & 29% Catholic), 71% prayed daily, and 63% read Scripture regularly. Compared to Gen Z, the numbers are essentially cut in half, with only 40-45% of adults identifying as Christian, 39% praying regularly, and just 21% reading Scripture regularly.*

The correlation between the presence or absence of religion-defined morality within a people group and the condition of their society is unmistakable. George Washington knew that America would continue to exist and prosper only so long as she “cherished and honored” Religion and Morality. How foolish of us to think we were so wise and clever that we had outgrown our need for biblical truths and faith in God. The erroneous application of “Separation of Church and State” has failed us.

However, the good news is that we know the way back. “If My people, who are called by My name, will humble themselves and pray, and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, I will forgive their sin, and heal their land” [2 Chron. 7:14].

God did not send Jesus to condemn us because we were already under judgment. Instead, He sent Christ to save us [John 3:17]. There is reason for hope and faith for a better tomorrow – but only through our repentance and faith in Christ. Now would be a good time to start.

*[These statistics are based on aggregated data from various sources, including the 2024 U.S. Religious Data, Demographics, Statistics, Pew Research, and other studies.]