

Who Has the Advantage Now?

In the last edition of *Christian School Comment*, volume 40, number 7, we pursued the issue of worldview, exploring the question, Does worldview matter? We may also ask some follow-up questions: Does it matter enough for families who have school-age children to continue the significant—in these times the extremely significant—investment in Christian school education? Simply put, does it really matter?

I would like to suggest that yes, it does matter—that it matters a whole lot. In March of this year, Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut, released the findings of the American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS), conducted by Barry Kosmin and Ariela Keysar. The survey was the third in a series, the first in 1990 and the second in 2001 (Office of Communications 2009).

This third survey questioned more than 54,000 U.S. adults living in the 48 contiguous states. The survey took place between February and November of 2008. A few brief findings from this crucial research offer a view of how Americans identify themselves religiously while providing evidence of an alarming trend: This study reflects that 15 percent of Americans claim no religion. The earlier studies in 1990 and 2001, which employed the same research methodology, reflected 8.2 percent and 14.2 percent respectively. Hence from 1990 to 2008, that percentage nearly doubled. In real numbers, that is an additional 4.7 million adults in the United States who claim no religion (Office of Communications 2009).

According to the press release from Trinity College's Office of Communications, "The percentage of Christians in America, which declined in the 1990s from 86.2 percent to 76.7 percent, has now edged down to 76 percent" (2009).

Other findings of interest in the ARIS indicate the following (Office of Communications 2009):

- "The Muslim proportion of the population continues to grow, from .3 percent in 1990 to .5 percent in 2001 to .6 percent in 2008."
- "The number of adherents of Eastern Religions, which more than doubled in the 1990s, has declined slightly, from just over two million to just under."

- "Adherents of New Religious movements, including Wiccans and self-described pagans, have grown faster this decade than in the 1990s."
- "The number of outright atheists has nearly doubled since 2001, from 900,000 to 1.6 million."

In light of these findings indicating significant shifts from Christianity in particular, it should be of great concern to Christian families that they take every opportunity to ensure the most effective teaching and nurture possible for their children regarding the development of a Christian worldview. From the above evidence, it seems relatively clear that significant influences in our culture have, at least for nearly the past two decades, been gaining advantage in a great contest for the heart, mind, and soul of our nation. That advantage is leaning more heavily toward secularism and non-Christian religious influences.

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Not since the Great Depression have Americans faced such a significant challenge in weighing the economic priorities of life. So as you consider those priorities now, will you choose Christian schooling and thus gain the advantage of Christian-worldview integration in your students' education, or will you take a chance—a chance on fighting alone against the non-Christian culture, which is gaining ground in the war of worldviews?



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Reference

Office of Communications. 2009. Catholics on the move, non-religious on the rise. *Trinity News*. Press release. March 9. http://www.trincoll.edu/AboutTrinity/News_Events/trinity_news/030909_Religion.htm.

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