

Americans Aren't Losing Religion, They're Inventing a New One

In the opening prayers of the traditional Latin Mass, the priest and the servers kneel at the foot of the altar and speak these words, "*Introibo ad altare Dei...*" which means "I will go to the altar of God."

Many readers of Intellectual Takeout "go to the altar of God," meaning they possess a belief in Christ, Yahweh, Allah, or some other deity. They believe in and worship a power beyond this earth, a Creator God who is lord of the universe.

Other readers may lack that belief, but still possess faith in some force outside of themselves: honor, duty, reverence for life, nature, or certain virtues. They march daily beneath these banners, finding in them both comfort and meaning.

Today we see the rapid growth of a new religion. It looks neither to the heavens nor to the virtues for worship. Instead, its adherents look into a mirror. Their religious faith intermingles with politics and culture, and their dogma begins with *Introibo ad altare Hominis* – "I will go to the altar of Man."

The chief priests of this new religion are a mixed lot of the rich and the powerful: billionaires, politicians, scientists, and celebrities. Like orthodox priests, rabbis, and imams, they also believe in a higher power: themselves. They believe men and women can become gods, powerful beings who create new societies and new laws of nature. They believe they can establish societies in which all are not only equal in the eyes of the law, but equal in all aspects of life.

Notice that word "believe?" It belongs to faith.

The prophets whom many of these postmodern priests revere are figures such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Karl Marx, Vladimir Lenin, Josef Stalin, Mao Zedong, and Che Guevara. Their holy writ is the "Gospel According to *The New York Times*." Their creed is always in flux and comes from the writings of priests and priestesses in academia. But the core of this creed – "If only others would do as I command, we would bring heaven to earth" – never changes.

This blend of politics, culture, and the new religion explains much about the hatred, hysteria, and craziness exhibited every day in our public square. The ministers of this faith recite from their catechism, touting socialism as utopia, climate change as the bogeyman, and gender change as a natural right. Those who disagree with them must be punished. The worst of these punishments are reserved for the heretics among them. Dissenters, for example, like [J. K. Rowling](#) or [Camille Paglia](#), who are smeared for daring to criticize the transgender movement, despite their otherwise liberal dispositions.

Ordinary people seem less infected by this madness. I only have to look at my family and friends, whose political beliefs are all over the board, to establish this truth. One of my sisters voted for Hilary Clinton, a childhood friend despises Donald Trump. Another close friend dislikes firearms, while another collects and shoots them with a passion.

Here's the point: none of us demonize the other. That gun-toting guy adores my gun-hating female friend. My sister who voted for Clinton and my sister who voted for Trump speak to each other regularly. They have strong beliefs, but they don't despise those who disagree with them or regard them as evil.

Why is it that some join the new religion of hatred and bile, in political speeches, editorials, or even online comments sections, while others keep their heads and agree to disagree?

Weakness and a thirst for power are two answers to this

question.

In an argument, it is the weak who must resort to ad hominem attacks. When they can't bring logic and reason to a debate, they simply label their opponent a racist and walk away. When a transgendered woman defeats biological women in a sprint, and is criticized even mildly for his/her male hormones, he/she threatens to sue for bigotry. When some in the cult demand that the world change its economy and living standards because of possible effects on the climate, they become hysterical when they encounter dissent, regarding those critics as sub-human.

Power also lies at the heart of this *novus ordo seclorum*. My friends and family have no desire to control the lives of other adults. They are realists, believing in Acton's adage "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely." Those who voted for Trump recognize the man's flaws, those who voted for Clinton see hers as well.

Those who belong to the new religion believe they have the knowledge and the wisdom to direct the affairs of humankind. They long for power just as holy men and women long for God.

Some say we are engaged today in a "cold civil war."

Unfortunately, it's also a religious war.

And wars of religion can be the deadliest and ugliest of all.

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