

The Chimerical Christianity / Morality Correlation

Christians claim that their religion is a force for good in the world. They would have us believe that without Christianity there would be no morality, or certainly much less of it. And they assert that we see clear and convincing evidence of this simply by comparing the conduct of atheists (or secularists) with that of believers.

First, as I have pointed out many times and discussed at great length, history debunks this myth in clear and compelling fashion. During the Middle Ages the Church was in complete control of European life. If there ever was a period of time that serves as a test case for a strong correlation between Christianity and morality, it was this dark era in world history.

So, how well did Christianity live up to its pious reputation? It was a spectacular failure. The Church was corrupt and evil from top to bottom. Far from reflecting God's light and love, Christian leaders from pope to priest exploited, oppressed, terrorized, enslaved, and murdered without restraint. A more wicked institution can scarcely be imagined. A more flagitious group of sinners is not found in the pages of history.

Well, Christians counter, maybe so, but that was a long time ago, and hardly relevant to today. Let's let bygones be bygones. Don't dwell on the negative. Don't worry about what happened centuries ago, but on what Christianity is today. It is rich that Christians are eager to dismiss what certainly happened in the Middle Ages because it was so long ago, insisting instead that we obsess about what may have happened over 2000 years ago. But Christianity is full of such inconsistencies and contradictions, so let's play along for now, and shift focus to modern Christianity.

It's undeniable that Christianity tends to be generous and compassionate in some ways. Churches and individual believers often give of their time and money to support each other and to help others outside the fold who are down and out. But so do non-believers, both on an individual basis and through charitable organizations. Do Christians prove themselves to be more generous and compassionate than their secular counterparts? I don't have any statistics that shed light on the subject. But it's interesting to view it in relative terms. When we consider the fact that the Catholic Church alone has wealth beyond imagination, accumulated, maintained, and protected because of their tax-exempt status, their giving doesn't seem so generous. In fact, they are downright niggardly stewards of God's bounty. And those in the secular world pick up the slack for the taxes Christians evade.

But charitable giving is just one small aspect of morality. Here's a broader perspective. If there is, in fact, a strong correlation between morality and Christianity, surely there is some rather compelling evidence of it. If Christians are more virtuous, we would expect, for example, areas with a higher concentration of believers to have a significantly lower crime rate. This is hardly an exact science, but we know that there is a much higher concentration of Christians in the Republican Party than in the Democrat Party. (Thanks in large part to Ronald Reagan.) So, it follows that there are more Christian conservatives in red states than in blue states. Do red states have a lower overall crime rate than their blue-state counterparts? Let's take a peek.

Of the 25 cities with the lowest rates of violent crimes, 62% are in blue states, and 38% are in red states. Of the 25 most dangerous cities, 76% are in red states, and 24% are in blue states. The very red state of Texas is home to three of the nation's five most dangerous cities. The 12 states with the highest rate of burglary are red. Of the 29 states with the highest rates of theft, 24 are red. Of the 22 states with the highest murder rates, 17 are red.

Statistics can be and often are misleading. So all that statistical correlation has to be considered in that context, and it would be unwise to try to push our conclusions too far based on that alone. Still, it does tend to contradict the Christian assertion. At the very least we can objectively conclude that it doesn't help their case. That's why, when those stats were revealed, Christians got their butts in gear and set out to come up with their own numbers, hopefully producing stats more favorable to their position. (Funny how they love science when it can be used to support what they think they already know.)

What is quite convincing and compelling is the fact that Christians have so far been unable to produce scientific studies supporting a strong (or even a weak) correlation between Christianity and morality.

But, since when did believers let facts interfere with their reality?