



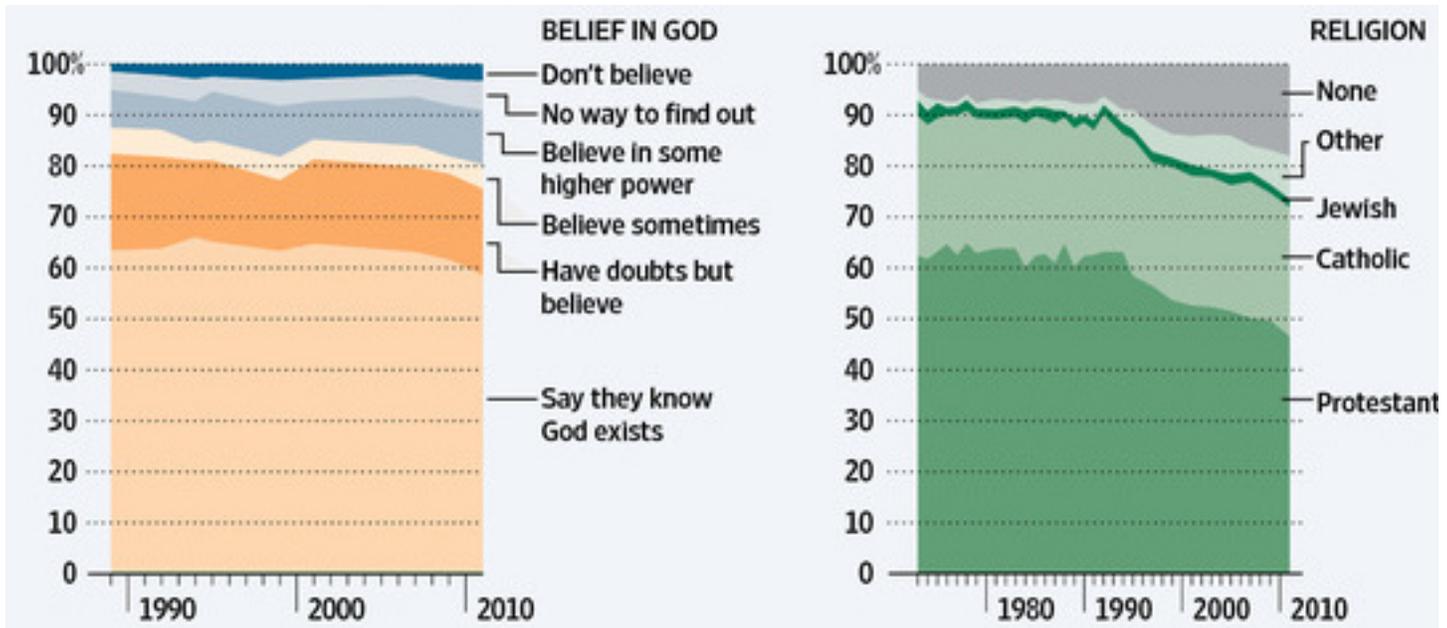
## THE BRIGHT FUTURE OF FREETHOUGHT

Predicting the future has been an interest of people going back into prehistory. All the ancient cultures and civilizations had their seers, prophets, soothsayers, oracles, and augurers. Innumerable methods were used to facilitate these activities from casting lots, interpreting dreams or observing the behavior of animals and other natural events and phenomena. Predicting the future also goes by the term "divination" because it was generally believed that it involved divine inspiration. The Bible actually prohibits divination but, clearly, it was done regularly, especially with the "Urim and Thummim." In fact, correct prophesying was viewed as a sign that the prophet was speaking with the authority of Yahweh.

We have plenty of modern-day "psychic" prognosticators and are familiar with the sort of predictions they like to make, especially around the time of the new year. Of course, these are typically made in profusion since this increases the chance of any one of them being a "hit," and most often they are somewhat indefinite and ambiguous so that there are more ways for any of them to score a "hit." Of course, it's always safe to predict the illness or death of prominent people who are old and already in bad health, or to predict something that happens nearly every year: a volcano erupts, a plane crashes, someone goes on a murderous rampage, an upset occurs during an athletic event, and so on. One particularly good strategy is to predict that ongoing events will continue or that trends already underway will persist. Thus, for 2013:

- There will be violent conflict in the Middle East.
- Taxes will increase and so will government spending.
- The US will run a trade deficit.
- The Federal Reserve will further monetize the US debt with "QE" purchases.
- The US public debt will exceed \$17 trillion.
- Scandals in the banking industry will be exposed.
- Drought conditions will worsen during the summer.
- New gun control legislation will be introduced.
- US domestic gas and oil production will increase.

One trend in particular is a welcome one for Freethinkers and that is the continued growth in the numbers of atheists, agnostics and "nones," people who do not identify with any particular religious affiliation. The Pew Research Center reported this past October that "nones" had increased from 15% of the population to just under 20%. Among adults under 30 the proportion is a full third. Moreover, "In 2007 60%



of those who said they seldom or never attend religious services nevertheless described themselves as belonging to a particular religious tradition." In 2010 that figure fell to 50%. Many of the "nones" – 2 of 3 – say that they believe in god(s), and 1 in 5 say that they pray. A majority also say that churches "benefit society." So "nones" are not just atheists who don't want the label.

The Pew Research Center has modified how they ask about religious preference and what specifically they ask. Not only has this fleshed out the "nones" but it has also found that 14% of self-identifying atheists and 56% of self-identifying agnostics say that they believe in some sort of deity or "universal spirit." Strange? Consider that 2% of self-identifying Christians say that they don't believe in god(s).

Many questions remain. How do "nones" get that way? What proportion of "nones" persist over time as opposed to going on to identify as atheists and agnostics or, perhaps, become affiliated with one of the traditional mainstream religions? What is most important to people in falling out of traditional mainstream religions, or joining one?

The "secularization thesis" – the idea that modernity with its technological innovations and consumerism undermines traditional religions – remains an excellent working hypothesis, but the details are murky. Some research suggests an inverse "hydraulic" relationship between the ability of society and governments to provide security to people and the inclination to believe that supernatural powers can provide such security. But the most important thing about the evolving religious landscape in America appears to be that, perhaps for the first time, significant numbers of people are willing to question and doubt the theological doctrines taught as dogma by the mainstream religions. That can only be a good thing.

**YOUR GENEROUS DONATIONS TO THE NTCOF ARE NEEDED, APPRECIATED, AND TAX-DEDUCTIBLE!! (AND NECESSARY FOR AN AUSPICIOUS START OF A NEW YEAR!)**

**PLANNED FOR NEXT MONTH:  
"FEELINGS: GOOD OR BAD?"**

**>>> Sunday, February 3rd, 2013 <<<  
SHERATON GRAND DFW AIRPORT  
SE CORNER OF 114 AND ESTERS**

All NTCOF events can be found through our website calendar, or through our meetup page, from which you can RSVP, at: [www.meetup.com/church-of-freethought](http://www.meetup.com/church-of-freethought) - **JOIN THE NTCOF MEETUP GROUP !!!**

**Social Luncheon:** Today, immediately after our Service, join us for lunch and discussion at the Golden Corral Buffet and Grill in Grapevine, located just across from the Grapevine Mills Mall, at 2605 E. Grapevine Mills Circle, phone (972) 874-7900. To reach Golden Corral from the Sheraton, cross over the freeway and make a left onto John W. Carpenter Freeway (114) going west. Then take the first exit RIGHT onto International Parkway (121), then Grapevine Mills Parkway exit. Turn LEFT on Stars and Stripes Way, continuing on to E. Grapevine Mills Circle.

**Freethought Salon:** Get together to discuss today's service topic or other conundrums of interest for Freethinkers. Most Sundays, over breakfast, at the Hilton Vineyard in Grapevine beginning 10:30 AM; see the meetup site!

**Game Night:** The regular game night crew meets nearly every Friday night at the IHOP on 2310 Stemmons Trail (I-35), near Northwest Highway (Loop 12). Plan to arrive at about 7:30 PM, and stay late playing Risk, Rummikub, and other fun games!

**Secular Singles:** Freethinkers have met their life-partners with whom they have begun families through the Secular Singles group. Check the meetup site for the next date, time and location!

**"If we open a quarrel  
between past and present,  
we shall find that we have  
lost the future."  
- Winston Churchill**



**DFWCOR**

Dallas-Fort Worth Coalition of Reason

The North Texas Church of Freethought  
The Fellowship of Unbelievers

Presenters: Tim Gorski  
Welcome Coordinator (away this month) Mark Barnick  
Videographer: John Gauthier  
WebMasters: Rusty and Sarah Nejdli

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