



# BULLETIN of THE NORTH TEXAS CHURCH OF FREETHOUGHT

The Fellowship Of Unbelievers

Preaching Religion As It Should Be Since 1994

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## WHAT IS TO BE LEARNED FROM THE NONES?

It is a challenge to gather meaningful information about religious beliefs and practices. Attitudes vary greatly among Christians, yet all Christians tend to see their own interpretation as correct and others as “not really Christian.”

Something similar may apply to those who say their religion is “none.” Yet these unaffiliated Americans, who represented 16% of the population in 2007, swelled to almost 23% in 2014 according to the Pew Research Center, the greatest increase of any religious group studied. The “nones” are now second only to the numbers of evangelical Protestants. Many are the so-called Millennials born after 1980. But many are older people who have fallen away from believing sects, especially the mainline Protestant denominations and the Catholic Church. The “nones” also obviously include atheists – about 13.5% of them. 17.5% said they are agnostics. The remaining 69% identified as “nothing in particular.” Pew also found:<sup>1</sup>

- 57% of “nones” are men, 43% women, compared to Protestants 45% men, 55% women, Catholics 46% men, 54% women and Jews 52% men, 48% women. (Muslims and Jehovah's Witnesses had the most gender disparity of 65% men, 35% women and 35% men, 65% women respectively.)
- Couples married since 2010 are more than twice as likely (39%) to be of different religions than those married before 1960 (19%).
- The “nones” grew at the expense of other religions ; only the small numbers of non-Christians also increased, from 4.7 to 5.2% of the population.
- Younger people are more likely to be “nones” but many continue to leave mainstream religions. The majority of “nones” were raised in a religious tradition and 18% of all Americans who were raised in a religious tradition were “nones” in 2014.
- 9% of American adults say they were raised with

no religious affiliation and almost half of those now identify with some religion. But for every one of those there are four who were raised in a religious tradition who are now “nones.”

- In the West “nones” are now the most numerous religious group at 38% of the population.
- “Nones” tend to stay unaffiliated; 53% of those raised without a religion still identify as such and retention rates among Millennial “nones” are among the highest of any religious group.
- Among “nones,” those identifying as atheists or agnostics rose from 25% to 31%.

Why do people leave religious traditions to become unaffiliated? In August of this year the Pew organization released a report of their results studying a sample of 1300 “nones.” It was found that:

- 60% said that a very important reason for their being unaffiliated was that they “questioned religious teachings.” 77% of atheists and 71% of agnostics cited this reason.
- About half of “nones” said they objected to churches' social and political positions.
- 41% “didn't like religious organizations.”
- 37% said “I don't believe in God” with 89% of atheists and 37% of agnostics citing this reason.
- 36% of “nones” said that religion was simply irrelevant to them, with 63% of atheists giving this reason and 40% of agnostics.
- 76% of atheists' most important reason was not believing in God (75%). Agnostics' was that they questioned religious teachings (38%).
- 25% of “nones” who said they were “nothing in particular” said their most important reason was questioning religious teachings, 21% disagreeing with religious social and political issues and 28% denying that there was any most important reason. Some said they believe in God or are religious but just do not practice any religion.

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What sense is to be made of this? The Pew organization has made some effort to develop a new way of classifying Americans' religious attitudes and behavior. In a second report released this past August they propose the following categories:<sup>2</sup>

- The “highly religious” composed of 1) “Sunday Stalwarts” who are “religious traditionalists” very involved with their beliefs, practices and co-religionists, 2) “God and Country Believers,” the socially and politically conservative who may be less involved, and 3) the “Diversely Devout” who mix traditional religious beliefs and practices with heterodox ideas with a “New Age” flavor.
- The “somewhat religious” of 1) the “Relaxed Religious” to whom religion is important but who allow that it is not necessary to believe in God to be a good person and who may or may not engage in religious practices, or 2) the “Spiritually Awake” who may accept various supernatural ideas such as heaven and hell or who have “New Age” beliefs.
- The “non-religious” made up of 1) “Religion Resisters” who do not think organized religion is useful or desirable and tend to be politically and socially liberal, and 2) the “Solidly Secular” who hold virtually no supernatural beliefs and may actively reject and oppose such beliefs.

The Pew researchers used a lengthy questionnaire<sup>3</sup>, the responses to which tended to cluster in a way that supported this proposed categorization. It offers the advantage of reducing the emphasis on specific doctrines. Another approach may be to consider the psychology of religion and what religion means in people's lives. “Extrinsic” religion is a means to an end, a tool to be happy or successful. “Intrinsic” religion, by contrast, is thought to offer deep truth and understanding, that it is an end in itself. A third religious orientation may be religion as neither a tool nor a truth but a quest, a process of self-discovery that has no definite end.

The rise of the “nones” is about more than the popularity of brands of supernaturalism or shifts in the political landscape. It should cause us to re-think what religion actually is or may be becoming.

(1) <http://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape/> accessed 11/3/2018  
 (2) <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/08/29/religious-typology-overview/> accessed 11/3/2018  
 (3) <http://assets.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/11/2018/08/28150815/Full-questionnaire-for-release-NUMBER-CHECKED.pdf> accessed 11/3/2018

**All NTCOF events can be found through our website calendar, or 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 Jason’s Deli on MacArthur Blvd just south of I-635, at 7707 N MacArthur Blvd, phone (972) 432-0555.

**Freethought Salon:** Discuss today’s service topic or other conundrums on most non-first Sundays of the month, over breakfast/coffee (or not), in the atrium of the Embassy Suites DFW Airport North – on Bass Pro Drive in Grapevine beginning at 10:00 AM.

**Game Night:** Most Friday nights 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 Imperial 2030, Dominion, Evolution, Le Havre, Ticket To Ride, and other fun games!

**Have Another Idea?** Email or call! Read bulletins & presentations and post on the FORUM at [www.churchoffreethought.org](http://www.churchoffreethought.org) LIKE US at [www.facebook.com/northtexaschurchoffreethought/](https://www.facebook.com/northtexaschurchoffreethought/) and sign up for our Twitter feed at [www.twitter.com/ntcof](https://www.twitter.com/ntcof) !

**PLANNED FOR NEXT MONTH:  
“WHAT'S THE USE? THE  
FUTILITY OF CHRISTMAS”  
> Sunday, December 2, 2018 <  
COMFORT INN DFW AIRPORT NORTH  
(114 Freeport Parkway exit, take the frontage  
road east just past the Best Western; service  
starts at 10:30 but come early for coffee and  
snacks - you can bring some! - and conversation)**

**THANK YOU !!  
FOR YOUR GENEROUS  
DONATION OF TIME & FINANCIAL  
SUPPORT to the NTCOF !!  
It is needed, appreciated and  
Tax-Deductible !**

**The North Texas Church of Freethought  
The Fellowship of Unbelievers**

Pastor (It's a job description, not a title!)..Tim Gorski  
Presenters.....Christel J Manning PhD  
.....with introduction by J Gordon Melton PhD  
Social Media Czar.....Aaron Kelton  
Welcome Coordinator.....Mark Barnick  
Videographer.....Michael Zaff  
Webpage Management.....Saturn Consulting

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