

Fifth Place: Joshua Jen

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One Nation Under God: The Consequences of the Secularization of America

In a functional democracy, the people's trust is placed in our leaders' hands. We give our power to public servants and elected officials who hopefully will use it with care. A major part of the reason our country has been able to succeed in the past 245 years is the strong religious beliefs many in our country held and the moral standards that resulted, meaning our elected officials would also share our beliefs.

The original core of our freedom came from these religious beliefs. Alexis de Tocqueville notes this in his book *Democracy in America*, saying “In America, religion is the road to knowledge, and the observance of the divine laws leads man to civil freedom” (Tocqueville, 42). John Adams states that “Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other” (Adams). Our democracy is grounded by having strong morally strong people inside of it and the governed controlling themselves, as Lewis also writes. Laura puts it best in *Little Town on the Prairie*, “This is what it means to be free. It means you have to be good. Then you have to keep the laws of God, for God’s law is the only thing that gives you a right to be free” (Wilder, 76).

The founders of America intended the relationship between liberty and restraint to come from the people. They intended that the people could have strong morals and religious beliefs to elect the right people.

However, during the past several years religion has started to fade away. Gallup, which has polled and examined religion in America since 1944, finds in their 2022 survey that belief in God has dropped six points since 2017, the lowest point in history¹. Additionally, according to the Survey

¹ See Gallup’s 2022 Polling [Here](#).

Center on American Life², 52% of Generation Z, 47% of millennials, and 40% of Generation X identify themselves as unaffiliated, atheist, or agnostic.

This prompts the question: if our moral judgments aren't based on religion then what? The answer is often us; we end up making the decisions for ourselves and this results in wishy-washy moral views and a "do as I please" mindset, as the French Revolution exhibited. This trend of decreased religious beliefs is only going to expedite the number of people with this mindset.

Suppose our country follows down the path of desecularization and hostility to religion. In that case, I strongly believe we are going to see more of what is going on in our world today: the deterioration of gender, the collapse of our constitutional rights, and a society where everyone thinks their view is correct. As Tocqueville writes, "Freedom sees religion as the companion of its struggles and triumphs, the cradle of its infancy, and the divine source of its rights. Religion is considered as the guardian of mores, and mores are regarded as the guarantee of the laws and pledge for the maintenance of freedom itself" (Tocqueville, 44).

² See The Survey Center on American Life polling [here](#).