Why Religion is at the Heart of America’s Identity Crisis

Robert P. Jones, Ph.D.
The End of an Era

White Christian America

A metaphor for:

• the cultural and political edifice

• built primarily by white Protestant Christians,

• which set the tone for our national conversations and shaped American ideals.
Vital Signs
The One Chart: White Christian Minority, Same-sex Marriage Majority

Percent of Americans who are white Christian vs. percent who favor same-sex marriage, 2004-2018

A Minority White Christian Country

The Decline of White Christians by Age

More Young Adults are Unaffiliated Today than in the Past

Religiously Unaffiliated by Age Cohort, 1986-2016

- 18-29
- 30-49
- 50-64
- 65+

The Decline of White Christian Subgroups, 2006-2017

Decreasing Proportions of White Christians by State

Percentage of White Christians by State, 2007
Decreasing Proportions of White Christians by State

Percentage of White Christians by State, 2016-2017

2016–2017

[Map showing the percentage of white Christians by state, with states ranging from 19% (HI) to 66% (ND).]

End of Life Bargaining:
From “Values Voters” to “Nostalgia Voters”
Stages of Grief
Trump Remains Popular with White Evangelicals

Favorability of Donald Trump Among White Evangelical Protestants, 2015-2018

Sources: PRRI Surveys, 2015-2018
The Trump Effect on White Christian Political Ethics

White Evangelicals Grow More Accepting of Politicians’ Personal Indiscretions

Percent who say an elected official who commits an immoral act in their personal life can still behave ethically and fulfill their duties in their public and professional life

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Americans</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White evangelical Protestant</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White mainline Protestant</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaffiliated</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: PRRI/RNS June 2011 Survey; PRRI/Brookings October 2016 Survey.
Our Divided, Dysfunctional Nation: Partisanship, Religion, and Tribal Identity
Widening Religion Gap between the Parties


Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner? Partisanship in the Family

FIGURE 6. Sharp Partisan Divides Over Child Marriage Partner Choices
Percent who would be somewhat or very unhappy if their son or daughter married someone who...

- Identifies as transgender
  - Democrat: 33
  - All Americans: 35
  - Republican: 70

- Is the same gender as your son or daughter
  - Democrat: 25
  - All Americans: 28
  - Republican: 58

- Is a supporter of the Democratic Party
  - Democrat: 3
  - All Americans: 10
  - Republican: 35

- Belongs to a different religious group
  - Democrat: 7
  - All Americans: 25
  - Republican: 28

- Is a different race or ethnicity
  - Democrat: 2
  - All Americans: 45
  - Republican: 25

Negative Views of the Other Party

Do you feel that the policies of the following...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Republican Party (among Democrats)</th>
<th>Democratic Party (among Republicans)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are so misguided they pose serious threat to the country</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are somewhat misguided but not dangerous</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Move the country in the right direction</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: PRRI 2017 American Values Survey.
Coming Together and Standing Apart
FIGURE 4. Frequency of Americans’ Interactions With Those Who Differ From Them

Thinking about your interactions with other people, how frequently do you interact with those who do NOT share your...

- Race or Ethnicity: 62 At least once a week, 14 A few times a year, 21 Seldom or never, 3 Don’t Know/Refused
- Religion: 60 At least once a week, 16 A few times a year, 22 Seldom or never, 3 Don’t Know/Refused
- Political Party: 57 At least once a week, 16 A few times a year, 24 Seldom or never, 3 Don’t Know/Refused
- Sexual Orientation: 41 At least once a week, 23 A few times a year, 31 Seldom or never, 4 Don’t Know/Refused

FIGURE 5. Locations of Americans’ Interactions With Those Who Differ From Them
Where do you frequently interact with people who do NOT share your...

- **In my workplace**: 74% Race or Ethnicity, 74% Political Party, 70% Religion, 60% Sexual Orientation
- **In my friendship circles**: 46% Race or Ethnicity, 48% Political Party, 48% Religion, 42% Sexual Orientation
- **In a school my child is attending**: 23% Race or Ethnicity, 15% Political Party, 16% Religion, 11% Sexual Orientation
Which Institutions are Bringing People Together?

FIGURE 10. Are Institutions Bringing People Together or Pushing Them Apart?
Do you think the following institutions are mostly bringing people together or mostly pushing people apart?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Bringing people together</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Pushing people apart</th>
<th>Don't Know/Refused</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Political Parties</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Media</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Organizations</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleges and Universities</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Schools</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Military</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workplaces</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Organizations and Nonprofits</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1950 or 2050?
The Challenge of Re-Envisioning America
Stark Partisan Divides on the Ideal of Racial Diversity

FIGURE 8. Preference for Racial and Ethnic Diversity vs. Western European Majority in the United States

Statement A: A nation made up of people from all over the world.
Statement B: I would prefer the U.S. to be a nation primarily made up of people from Western European heritage.

Stark Partisan Divides on the Ideal of Religious Diversity

FIGURE 7. Preference for Religious Diversity vs. Christian Majority in the United States

Statement A: A nation made up of people belonging to a wide variety of religions.
Statement B: A nation primarily made up of people who follow the Christian faith.

Nostalgia for the 1950s

Since the 1950s, do you think American culture and way of life has mostly changed for the better, or has it mostly changed for the worse?

- Mostly changed for the better
- Mostly changed for the worse
- Don't know/Refused

Source: PRRI 2016 American Values Survey.
1950 or 2050? The Challenge of Re-Envisioning America
Why Religion is at the Heart of America’s Identity Crisis

Robert P. Jones, Ph.D.
Optimism About Cultural and Demographic Change

- American culture has mostly changed for the better
- Demographic change mostly positive

Independent Predictors of 2016 Support for Donald Trump Among White Working-Class Voters

Support for Donald Trump: Odds Ratios from Multivariate Regression Model


- Republican Identification: 11
- Fears of Cultural Displacement: 3.5
- Deport Undocumented Immigrants: 3.3
- Economic Fatalism: 1.9
- Economic Hardship: -1.7
**Racial/Ethnic Composition of Evangelicals**

- **White, non-Hispanic**: 63
- **Black, non-Hispanic**: 19
- **Hispanic**: 10
- **API**: 2
- **Native American**: 2
- **Other/Mixed race**: 3
- **Don't know/Refused (VOL.)**: 1

Evangelicals by Race and Ethnicity

- White Evangelical: 51
- Black Evangelical: 15
- Hispanic Evangelical: 5
- API/Other/Mixed Race Evangelical: 2
- Non-Evangelical Religious: 25
- Unaffiliated: 0

Median Age of Evangelicals by Race

All Americans: 47
All Evangelicals: 53
White Evangelicals: 56
Black Evangelicals: 50
Hispanic Evangelicals: 40
API Evangelicals: 40

Source: PRRI 2017 American Values Survey.
Growing Discomfort with Children Marrying Across the Aisle

Percent who say they would be displeased if son or daughter married a supporter of the other party

- Republican
- Democrat

Note: Numbers for 2008 and 2010 are percent who said they would be very or somewhat upset.
Most Republicans Distrust Reporters' Motives

Do you think most reporters have a personal or political agenda, or are most reporters trying to report the news fairly and accurately?

- Personal or political agenda
- Trying to report news accurately

Source: PRRI 2017 American Values Survey.