

The 'Musical Chairs' Spiritual Trend

Written by Ginny Grimsley
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Polls Show More Non-Denominational Believers; Commingling Disparate Traditions is Good, Author Says

Growing numbers of Americans are changing their relationship with religion, recent Pew Research Center polls indicate.

Consider the stats:

- Forty-four percent of U.S. adults have either switched religious affiliation, or report “no affiliation”
- More than 16 percent report they are unaffiliated with a religion; that includes those who are spiritual but not religious, and agnostics and atheists
- Twenty-eight percent have switched from the religion in which they were raised

“A full-bodied understanding of the truth does not necessarily come neatly packaged in the form of a church or a scientific theory,” says Eli Just, former physics teacher and author of *Manny Jones and the Place* (www.elijustsupernaturalwriter.com), which links quantum theory,

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biblical stories and the Mayan precession.

With science developing new concepts about the nature of reality; changing attitudes in institutional religions, and widespread sharing on the internet, more believers are creating their own spiritual narrative -- one that makes more sense to them, he says. Scandals involving sex and money in Christian denominations, which account for more than 78 percent of the faithful in America, have contributed to religious shifting, Just adds.

A recent Pew poll on religion reveals that nearly 40 percent of Americans say there is "too much" religious talk in politics. Many respondents think politicians use religion as a tool for their own benefit, which may serve to increase alienation to religion for the average American, Just says.

Despite wariness on some religious issues, most respondents polled say spirituality plays a significant role in their lives.

"Type in 'new religious movements' in Wikipedia and you'll see the hundreds of religions that have popped up since the 1800s, and those are just the registered ones," Just says. "As a man of science and faith, and I don't think the truths of these two traditions are mutually exclusive. After all, Newton was a fervent Christian."

One of the more recent registered religions was created in 2000 and is called Jediism -- a movement based on the philosophical and spiritual ideas posited by Jedi characters in the "Star Wars" movies. Jedi churches often incorporate beliefs from mainstream spiritual traditions including Christianity, Buddhism, Taoism and Stoicism.

"Everything is connected, which is probably why so many people come up with such a variety of spiritual perspectives," Just says. "Personally, however, I don't think the interconnectivity of everything gives license to the notion that all religions are the same."

In addition to the new and fascinating data coming from sources like the Large Hadron Collider in Europe, it's important to remember ideas that are still alive after thousands of years, he says.

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"Old religions like Christianity have withstood the test of time," Just says. "That's why the majority of Americans remain spiritual and religious in a traditional sense."

About Eli Just

Eli Just is the author of several books including the popular "Manny Jones" series and "The Eddy." He has a master's in history from Southeastern Louisiana University and is a self-taught student of physics, which he taught at the high school level. As a Christian, Just enjoys exploring themes involving physics and its relationship to religion. He lives in northern Georgia.