



RELIGION

The Democrats' God Gap

By DAVID FRENCH | May 2, 2018 2:42 PM



People pray at a Veterans Day event near the site of the shooting at the First Baptist Church of Sutherland Springs, Texas on November 11, 2017. (Rick Wilking/Reuters)

The American church is in desperate need of a unity that transcends Identity politics on the left and on the right.

You know elite Democratic anti-Christian bigotry is getting out of hand when it's expertly skewered on HBO.



Piper (the fictional tech startup at the heart of the series) was assembling a coalition of companies to use its new product, but it ran into a problem. One of the CEOs was — gasp — a Christian. He was gay and ran a gays-only dating app, but he went to church regularly.

GQ Sparks Controversy After Calling the Bible 'Foolish'



The show's protagonist, Richard Hendricks, accidentally “outed” him as a person of faith, then spent the rest of the show trying to contain the damage. Some of the lines were outstanding. In Silicon Valley, “you can be openly polyamorous, and people will call you brave,” one character explained. “You can put microdoses of LSD in your cereal, and people will call you a pioneer. But the one thing you cannot be is a Christian.”

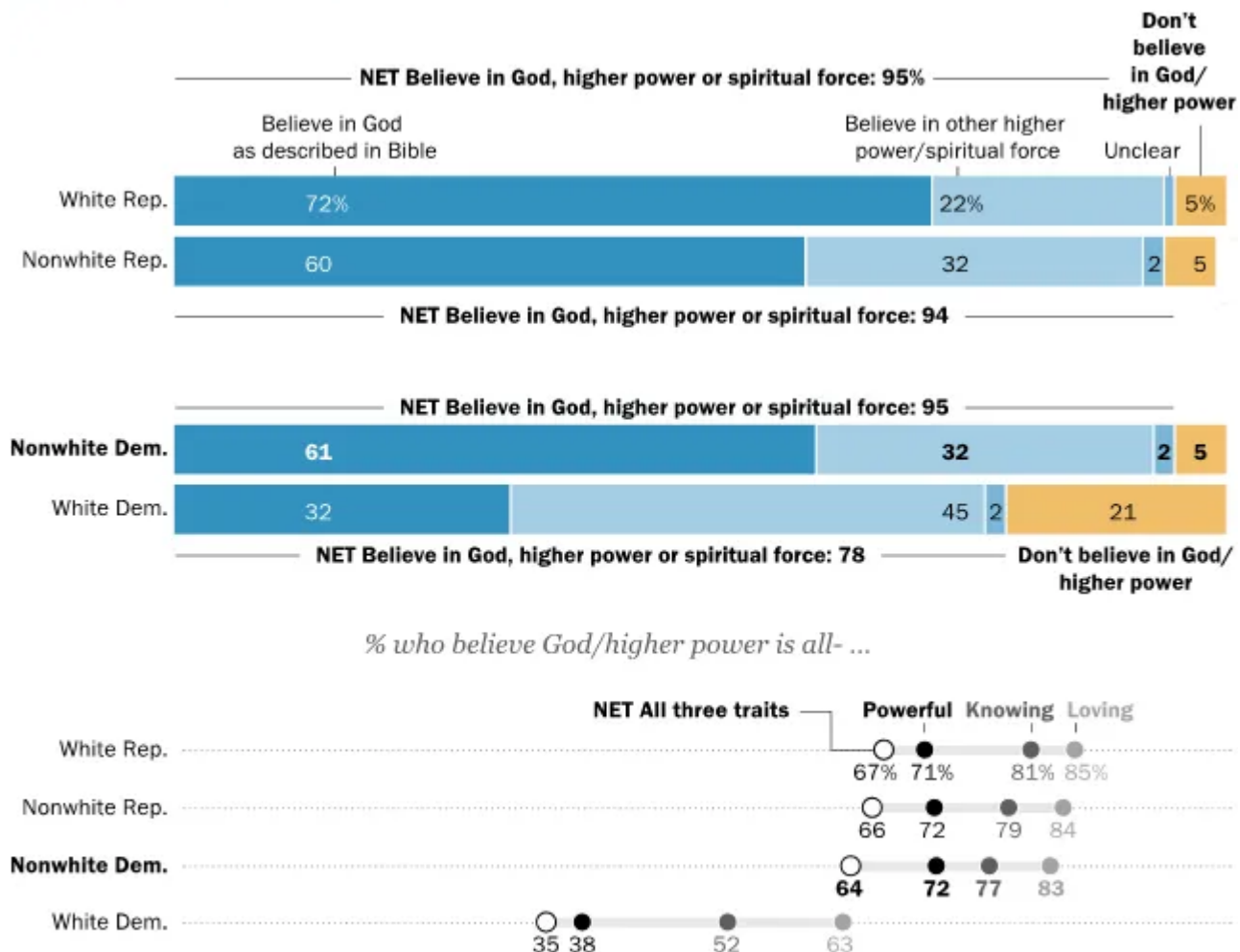
Or, as the gay Christian laments, “My dad says my lifestyle makes him sick. He just wants his gay son back.”

I thought of that show when I caught up today on the results of a fascinating **Pew Research Center survey** of faith in America. There's a big “God gap”



God of the Bible compared with 45 percent of Democrats — but there's an even *larger* God gap within the Democratic party. Only 32 percent of white Democrats believe in the God of the Bible, compared with 61 percent of nonwhite Democrats — an almost 30-point gap:

In their beliefs about God, nonwhite Democrats more closely resemble Republicans than white Democrats



Note: Republicans and Democrats include those who identify with or lean toward those parties. Those who did not say whether they believe in God or a higher power are not shown.

Source: Survey conducted Dec. 4-18, 2017, among U.S. adults.

"When Americans Say They Believe in God, What Do They Mean?"

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This is an immense gap on a matter of central cultural, spiritual, and individual significance. Spend much time in secular progressive circles and you'll quickly encounter the kind of sneering, anti-Christian elitism evident in pieces such as



fundamentally at odds with the lived experience of the Democratic party's black and Latino base. As Yale's Stephen Carter wrote, "When you mock Christians, you're not mocking who you think you are."

Citing an earlier Pew Survey, **Carter details the deep faith** of the American black community:

Overall, people of color are more likely than whites to be Christians — and pretty devout Christians at that. Some 83 percent of all black Americans are absolutely certain that God exists. No other group comes close to this figure. Black Christians are far more likely than white Christians (84 percent to 64 percent) to describe religion as very important in their lives. Of all ethnic groups, black Christians are the most likely to attend services, pray frequently and read the Bible regularly. They are also — here's the kicker — most likely to believe that their faith is the place to look for answers to questions about right and wrong. And they are, by large margins, the most likely to believe that the Bible is the literally inerrant word of God. In short, if you find Christian traditionalism creepy, it's black people you're talking about.

There are longstanding, profound, and heartbreaking racial divisions in American Christianity. And there are people — black and white, left and right — who perpetuate and exploit that divide.

In spite of the common faith of white and black Christians, they don't share common politics. Why? The answer is complicated, but part of it is regional, and a lot of it is historical. America's most religious region is also the region most steeped in the legacy of slavery and Jim Crow. White Christians and black Christians have always been profoundly segregated in the South, and that Sunday-morning segregation continues to this day.



There are longstanding, profound, and heartbreaking racial divisions in American Christianity. There are longstanding and justifiable reasons for black Americans to view white Evangelicals with suspicion and mistrust. And there are people — black and white, left and right — who perpetuate and exploit that divide.

But, at the same time, the Democrats' emerging God gap creates its own tensions. It creates its own cultural differences, and to the extent that faith informs politics, it could crack open the progressive coalition.

It won't, however, so long as identity politics dominates American life, and I don't mean just the identity politics of the Left. Even putting aside the sheer evil of the Trump-supporting alt-right, the Trump GOP has demonstrated remarkable tolerance for the president's worst statements (presuming a judge can't rule fairly because of his Mexican heritage is a textbook racist statement), welcomed for a time Steve Bannon into its ranks (until he turned on Trump), and has defended its tribal turf so vigorously that it all too often turns a blind eye even to legitimately troubling or outrageous injustices.

For example, few conservatives remember that there were **two Department of Justice investigations** of police conduct in Ferguson, Mo. Most informed Republicans can tell you that “even the Obama DOJ” debunked the “hands up, don't shoot” narrative about the shooting of Michael Brown. How many, however, remember the report that described, in detail, how the local officials had essentially turned the poor and disadvantaged citizens of the city into virtual ATMs for city government, with police the armed tax collectors of the state? But acknowledging real abuse dilutes “Blue Lives Matter” sloganeering, so we move along.

The message sent — intentional or not — to the black community (and, to be sure, it's a message that's often manufactured by Democratic demagoguery) is



Republicans and conservatives radiate either contempt or indifference, not only will the Democratic coalition hold, but — more significantly — America's cultural and spiritual divide will remain. It's absurd to look at a population that votes against you at a roughly 90 percent ratio and declare that it's all *their* fault.

But history isn't always destiny. American political coalitions have shifted before, and they can shift again. More important, the American church is in desperate need of a unity that transcends politics. As secular culture grows more contemptuous of people of faith, perhaps it's time to understand that the ties that bind people of faith should be far greater than the sins that divide.



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