

Ok Rasster,

Before we get started, all the info on here was a collaboration of work I gathered throughout the interwebs from quora to Disqus to reddit to forums and myself.

Again before we get started, I would like you, Rasster, to ponder few of these general questions as they do come into play later on: Are moral standards based off of religion (*in this case Christianity*), or is religion based off of people's moral standards? Or is it probably something more complicated where all of these things play into each other? Why is that the most industrialized nations aren't theocracies? Or if not theocracies, why not copy religious values verbatim? Why is slavery allowed in the bible and yet (*almost*) everyone in the world thinks it's immoral? How do you explain the chasm between the values of nations and their predominant religions values? Due to the ease of social and mass media to push information in your face, could you simply be hearing more about violence and making it out to be more than what it is? What do you mean when you say something is morally wrong? And why we ought or out not do something?

No doubt being raised as a Christian and living in a Christian society influenced one's moral outlook, but that's not the same as saying or implying that Christianity was necessary for having a moral framework, which you indeed implied by saying we ought to bring our young up into Christian values. Besides who says that the influence of Christianity on my morality is a good thing? I know of people who used to hold some pretty reprehensible views that can be backed by the Bible or thier sect. If anything, Christianity has held these back from developing good moral values.

Right, ok, lets get into this, you have made two extraordinary claims that I will like to address (*the rest, which is your main argument, I know. I might do later on. I just thought your premises/claims in your "introduction" needed to be addressed first*).

1. This is what happens when we deprive our youth from our christian values on respecting life and the dignity of life.
2. Whether your christian or not, the whole western society was built on christian values which is rapidly being torn away by aggressive secularism.

If you don't mind I would like to split each if these into two parts. There may be some overlap.

Claim 1 - Part 1:

//“This is what happens when we deprive our youth from our christian values”//

Let us shine a flashlight deeper into the chasm of your first claim and explore it and all I see is a strawman. We know it works literally the other way around than what you clam. The more modern secular an area, the less crime and immorality is seen. The violence that is [statistically less common in places with lower rates of religion?](#) [2]. The most violent nations tend to be the most religious. High rates of religiosity are a symptom of a broken society, not a quality of a well functioning one. Please, let's become more secular in modern terms because being religious results in more crime. [1] [2] [3] [4]

The fact that religiously free societies with a proportionally large number of no believers like Denmark, Iceland, Switzerland, Norway, for example, are generally more peaceful than otherwise is evidence that the perception of needing religious based laws like the outdated 10 commandments, whichever version, to know right from wrong, is incorrect.

[“Those societies today that are the most religious — where faith in God is strong and religious participation is high — tend to have the highest violent crime rates, while those societies in which faith and church attendance are the weakest — the most secular societies — tend to have the lowest.”](#)

But when violent crimes do happen, blaming it on a country depriving the youth of Christian values is fallacious in a plethora of ways. For example, you are [begging the question](#). (i.e., *We must encourage our youth to follow “christian values” or worship a deity to instil moral behaviour.*) How does Christian values remove the problem? What makes you think the way we are now is because of not instilling Christian values into our youth? Does instilling Christian values and worship of a deity actually produce moral behaviour? Some would argue the opposite.

Taken that to be true and that there is even a correlation to even consider still doesn't hold up, well unless you can provide ample evidence that one thing will directly lead to something and that something will lead to another something so on and so forth. I contend what you have written does not and hastily jumps to an absurd extrapolation and without any further details can be regarded as a contextomy and therefore a straw man. It's nothing but a false cause cum hoc.

[Cum hoc ergo propter hoc](#) or also known as Circular Cause and Consequence says that statistical correlation does not equate to causation. Until you can demonstrate a causal link between depravity of Christian values and violence, your entire argument fails. This is based on ***IF*** there is a '*statistical correlation*' to account for in the first place. Simply saying something like “*oh crime increased in some areas this year*” means nothing.

But you, Rasster, have yet to make a direct causal correlation that these acts of evil from our youth (or otherwise) are:

1. becoming more common rather than within the scale of normal statistics. I would say some are bad and some are good. It's been like this since forever. [Meet the 6 impressive teenagers who are leading a massive gun-control movement after the Parkland massacre.](#)
2. and ***if*** these acts are increasing, does it fall into a larger incline of gradual evil acts or are these incidents say the last year mere **statistical anomalies**? Myself, I think it is the latter rather than the former given the fact western society have become much better in the last 100 years.
3. and ***if*** these acts are increasing, that it is because we are depriving our youth of Christian values or something entirely different.

It could also be said you are appealing to an [absurd extrapolation](#) with a dash of [argumentum ad antiquitatem/tradition](#). That because something older and more comfortable, i.e. Christian values, that it is therefore better. It does not necessarily follow that just because we make changes that a slippery slope

will occur. Just because we are moving ever so slightly away from Christian values and towards secular ones does not mean we will fall into chaos. In fact the evidence I presented above shows different.

Ok, let us go back and delve deeper into the point made in my first paragraph of claim 1 - i.e. go back to giving your claim the benefit of doubt and let's take your claim at face value that young people have become more violent.

What you just said was a reductionist non-sequitur, more specific [post hoc, ergo propter hoc](#). (*after this, therefore because of this*) i.e. a false cause fallacy but more time dependent than your cum hoc. If you witness B occur after A, you may think it's likely that A caused B, but there could be a third causal factor, or a C that you're not factoring in. In this case you think that depriving young people of Christian values (A) causes crime amongst teenagers we see today (B) but it is actually a much more complicated reason that involved many factors (C) that ended up causing (B). How do you determine depravity of Christian values caused the effect without committing heinous falsehood? So, event Y followed event X, but does not ensue that event X induced event Y, so event Y correlates to event X but in no way is evidenced that event X to be caused by event Y. How do you know it wasn't just a coincidence? How do you know it's not something else going on, perhaps based on something more complicated?

Perhaps the *violence we see today* is derived from something entirely independent from depriving "our youth from our christian values on respecting life and the dignity of life.", oh I don't know perhaps:

- Drugs/Drink
- The parenting of these kids who may or may not be Christians who most likely live in a Christian community.
- Or that some of these kids are severely deranged people that may suffer from sociopathic/psychopathic tendencies. (*Note: Having these does not correlate in any way being deprived "of Christian values"*). Sociopathic and Psychopathic tendencies have been around in periods where Christianity had much more influence than today.
- Another reason could be, as simple as it may be, bullying. The fact that society today, well society throughout history too, feel the need to categorise and label everything but not just that but to put stigma's on these labels. What I mean is one of the reasons for youth crimes could potentially be the victim or the perpetrator being depressed and bullied for being *[insert stereotype here]*.

Or it could be a combination of all of the above or maybe some cases have nothing to do with parenting, maybe the parents did the best they could. From what we know, it does seem much of these cases hold up to bullet point number three above. Again, taking your unsupported claim that youth violence is increasing, the reasons for this supposed current violence (*youthful or otherwise*) are too broad to conclude that it was because we deprived them from Christian values. There are too many variables to account for your claim to even be considered. Your Dunning-Kruger thinks one relates to the other when they don't.

No doubting good comes from religion and Christianity, I am not saying it doesn't, but my point is that people can also derive bad/evil from it too. What was it that Mr. Weinberg said: "*With or without it you would have good people doing good things and evil people doing evil things. But for good people to do*

evil things, that takes religion." Forcing any public area to proselytise one particular religion does not bode well according to history.

The real problem here **isn't** religion, religion is a symptom, a side effect. Religion, given server restrictions and a lot of work and is separate from the state.. can be harmless. The real problem is **irrationality** and **ignorance**, which is the same thing that causes racism and wingnut political ideologies, etc. Ignorant people kill most, they are also more susceptible to religion and superstitious thinking. We know there is a correlation between high levels of ignorance in predominantly religious countries and states. Data, in many formats, actually seems to suggest the non-religious are less likely to harm others than the religious.

Citing census data, he writes: "And within America, the states with the highest murder rates tend to be the highly religious, such as Louisiana and Alabama, but the states with the lowest murder rates tend to be the among the least religious in the country, such as Vermont and Oregon."

And these findings are not limited to murder rates, as rates of all violent crime tend to be higher in "religious" states. Zuckerman also points out that atheists are very much under-represented in the American prison population (only 0.2%).

Claim 1: Part 2:

//"christian values on respecting life and the dignity of life."//

Well I'll be damned, respect for life is a specifically *Christian* value. Buddhists can fuck right off. /s Demonstrate this. Otherwise, you are just fallaciously [arguing by assertion](#).

What makes those values christian? Do other people have those values? How well do christians keep those values in practice? Which parts of modern society don't have those values? Are there modern societies that have these values without needing for people to be proselytize in Christianity? What Christian values are you talking about here? You are talking credit for stuff like justice and compassion? These are humanist values first before anything. I want answers to these questions, Rasster.

These values aren't exclusive to Christianity. People can derive such values elsewhere. Christianity doesn't own the intellectual rights to "*don't kill*". Your point fails because of this alone. There are plenty of examples of groups of people in the West who were not exposed to Christianity and discovered in the 20th century. Guess what? They weren't all killing each other in a pagan blood fest. For example: The Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Creek (*Muscogee*), and Seminole. These are the first five tribes that Anglo-European settlers generally considered to be "*civilized*" according to their own worldview. Peaceful without Christianity.

Religious thought changes to follow current social morality, but it is often slow and with massive resistance to doing so. Not the reverse. Look at the Catholic Church on many issues for example. They do change their stance on issues, but they do it decades or even centuries after it has become accepted elsewhere.

Moral standards existed before religions. Religion is not the innovator here, just an imitator. Religions just codified them into laws and rules. Just look at how dogs and dolphins and bonobos coexist; there's clearly moral rules in their societies without religion. Theists like to make out that morality is

impossible to come by without religion, which is what you implied, when in reality, morality is pretty simple at its core. Some of the most peaceful places on the planet today have populations that largely do not identify with any religion.

Religion did not invent morality, is not the source of morality, and cannot claim credit for morality. As mentioned in Claim 1 part 1 above, morality is an instinct, an evolutionary mechanism humans developed as a result of early herding behaviours in vertebrates. Moral specifics, their expressions, are cultural artifacts arising from social mores. Religion has nothing whatsoever to do with morality, well other than another way to [appropriate it](#). We know this. Thanks to vast research. Take a look at [The Prehistory of Compassion](#). An interesting read.

Despite the attempts of religions to claim otherwise, religion follows morality, not the other way around. Morality predates religion. It's almost funny watching religious people try to claim that religions are responsible for (*good*) morality. It's funnier when they then cherry pick their scriptures to pretend that their religion doesn't explicitly endorse some terrible morals, like condoning slavery or murder or rape or pedophilia or sexism. None of the good that comes from religions actually requires religion; they're obtainable through secular organizations and practices. So based on the harm from religion, which can be boiled down to [this](#), it should be left behind but in a gradual way which may take hundreds of years. Yes, people do good because of their religious beliefs, no denying that, that is great, it is simply another way we derive morality. Religion is a reflection of the moral standards of a time, not the source of it. In fact, that's why there are occasional issues with it because religion by its nature is fixed and unchanging but moral standards are not. In fact any time society has made great advancements in ethical thinking, it is nearly always religion that lags behind, often for hundreds of years.

We know how and why we have morality. We know how it functions, what it does, why it sometimes doesn't work very well. Morality is based upon and built from evolved social drives that are necessary for any and all social species to survive and flourish. This is extraordinarily well evidenced and not really able to be disputed. Religion has nothing at all to do with any of this other than being a way to appropriate morality. We evolved as a species recognising that we are stronger as a tribe / family than we ever could be alone as individuals, and such behaviour is not only exclusive to humans either, there are many species in the animal kingdom that have similar behaviour, for example meerkats (*one keeps lookout, the rest forage and play*), also predatory species (*wolves, lions, hyena's*) work together cooperatively to make sure they don't starve to death.

Human morality has been around for hundreds of thousands of years. It isn't surprising that when we invent religions, we imbue them with our own morality. You've got the cart and the horse in the wrong order, Rasster. Have you considered that you have it backwards? Human Empathy tells us how we should act... and Religion appropriated it, claimed it as their own. THEN religion warped it into the hatred we see in some religious people? We do have a fairly good understanding of group psychology and how to influence large amounts of people to support and join causes and actions they would otherwise be unmotivated and/or uncomfortable in joining. Various techniques are used for this, such of cult of personality and common goals. However, using the powerful psychological effects of religion on a population is a very powerful one. That is why it is almost always used when leaders require the support of their population in a conflict.

While other means to engage the population remain, it seems prudent and reasonable that limiting these means may likely result in a lower incidence of success in influencing mass groups of people to support and join a conflict.

And this is the premise of your claim and I see no reason to think you have a valid argument.

Conclusion:

Simply put I have refuted your claims on numerous fallacious grounds and have provided ample counter evidence to your claims. Any single one of these is enough for a refutation but I like to be thorough. Meaning if you can show how one of my points to be illogical, most of my other points can stand alone without depending on others. You not only have to make your premises sound and logical but also have to counter my counter evidence.

Claim 2:

//“Whether your christian or not, the whole western society was built on christian values”//

As I said in the beginning; Are moral standards based off of religion (*in this case Christianity*), or is religion based off of people's moral standards? Or is it probably something more complicated where all of these things play into each other? A lot of christian values come from all sorts of places that were not christian. [\[1\]](#) [\[2\]](#) [\[3\]](#). Christians merely co-opted “*values*” that had been around for thousands of years prior to that. There was nothing new about the “*values*” in the Christian religion.

The ideals that shape western society predate Christianity. Our morality, laws, and culture began in the pagan society that was in Europe prior to the spread of Christianity. Western Society is a result of Sumerian morality. Our “*modern*” laws evolved out of the basic laws the Sumerians were using up to 10,000 years ago, long before Christianity or even Abrahamism was a concept in the human mind. Christianity just co-opted the good and bad from existing thought. Mosaic law is the result of the Code of Hammurabi. [These are the oldest written laws we have thus found](#), these are the laws that influenced Abrahamic religious concept of “*god’s laws*” or “*commandments*”... does “*laws written on stone tablets*” ring a bell?

The other aspects of western culture evolved ***in spite of*** Christianity- not because of it. If you want to know about our modern ideals that comes from the Enlightenment and modernism. Get reading if you want to be even remotely informed since you currently aren't. [That isn't remotely what secularism is, btw.](#)

People are raised with *cultural* moral standards. Religion is a part of culture, but religion isn't responsible for Western values. The Enlightenment and the spread of technology facilitating its spread are. Western values and moral codes are developed relative to the long history of our culture. To the various inputs of people and groups in order to manipulate how society functions as a whole. From ancient greece to the age of enlightenment to modern secular humanism.

It's why no two groups of people from the same religion will have the exact same set of beliefs on any given matter. It's why African Muslims are the ones who engage in female genital mutilation, but Arab and Indonesian Muslims don't.

There is nothing arbitrary about society dictating morals. It is simply the brute fact and the historical record. Theists bring up cultural relativism (*what if moral for us, might not be moral for other societies*), as I've already wrote, the additional criterion to many social norms which is the backbone of their evolution is this idea of '*facticity*' or '*objectivity*'. We can say someone's moral code is wrong if it is based on poor reasoning or evidence (*like sacrifices to the gods*) or produces consequences so negative it is deemed wrong on that account.

So yes, part of Western society was indeed built on values espoused by Christian values but It was built on many things, mostly pre-christian notions of democracy. Also on trade, the code of hamurabi, and the enlightenment..which was a liberation from the tyranny of the christian church in Europe.

//“Whether your christian or not, the whole western society was built on christian values which is rapidly being torn away by aggressive secularism.”//

But, you do raise a good point. Theistic Religion has infected nearly all societies, and in some fashion influenced every society. And to date, the societies where Theistic Religion, or its ideological surrogate, plays a predominant part of social and cultural morality are, indeed, full of moral pain and suffering. The correlation is so strong, one must suspect a causal linkage!

However, if you look at societies where Theistic Religion is not a dominant influence, there is a correlation with a reduction of overall pain and suffering. A contemporary example can be seen in those countries which are ranked high in the '*happiness*' scale - which correlates well with societal irreligiosity. Let's look at contemporary societies/countries that are not oppressive authoritarian regimes where the party in charge enforces devotion to the state ideology and where religiosity is low.

And would you look at that, low religiosity does correlate highly with "*happy*" places to live. Actual empirical statistically supportive evidence, in the real world, that "*happiness*" correlates quite well to societies and communities where religiosity and belief in the God(s) is minimal.

The UN [WORLD HAPPINESS REPORT 2017](#) provides evidence of an interesting and rather strong inverse correlation between religiosity and a "*happy*" society (those countries rated high in caring, freedom, generosity, honesty, health, income and good governance). The happier (see Chapter 5, [THE KEY DETERMINANTS OF HAPPINESS AND MISERY](#), of the UN report for specifics on how "Happiness" was determined) countries tended to be those with the lowest religiosity (a rather strong correlation, supportive of a beginning argument of non-religiosity as a causal factor). They are the most secular, most socially adjusted, with best education standards in the world, with lowest crime rate, with best social systems, equality of sexes, personal liberties, economically successful, most advanced technologically and medically, the most involved in human rights and humanitarian help around the world, etc...

To the contrary, religious concentration and expansion within a population is proportional to the decline of development and scientific achievement. Just look at any highly religious country around the world as a testimony to my claim. Religion, at its base it is a mechanism for defining community through exclusion and "*othering*" - dividing and dehumanising people who don't conform. Religious thought does change to follow current social morality, but it is often slow to do so. Look at the Catholic Church on many issues for example. They do change their stance on issues, but they do it decades or even centuries after it has become accepted elsewhere.

//“which is rapidly being torn away by aggressive secularism.”//

Wrong and distortion of history:

- the things that tell Western civilisation apart from other cultures is also rooted in Greek and Roman traditions mixed up with notions from the native European cultures.
- these are the core values of Western culture: strong sense and emphasis on individuality, democratic rule, freedom of speech and thought, emphasis on science and observation as foundation of knowledge rather than handed-down traditions.
- *any* of these core values are alien to Christianity as such. If you want to observe Christianity in its own glory, quality and capacity, just look at the Middle Ages. Then it ruled in Europe.
- during the Renaissance (*"Rebirth" it means in cases not everyone may understand its meaning*), the old Greek concepts like democracy and science (*although still in premature form*) were reintroduced. Since then we see a gradual decline, with ups and downs, of religion.
- secularism is defined as the principle of the separation of government institutions and persons mandated to represent the state from religious institution and religious dignitaries - shortly the separation of church and state. In a broader sense it's also the separation of church and the institutions that are involved in the pursuit of knowledge.

So I have *no idea* what you mean with *"aggressive secularism"*, you do not seem to even understand what *'secularism'* means. *"Aggressive secularism"* is almost an oxymoron level of incoherence. What values do you think secularism takes away? Then which of that list do you think the lack of leads to violence? Where is this supposed aggressiveness? I'm not seeing it. In fact I would say it's the other way around and we don't even have to talk about the crusades.

1. ['Drug traffickers of Jesus' drive Brazil slum violence.](#)
2. [The Rise of the Brazilian Evangelicals](#)
3. [Violent deaths of LGBT people in Brazil hit all-time high](#)
4. [Attack on 11-year-old in Rio highlights fears of rising religious intolerance](#)

How is the segregation of the religious sphere of influence from political, social and cultural spheres aggressive? Calling for religion to be separated from government is hardly trying to be aggressive. I would fight for everyone's right to believe what they want but when those beliefs are directly infringed on the rights of others I would fight against. Freedom to believe, think, express, and worship as you wish is the fundamental right that undergirds all of our other rights. There are only two possible neutral stances on religion that a state can make. One is to give equal time and attention to all religions and non. The other is to give no time or attention to any religion or non. The first stance is unreasonable, as there are far too many different religions for this to be workable. So the only reasonable neutral stance is the second.

Are you sure your side is not being the [aggressive one](#) when it comes to secular ideals? In the link provided it is the Christian advocates that are being aggressive. You aren't asking for respect for religion

either. You're asking for religion to dictate laws for everyone else. Do you understand the difference? No one that I know of is trying to take Christianity and its traditions out of a country or anywhere for that matter but it is these Christian advocates that are being discriminatory to others. Christians are simply having a hard time giving up their undeserved privilege.

Once Christians stop cramming their religion down the throats of those who *can't* believe - either from the street-corner or the statehouse - the backlash they experience will likely abate, leaving them nothing to hang their Persecution Complex on. But there will be little need for "aggressive secularism," made aggressive only by the divisive Christian majority they currently have to endure.

But there are valid reasons to discourage religious belief, at least in some of the forms it manifest.

- Divine justification for one's actions based on their own interpretation of religious text or a personal spirituality is dangerous. It's a free pass to do whatever you can convince yourself that your gods want. You do not answer to your gods, but to the rest of society. Actions should be evaluated in terms of their effect on others, not by their adherence to divine will.
- Absolute truth does not play well with others. Religious belief can foster us-vs-them attitudes and reduce ability/desire to compromise or accept dissenting opinions. Reality is not black and white, but all kinds of gray.
- Science is our best tool for understanding the world around us and protecting ourselves from this insanely dangerous universe we live in. Religious best practices don't always align with the suggestions of science, leading to unnecessary suffering in some cases. Religions can also feel threatened by scientific advances, resulting in anti-intellectual trends that slow the progress of science and limit its ability to alleviate societal problems.
- Organized religion can gain tremendous power over individuals, opening them up to exploitation, reducing their ability to think for themselves, and forcing them to feel ashamed of themselves for being human.
- Children are taught to accept things on authority rather than critically evaluate the world around them.

Examples of some of these in action are militant and political extremism, totalitarian governments that persist by intertwine themselves with religion, rejection of healthcare (*especially when it affects others, such as birth control and vaccinations*), and unwillingness to accept the diversity of human experience without judgement.

In my opinion, religion is a tool that humans employ. Like all tools, it can be used constructively or destructively. I have no problem with religious people that keep their beliefs to themselves, allow their children to be their own individuals, keep their gods out of science, accept alternative views and lifestyles when they have no effect on others, and objectively evaluate evidence before making choices that affect others.