

Fr. Perozich comments —

Dennis Prager is an observant Jew. His article differentiates a religious upbringing vs a secular upbringing and how the two form people and societies.

As a former pastor with Catholic schools it was a struggle to keep them Catholic.

Teachers of my own age group with a Catholic school education were faithful worshipers and believers. They were the bedrock and resource for younger teachers who simply could not articulate the faith that came so easily to us “older” Catholics. What they could not articulate in words they could not pass on to students.

When one of my contemporary principals retired, two more followed him. He went to Mass every day and brought the faculty to Mass as well. The younger Catholic principals had to be told to come to daily Mass. They were directing teachers to teach advanced or remedial classes during Mass time rather than to worship as a faculty and invite the children who were dropped off early for pre class day care to join them.

These principals were skilled in administration and secular education policy, but were products of an impoverished faith formation, even though they went to Sunday Mass.

It was necessary to meet with the teachers weekly to form them in the faith. It was WORK to make a Catholic school Catholic.

In my youth, we were formed with a clear catechism. We attended weekly Mass, had weekly choir lessons (Mass was still in the traditional rite then), learned about the saints, the holy days, the commandments, the sacraments, the moral life, church customs and disciplines, and instilled with a desire to go to heaven and how to avoid hell, a love of Jesus, the major biblical stories and figures.

We had wisdom. We had family. We had community. We had holy days. We had personal discipline.

In a recent article on California Catholic Daily, students at the University of San Diego shouted down a pro life speaker. These students were NOT formed in Catholic faith, even though they were going to a supposed Catholic institution and probably came from modern Catholic schools.

<https://www.cal-catholic.com/students-at-catholic-college-target-pro-life-talk-with-obscenity-laced-protest/>

It will take work to rebuild the wisdom, the discipline, the communal life of faith, holy days, the commandments, and a real desire for eternal life in our Catholic church today.

Catholics then will once again have an important contribution to give to society rather than allowing a faithless society to vitiate their Catholic faith and life, leaving the Catholic just as empty as the rest of America is becoming.

Differences Between a Secular and a Religious -- Jewish or Christian -- Upbringing

Anyone who thinks about the current civil war in America comes to realize that it is, in large measure, a war between the religious and the anti-religious. The Left has contempt for evangelical Protestants, traditional Catholics and Orthodox Jews for good reason: They represent everything the Left loathes; and while there are, of course, secular conservatives who fight the Left, the largest and most effective opposition comes from conservative Christians and Jews.

The differences begin in childhood. **Most religious kids -- especially those who attend traditional Christian and Jewish schools -- are raised with different values than most secular kids.**

Here are some examples:

**No. 1: Religious upbringing: Fight yourself.
Secular upbringing: Fight society.**

I studied in yeshiva (Orthodox Jewish school, where half the day I studied Bible and other religious subjects in Hebrew, and half the day I studied secular subjects in English) from kindergarten to 12th grade. I learned early on that the biggest problem in Dennis Prager's life was Dennis Prager. In nearly all secular schools and in liberal religious schools, kids learn that the biggest problem in their lives is American society -- in fact, everything other than themselves.

Which do you think produces a more self-critical, more self-controlled and overall better human being?

Which do you think produces an angrier and less happy human being?

**No. 2: Religious Upbringing: Learn wisdom.
Secular Upbringing: Nobody of wisdom conveyed.**

I have no doubt that most kids raised with the Bible and other Jewish or Christian works have more wisdom than almost any secular professor or other secular

intellectual. Yes, there are secular individuals who have wisdom (the Judeo-Christian body of wisdom sometimes continues to have influence for a generation or two), but **I cannot think of a single secular institution with wisdom.** That is why the **institutions with the least wisdom and that believe and teach the most nonsense are universities -- they are,** after all, the most secular institutions in our society.

No. 3: Religious Upbringing: People are not basically good. Secular Upbringing: People are basically good.

"Wisdom begins," both Psalms and Proverbs teach, "with fear of God." In other words, **no God, no wisdom.** But there is another way of asserting how and where wisdom begins. **Wisdom begins with acknowledging how flawed human nature is.** Or, to put it as succinctly as possible, you cannot be wise if you think people are basically good. **You can be a sweet, kind and well-intentioned person if you believe people are basically good, but you cannot be wise. Indeed, you are more likely to be a naive fool.**

The belief that people are basically good, a belief that neither Judaism nor Christianity has ever held, is a major obstacle to making a good society. For one thing, parents who believe this will not discipline their children as much as they need to. They will assume, as three generations of American parents now have, that all a child needs is love. And for another, **people who believe human nature**

is good are much less inclined to punish criminals because they will blame murder, theft, rape and other evils on economic circumstances, parents and society -- on anything but the criminal's failure to control his flawed nature.

No. 4: Religious Upbringing: Holy days. Secular Upbringing: No holy days.

Religious children celebrate holy days -- the Sabbath each week and other holy days in their respective religious calendars. **Regular times devoted to the Transcendent have a major impact on the development of a child. The secular child has secular holidays, but they mean little to most American young people.** July Fourth is a day off with a barbecue. Meaningless Halloween has come to have more significance than meaningful Christmas. Presidents' Day means nothing. And Thanksgiving is increasingly declared Indigenous Peoples' Genocide Day.

No. 5: Religious Upbringing: Friends plus community. Secular Upbringing: Friends, but no community.

Loneliness is a greater pandemic in the modern world than COVID-19, so much so that the U.K. now has a Minister of Loneliness to try to combat the problem.

This is, in large measure, another consequence of secularism. Religious Jewish and Christian (including Mormon) kids grow up with an abundance of friends and a whole religious community thanks to religious school and thanks to their synagogue or church. What is the communal secular equivalent of the church, synagogue and religious school? Other than sports (which, in any event, is available to only the handful of young people who play on a team), there isn't any.

No. 6: Religious Upbringing: The obligation to honor parents. Secular Upbringing: No such obligation.

Religious Jewish and Christian children are taught the Ten Commandments, one of which is "Honor your father and mother." It goes without saying that many secular children honor their parents, but they do so only if they want to. Religious children are told to honor parents whether they feel like it or not -- which is important because very few children always feel like honoring their mother and father.

There is another pandemic in America -- that of adult children who have decided never to talk to one or both of their parents. I would wager a serious sum of money that few of those adult children are religious Jews or Christians.

There's a lot more that distinguishes religious and secular upbringings. But one stands out: Religious kids are generally happier.

Is one upbringing better than the other? You decide.

Dennis Prager is a nationally syndicated radio talk-show host and columnist. His latest book, published by Regnery in May 2019, is "The Rational Bible," a commentary on the book of Genesis. His film, "No Safe Spaces," was released to home entertainment nationwide on September 15, 2020. He is the founder of Prager University and may be contacted at dennisprager.com.