

Camp*aign Response

May 3, 2009

[Re: May 1, 2009, New York Times OPED, Defecting to Faith,” \(full text on p.2\)](#)

Dear Mr. Blow,

The Camp*aign for American Kids celebrates your piece, “Defecting to Faith.” One of the key tenets of The Camp*aign, formed in response to the ongoing Crisis of American Youth, is that pure Faith (as opposed to religious creations springing from the Faith impulse) is an integral component of the mother-of-all instincts: SURVIVAL. Otherwise, in keeping with the science of natural selection, humankind would have jettisoned Faith ages ago. Furthermore, pure Faith is a universal phenomenon, an instinct found among people in every global crevice.

A wise person once wrote, “These three abide: Faith, hope and love.” This trio has endured every test of time and refuses to die. Despite the concerted effort of Communism to eradicate it, Faith endures. Faith may be difficult to explain, but like love, its reality cannot be denied. Thus, to fail to nurture the Faith impulse in a child has the same physiological result as denying love: a gnawing sense of incompleteness, a “void” as you put it. A child deserves better.

The Camp*aign has found that children who attend Joint Outdoor~Ecumenical Youth (JOEY) programs are simply more likely to be happy in life and less likely to stumble onto a path leading to years of heartache. The JOEY Solution to the Crisis of American Youth neither ignores nor imposes Faith on a child. Rather, it is viewed as natural and like love and hope, integral to what it means to be human. Thus, our slogan:

The Camp*aign for American Kids: a little change *for a WHOLE life!*

All good wishes,



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The New York Times

Op-Ed Columnist

Defecting to Faith

By CHARLES M. BLOW, Published: May 1, 2009

“Most people are religious because they’re raised to be. They’re indoctrinated by their parents.” So goes the rationale of my nonreligious friends.

Maybe, but [a study](#) entitled “Faith in Flux” issued this week by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life questioned nearly 3,000 people and found that most children raised unaffiliated with a religion later chose to join one. Indoctrination be damned. By contrast, only 14 percent of those raised Catholic and 13 percent of those raised Protestant later became unaffiliated.

(It should be noted that about a quarter of the unaffiliated identified as atheist or agnostic, and the rest said that they had no particular religion.)

So what was the reason for this flight of the unchurched to churches?

Did God appear in a bush? Did the grass look greener on the other side of the cross? Or was it a response to the social pressure of being nonreligious in a very Christian country?

None of those reasons topped the list. Most said that they first joined a religion because their spiritual needs were not being met. And the most-cited reason for settling on their current religion was that they simply enjoyed the services and style of worship.

For these newly converted, the nonreligious shtick didn’t stick. There was still a void, and communities of the faithful helped fill it.

While science, logic and reason are on the side of the nonreligious, the cold, hard facts are just so cold and hard. Yes, the evidence for evolution is irrefutable. Yes, there is a plethora of Biblical contradictions. Yes, there is mounting evidence from neuroscientists that suggests that God may be [a product of the mind](#). Yes, yes, yes. But when is the choir going to sing? And when is the picnic? And is my child going to get a part in the holiday play?

As the nonreligious movement [picks up steam](#), it needs do a better job of appealing to the ethereal part of our human exceptionalism — that wondrous, precious part where logic and reason hold little purchase, where love and compassion reign. It’s the part that fears loneliness, craves companionship and needs affirmation and fellowship.

We are more than cells, synapses and sex drives. We are amazing, mysterious creatures forever in search of something greater than ourselves.

Dale McGowan, the co-author and editor of the book “Parenting Beyond Belief” told me that he believes that most of these people “are not looking for a dogma or a doctrine, but for transcendence from the everyday.”

Churches, mosques and synagogues nurture and celebrate this. Being regularly surrounded by a community that shares your convictions and reinforces them through literature, art and ritual is incredibly powerful, and yes, spiritual.

The nonreligious could learn a few things from religion.