

being a very devout country, and when the later immigrant groups came, the Catholics in particular, noting how religious the country was and how religion was a way of defining yourself, they for the most part either remained devout or indeed became more devout because being religious was a way of being American.

PP: You don't think the story of modern religious experience has been at all well told?

AG: The social science in America, and indeed the national elites which dominate our media and our book publishing industry, really don't think religion is serious. On the whole not very religious themselves, they can't take religion seriously. They've sort of accepted the popular version of the Secularization model, that religion is going away. I have seen no

research that persuades me that this is true, and in fact much research that suggests the opposite. The media engage in other distortions. I have been doing some work lately on comparing Catholics and Southern Baptists—the two largest denominations in the country, together including more than a third of all Americans. And it turns out that the image of the Southern Baptists which the national media present is utterly false; only a tiny minority of them are potential or actual members of a new "Religious Right". There are modest differences in norms and values between Catholics and Southern Baptists, which you can account for by the different images of God—the Catholics having a much more affectionate image of God and the Southern Baptists a more punitive one.

Overall, American religion has been

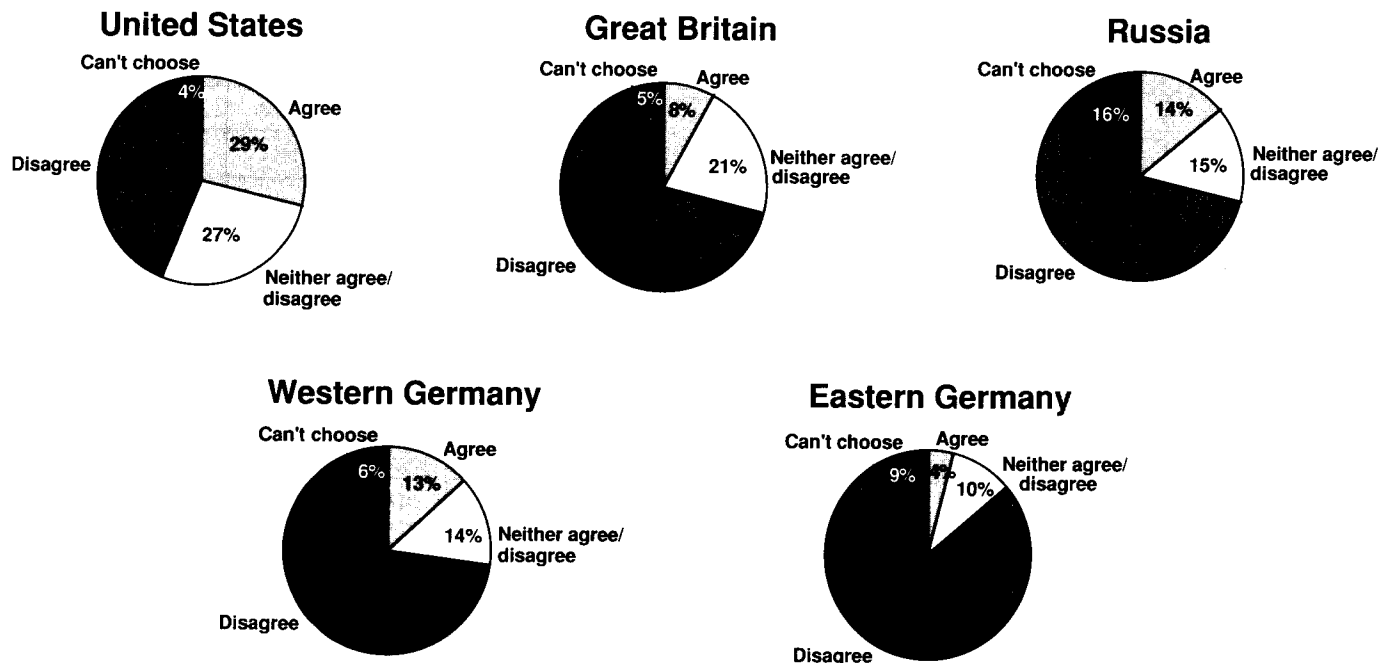
stable as far back as we have surveys, back into the middle 1930s. We need to abandon the Secularization model, abandon the idea that religion is nothing more than superstition bound to wither in the face of science and development. We need to take religion seriously and try to understand its positive and negative influences in our society. I have been doing research on religious imagery for the last dozen years because I am convinced that the core of religion is experience and image and story. Religion is a powerful determinant of many forms of social behavior. It deserves serious study, not reductionist attempts to explain it away.

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THE ISSP CROSS-NATIONAL RELIGION SURVEY

**FIGURE 1
DIFFERENT NATIONAL VIEWS ON CHURCH AND STATE**

Question: How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?...Politicians who do not believe in God are unfit for public office?



THE ISSP CROSS-NATIONAL RELIGION SURVEY

Editor's Note: Except for Figure 3, these data (pages 21-25) are from surveys done in the International Social Survey Program (ISSP) 1991. The organizations participating were: the National Opinion Research Center, University of Chicago (US); Social and Community Planning Research (UK); VCIOM (Russia); ZUMA (Germany); University of Warsaw (Poland); TARKI (Hungary); Social Weather Stations (Philippines); Economic and Social Research Institute (Ireland); EURISCO (Italy); Institute Fessl and GfK (Austria); Tel Aviv University (Israel); University of Ljubljana (Slovenia); Massey University (New Zealand); Social and Cultural Plan Bureau (the Netherlands); Norwegian Social Science Data Services (Norway).

TABLE 1
THE YOUNG ARE AS RELIGIOUS AS THE OLD IN POLAND AND THE US,
AND ALMOST SO IN RUSSIA

Question: Which best describes your beliefs about God...I don't believe in God now and I never have, I don't believe in God now but I used to, I believe in God now but I didn't used to, or I believe in God now and I always have?

RUSSIA

Age	Never	Used To	Believe Now	Always	Can't Choose
<30	38%	4%	23%	12%	23%
30-44	44	1	15	17	23
45-59	35	3	13	29	21
60+	30	3	14	37	16

POLAND

Age	Never	Used To	Believe Now	Always	Can't Choose
<30	1%	2%	2%	83%	13%
30-44	1	4	1	79	15
45-59	1	5	1	86	8
60+	-	3	3	90	5

EASTERN GERMANY

Age	Never	Used To	Believe Now	Always	Can't Choose
<30	70%	13%	5%	12%	NA
30-44	62	20	6	12	NA
45-59	43	33	4	21	NA
60+	26	33	5	37	NA

HUNGARY

Age	Never	Used To	Believe Now	Always	Can't Choose
<30	36%	15%	14%	28%	6%
30-44	33	13	10	36	9
45-59	12	13	5	66	4
60+	6	10	2	80	2

US

Age	Never	Used To	Believe Now	Always	Can't Choose
<30	2%	5%	5%	75%	13%
30-44	3	3	8	76	11
45-59	1	3	1	91	4
60+	1	4	2	85	8

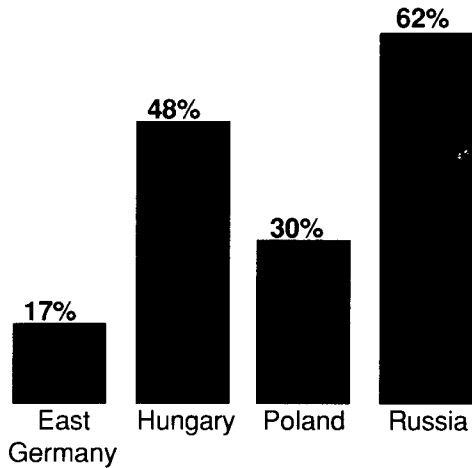
GREAT BRITAIN

Age	Never	Used To	Believe Now	Always	Can't Choose
<30	21%	10%	5%	34%	30%
30-44	17	10	7	41	26
45-59	7	15	4	48	26
60+	3	15	8	62	13

FIGURE 2 NO REVIVAL OF RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS IN EASTERN GERMANY

Question: How much confidence do you have in churches and religious organizations?

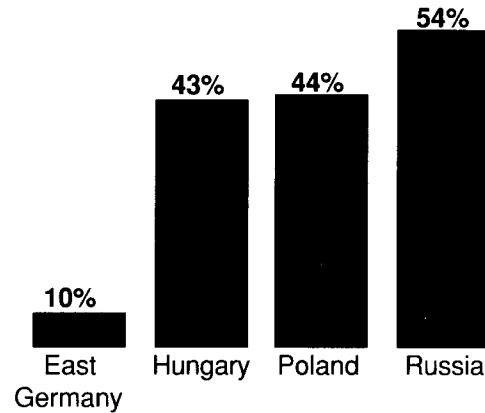
Percent saying: "Complete/Great Deal of Confidence"



CONFIDENCE IN CHURCHES

Question: In your opinion, should there be daily prayers in all state schools?

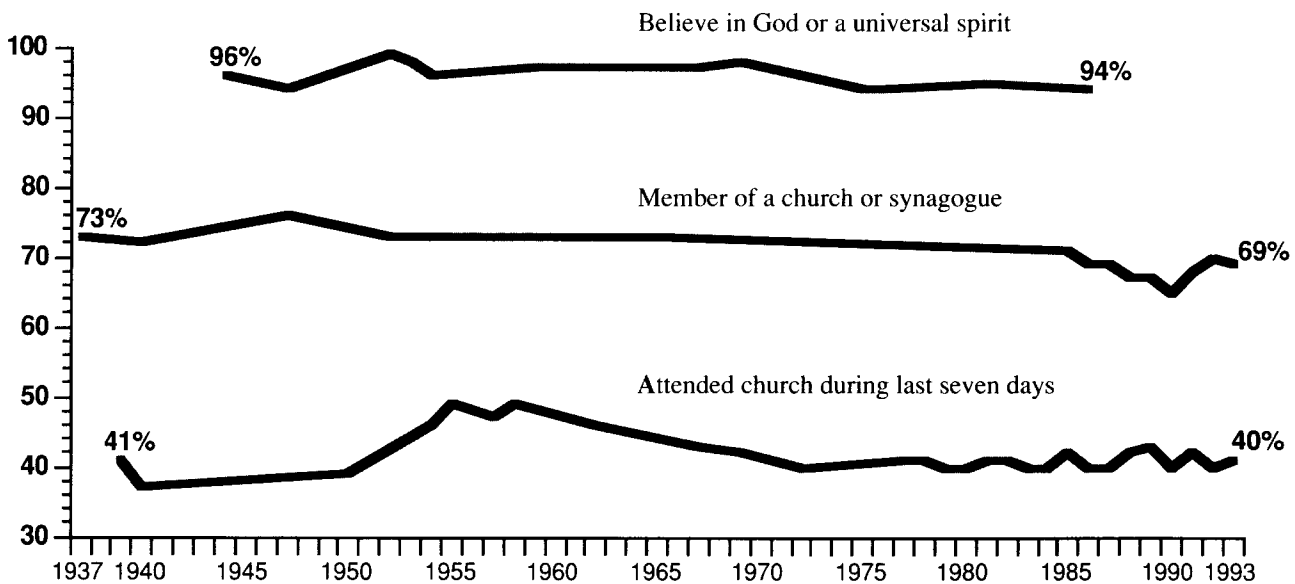
Percent saying: "Yes Definitely/Yes Probably"



PRAYER IN SCHOOL

FIGURE 3 GREAT CONTINUITY IN RELIGIOUS BELIEF AND PRACTICE IN THE UNITED STATES

Questions: Do you believe in God or a universal spirit?...Do you happen to be a member of a church or synagogue?...Did you yourself happen to attend church or synagogue in the last seven days?



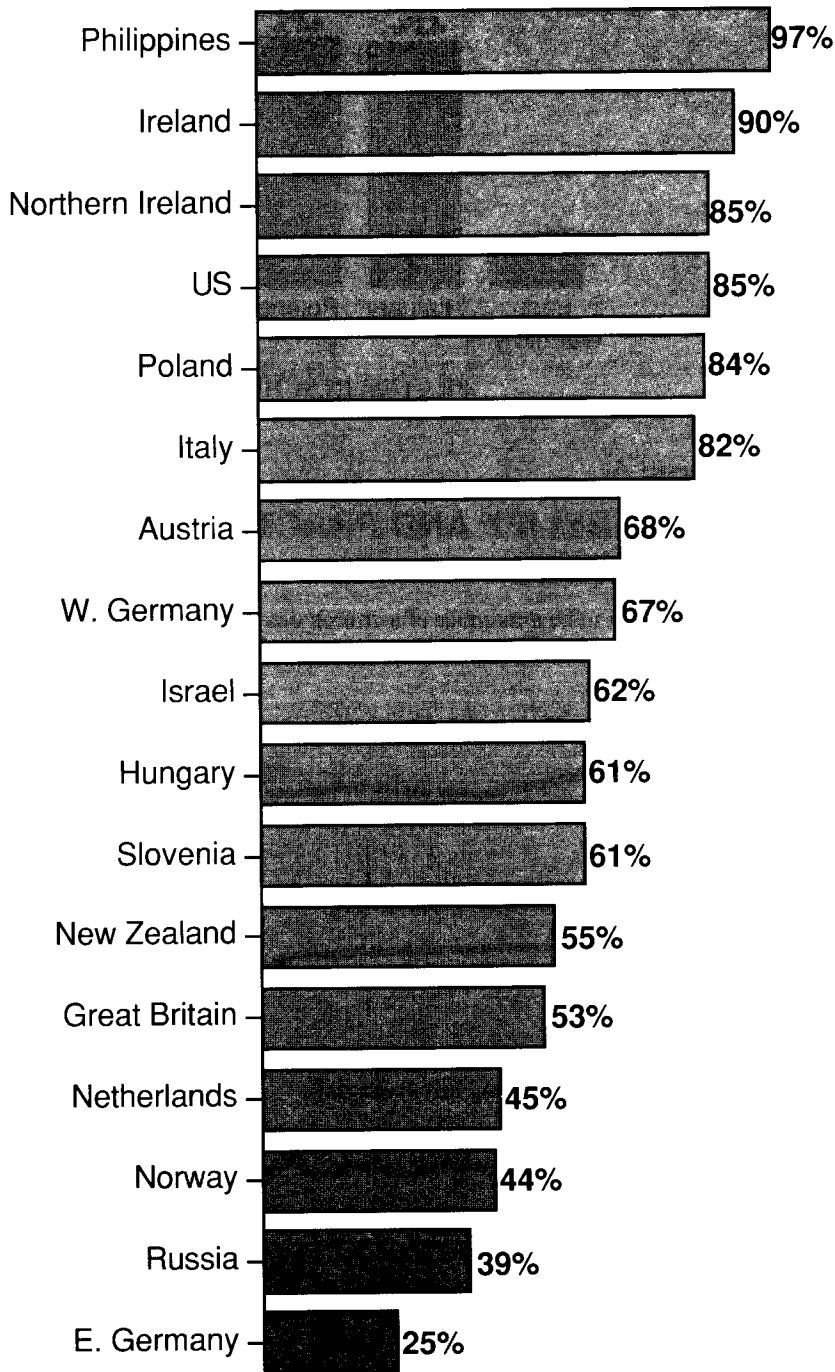
Source: Surveys by the Gallup Organization, latest that of 1993.

FIGURE 4
HUGE DIFFERENCES CROSS-NATIONALLY IN RELIGIOUS MATTERS...

Belief in God

Question: Which best describes your belief about God...?

Percent saying: "Believe Now/Always Believed"



Church Attendance

Question: How often do you attend religious services?

Percent saying: "Attend Church Once a Week"

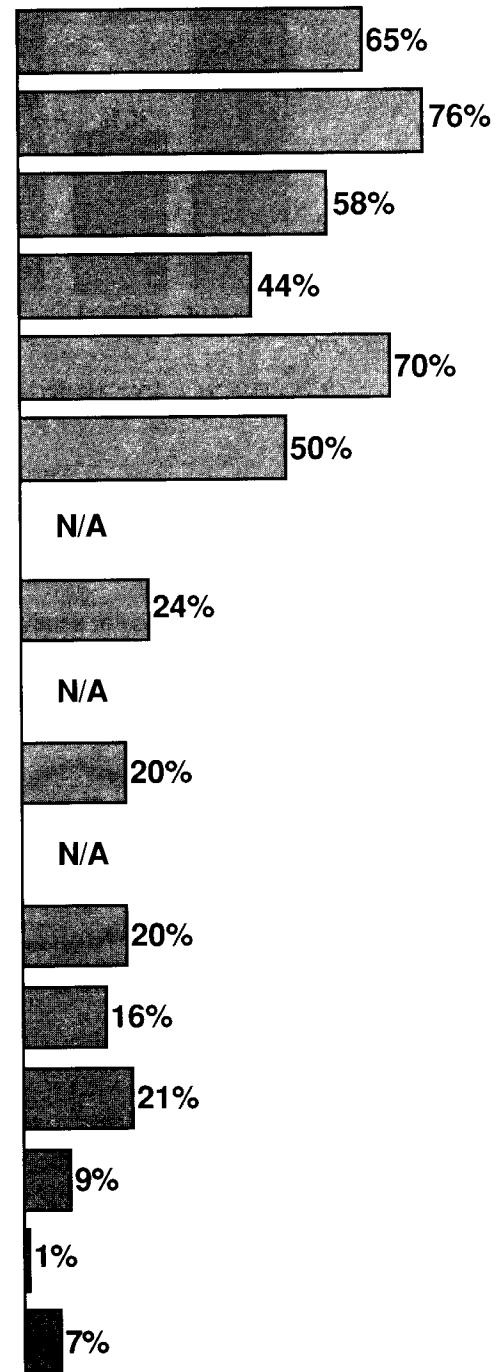
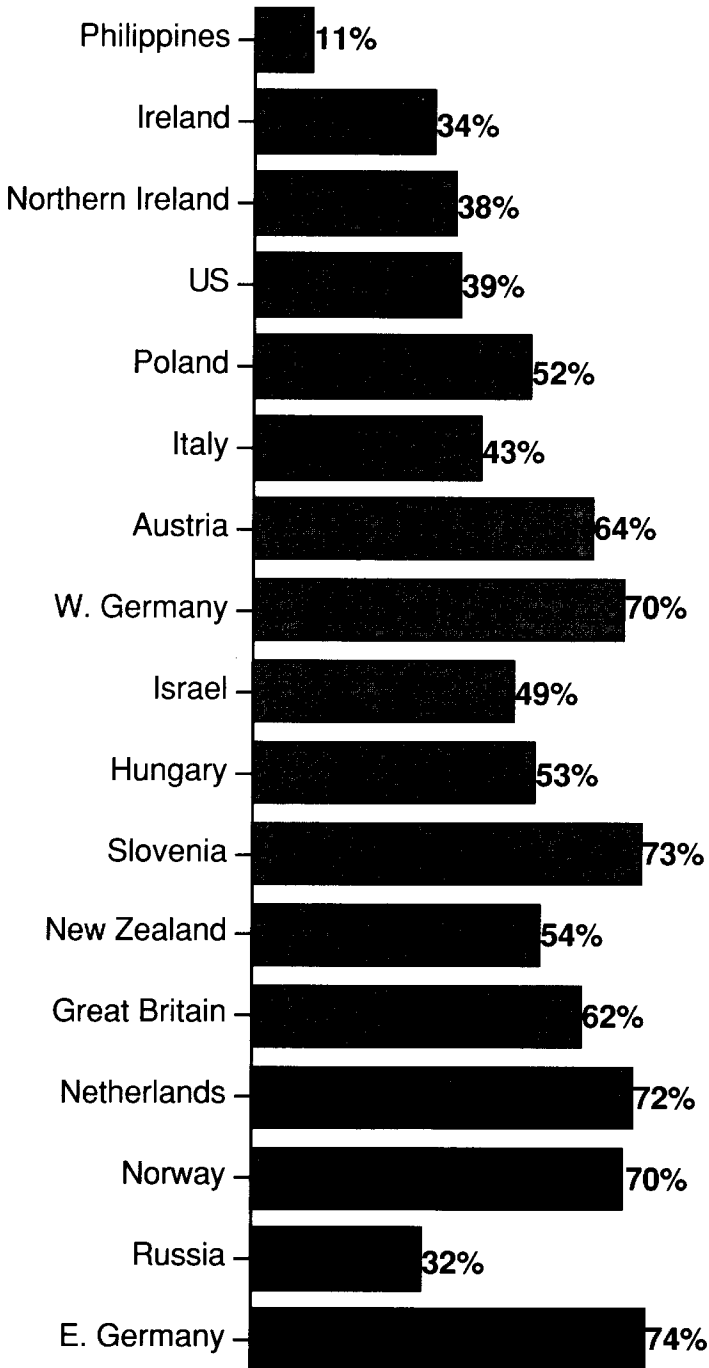


FIGURE 4 (continued)
...AND ON SOCIAL ISSUES OFTEN LINKED TO RELIGIOUS BELIEF

Premarital Sex

Question: Do you think it is wrong or not wrong if a man and a woman have sexual relations before marriage?

Percent saying: "Not Wrong At All"



Homosexuality

Question: What about sexual relations between two adults of the same sex...?

Percent saying: "Not Wrong At All"

