

continuous conversion

*Thoughts, ideas and questions about
religion*

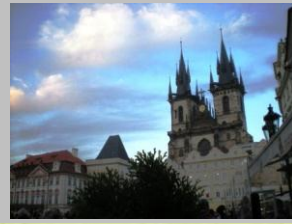
Why I like living in an atheistic, post- Christian nation

Modern Europeans are notoriously indifferent to religion. The term “post-Christian,” coined in 1964 by a Protestant Frenchman of Armenian heritage, has been used to describe a society which has a heritage of Christianity, which espouses Christian values and ethics as codified in its laws and social systems, which celebrates Christian holidays, which considers itself Christian as opposed to Muslim or Buddhist, but which doesn’t actually go to church on Sunday.

Czechs are known as “uber-post Christians.” Not only do they practice all of the above “post-Christian” activities, but a majority also proclaim themselves atheists when asked in polls. Figures ranging from 60% upwards are given as the percentage of atheists living in the Czech Republic.

Keep in mind that atheists, unlike agnostics, believe just as strongly that there is no God as Christians believe there is one God. Agnostics are milder folks who aren’t sure about the existence/nonexistence of God. To be an atheist implies some thought and commitment on the issue. As to Czech atheists, I can only conclude that their 1400 years of Christian society was not enough to win them over to Christ.

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*Evening at Tyn Cathedral, Old Town
Square*



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A Lesson on English

Conventional wisdom has it that so many Czechs are atheists due to the destruction of the church's integrity by Communism since 1948. This may be true, but it doesn't account for France's post-Christian record, which is about the same as the Czech Republic. Nor does this explanation give much credit to the strength of the message of Christ; if a few Communist thugs can turn people from God, then how deep was their commitment in the first place?

Missionaries in the Czech Republic tend to emphasize the post-Christian aspects of the society, and certainly they are obvious: materialism, sexual freedom, preoccupation with personal comfort and corresponding lack of civic pride, and a kind of "live-and-let-live" attitude that slides into apathy are quite apparent in Czech society. It's easy to bemoan this state of affairs, and I sometimes do so myself.

But I must say, in many ways, I like living in this "atheist," post-Christian country. There is something refreshing about the lack of expectation that I will think, talk and behave a certain "Christian" way. My relationships here are, in many ways, more genuine and spontaneous than in the US, where I often feel either judgment or hostility toward me for being a Christian.

Living here gives me the best of both worlds: the bedrock Christian values and customs that are familiar to me, and the opportunity to define myself as a Christian on my own terms. Perhaps the Czech objectivity toward Christianity as one of many spiritual choices is not such a bad characteristic. A bit of "benign neglect" by the society around me has allowed my Christian faith to grow in new directions, and I am grateful to the Czech Republic for giving me this freedom.