

Tim Keller: 'Mushy Middle' in Religion Is Disappearing

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By [Ethan Cole](#), Christian Post Reporter | Wednesday, June 15, 2011

Americans are becoming both more secular and more religious at the same time because the “mushy middle” is disappearing and the country is becoming more polarized, said Pastor Tim Keller on Sunday.



Keller, founding pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in Manhattan, N.Y., agreed with ABC News journalist Christiane Amanpour’s observation that secularism and religiosity are somehow both growing in the United States during his interview on ABC’s “This Week.”

“What’s happening is secularism and devout religion is growing together. And what’s going away is the kind of mushy middle, where people are just part of the synagogue, the mosque or the church because it’s expected,” said Keller. “So what’s actually happening is polarization.”

But not only is America becoming more polarized religiously, it is also seeing extreme division in politics.

Keller recalled his mother saying that up until 15 years ago Americans could vote for a candidate to be president but still support the opposing candidate if he was elected. But now, if the person you did not vote for becomes president “you actually act as if he’s illegitimate.”

The church, acknowledged the Manhattan megachurch pastor, should be doing a better job training its members to engage in more civil discourse. But he also noted that churches as an institution have “lost a lot of credibility” because they are too closely identified with a type of politics or, in the case of the Catholic Church, because of its sex scandals.

“The Gospel creates people who say, ‘I’m loved by God but I’m a sinner.’ So there should be a certain humility and graciousness about the way in which you talk to everybody,” said Keller. “So I think it’s our job as individual congregations to care for the poor, to produce people who speak civilly, to just serve our neighborhoods and serve people and be careful about speaking ex-cathedra, you know, about these great political positions on issues.”

“I personally think that the church, as the church, ought to be less concerned about speaking to politics and more concerned about service.”

Keller was among the prominent Christian leaders, the other being Franklin Graham, who had a short interview with Amanpour for ABC’s “This Week” Easter special.