

CHURCH

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their own values and another thing to force it down their throats," Colurn said. "We had to accept everything on faith. In church, you just had to sit and listen, but in class you get to talk and are taught to question things."

Fifty percent of college students say college has affected the strength of their religious convictions, according to a 1988 Gallup Poll. When asked how attending college had changed their religious beliefs, 27 percent said it had made their beliefs stronger, 23 percent said it had made their beliefs weaker and 50 percent said there was no change in their beliefs.

Benton Johnson, head of the University's religious studies department, said he believes every generation is diluted in its religious intensity.

"Each generation has a smaller and smaller percent of people who believe Jesus is the son of God and who believe in heaven and hell," Johnson said. "These people transmit less urgency to their kids."

In 1989, Johnson interviewed 500 baby boomers, ages 33 to 42, who were brought up in the Presbyterian Church. He said most of these people had either dropped out of the church or participated less in church than their parents.

Most of the people he studied who dropped out of church did so in their late teens to early 20s, Benton said. Men were more likely to drop out sooner than women.

Johnson said fundamentalists who believe their actions are strongly connected with their eternal destiny remain highly active in their churches.

"If you really believe that, that will energize you," he said.

Johnson said the people he studied who were less involved in church than their parents were not anti-religious.

"They still prayed occasionally, but religion was not a ma-

ior interest," he said. "They were looking for a low-involvement religion. Either they won't join a church, or if they do, they're not going to throw themselves heart-and-soul into it."

The single biggest predictor of whether someone will attend church regularly is the extent of his or her belief, Benton said. Married people with children are also more likely to attend church because "everyone wants a religious education for their kids," he said.

Students who decide to leave the church they grew up in often fear they are betraying their parents, said Mark Evans, staff psychologist at the University Student Health Center. Some students from a fundamentalist background may fear they are damning their soul forever.

"If they have a choice of either belonging to the church or they're doomed, it makes it particularly hard because there's more at stake," he said.

It isn't a coincidence that many people question religion when they go to college, Evans said.

"At college, people are taught to question all kinds of assumptions," he said. "It seems natural it would spill over into religion."

Reverend Marguerite Scroggie of the Metropolitan Community Church said about nine of the 30 people who regularly attend her Christian church are college students. Half of the congregation used to be college students. Scroggie said she believes this is because the students are "less intense" about religion.

The changes that accompany college may push students into churches instead of making them pull out, said Chris Fery, peer minister of the Catholic Newman Center.

College students may join a church to deal with all of the confusion in their lives, Fery said. University students may also attend church for a sense of community, which they may not have after leaving family and friends.

"Church gives people a sense of stability, especially students, and it is someplace they can always go," Fery said. "I think some of it's spiritual, but I think a lot of it is social."

Of the 750 people who attend services at the Newman Center, about 450 are students, said Father Albert Felice-Pace. He said in the last five years he's noticed a steady increase in the number of college students attending services.

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