I am as firmly convinced that religions do harm as I am they are untrue.

Bertrand Russell
DEAR READER,

According to a recent survey, over one-third of Americans are atheist, agnostic, or “nothing in particular.” And while it sounds encouraging, 19th and early 20th-century freethinkers—and some social scientists—also believed religion was dying out. But as we learned while researching our American Freethought film series, their hopes were dashed by the resurgence of religious fundamentalism in the 1920s.

At a time when evangelical Christians have anordinate amount of influence in our government and the world is again confronted with the possibility of nuclear annihilation, we’re looking back at the free-thinking philosopher Bertrand Russell (1872–1970). A pacifist and critical thinker ahead of his time, Russell condemned Christianity and protested against war and the use of nuclear weapons.

In this issue, Bertrand Russell’s philosophy and wisdom is eloquently expressed in his 1922 “Free Thought and Official Propaganda.” And in his 1962 Tom Paine Award acceptance message, Russell articulates the importance of freedom and civil liberties.

Gary Berton, Coordinator at the Institute for Thomas Paine Studies, reviews Losing Our Religion, a documentary film about the clergy who join the ranks of non-believers. These clerics seem to be under the impression that they are unique and the first “converts” to unbelief. The overwhelming majority of 19th and early 20th-century freethinkers had also been devout Christians, including the founder of the Truth Seeker. And ironically, many prominent unbelievers were former pastors.

Historian Nathan Alexander writes about the freethinkers who fought against racism, most notably Robert Ingersoll and Truth Seeker contributor James F. Morton. From our archives, we offer the only known account and photographs of the historically significant 1894 New Rochelle Decoration Day services where Robert Ingersoll and his fellow prominent Liberals paid tribute to author-hero Thomas Paine.

In 1882, a few weeks after D.M. Bennett’s death, his successor Eugene Macdonald wrote an article about the future of the Truth Seeker published on what would have been Bennett’s 64th birthday. On the same page, Macdonald printed D.M. Bennett’s amusing account of his birthday bath the previous year in the “holy” Nile river.

This year we commemorate the 200th anniversary of D.M. Bennett’s birth. Although Bennett was imprisoned for violating the Comstock obscenity law—the real crime—in the eyes of his Christian persecutors, was his publication of the blasphemous Truth Seeker.

—Roderick Bradford

D.M. BENNETT MONUMENT
GREEN-WOOD CEMETERY
BROOKLYN, NEW YORK

QUOTE IS FROM THE PREFACE TO HIS BOOK
STATEMENT FOR THE CONTRADICTION
RELATED SUBJECTS
KNOWN AS “RUSSELL’S PARADOX.”

Prominent Freethinkers at the Thomas Paine Monument during the 1894 Decoration (Memorial) Day services in New Rochelle, N.Y.

Third from left, HENRY ROWLEY (1855–1918), President of the Brooklyn Philosophical Association. Tall man in center, sculptor. THE EQUATION IS HIS

(Photograph courtesy of TIM BINGA/Center for Inquiry Libraries in Amherst, N.Y.)

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Bertrand Russell, Truth Seeker

Figure out what is right—figure out what is true—and then act upon it. Don’t be discouraged from doing—or thinking—what is right merely because it is unpopular. Be suspicious of any illegitimate forces that may be trying to influence what you believe and what you do. Be a freethinker. Be a truth seeker.

by Peter Stone*

When the philosopher Bertrand Russell turned twelve years old, his grandmother gave him a Bible as a gift. On the flyleaf of the book, she inscribed some of her favorite Bible verses. Among these was Exodus 23:2—“Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil.” This verse perfectly encapsulates Russell’s attitude throughout his long life. Figure out what is right—figure out what is true—and then act upon it. Don’t be discouraged from doing it. It’s what’s right. What is right, you see, is what is right merely because it is right. Be suspicious of any illegitimate forces that may be trying to influence what you believe and what you do. Be a freethinker. Be a truth seeker.

Russell has been living with his grandmother for several years. He had lost his mother and sister to diphtheria when he was two, and his father to bronchitis (and a broken heart) when he was four. His parents were real freethinkers, and lived an eccentric, bohemian lifestyle. They had named Douglas Spalding (the children’s tutor) and T.J. Cobden-Sanderson as guardians of their children. But Spalding had engaged in a sexual affair with Bertie’s mother, with her husband’s consent. Spalding suffered from consumption, and so never married. Apparently, Bertie’s parents did not think it fair that he should be deprived of his grandfather, with her husband’s consent. (Spalding suffered from consumption, and so never married. Apparently, Bertie’s parents did not think it fair that he should be deprived of his grandfather, with her husband’s consent. He had already been brought up by his grandmother. (His grandfather died when Bertie was only six.) Both Bertie and Frank found life with her dour and depressing. Frank became very religious, but Bertie retreated into introspection, unable to accept the outlook of his grandmother but unwilling to act out or cause his relatives pain. This led him, for example, to conceal his growing doubts as an adolescent regarding God and religion. He developed his doubts—dismissing the existence of free will, an afterlife, and finally God—keeping them secret by writing them out in Greek, in a notebook he labeled “Greek Exercises.”

Russell’s grandmother hoped that he would follow his grandfather, the former prime minister, and go into politics. But from an early age it was the life of the mind that called Russell. He was particularly fascinated by mathematics. As a boy, he introduced himself to the subject by following his older brother, Russell loved it, but he was dis-appointed to learn that mathematics rested upon axioms, which were supposed to be assumed but not proven. He went to Trinity College, Cambridge in 1890, hoping for something better, but he was very disappointed with what he found there. To him, mathematics as practiced at Cambridge seemed to be nothing more than a toolkit of technical tricks used to solve problems. It functioned with only a vague and intuitive understanding of some of the central concepts that lay at its core, such as “number,” “limit,” and “infinity.” He was therefore delighted to learn that there were mathematicians elsewhere in the world—great minds like Georg Cantor, Karl Weierstrass, and Richard Dedekind—who were actively tackling these difficult questions. This led Russell into the area of work for which he would establish his intellectual reputation—the philosophy of mathematics.

With his friend G.E. Moore, Russell became one of the founders of a movement in philosophy called analytic philosophy. This movement was inspired by the idea that many concepts of ordinary language are vague, and that the purpose of philosophy is to make them more precise, and thereby advance our ability to establish which ideas are true and which are false. This attitude is clearly visible in Russell’s attitude towards mathematics, and his desire to define more rigorously the central concepts of the discipline. This project gained decisive direction when Russell became acquainted in 1900 with the work of Giuseppe Peano, an Italian mathematician who had provided a set of axioms for the natural numbers suitable for deriving the results of traditional arithmetic. Russell was inspired by this work, and believed that it could be extended to show that all of mathematics could be derived from a few foundational concepts of logic. (In philosophy, the belief that such a derivation is possible is known as logicism.) He had already been tinkering with the idea of writing a book on the foundations of mathematics; his encounter with Peano gave this work a definite direction. To this end, Russell wrote a book entitled The Principles of Mathematics (1903). He hoped to write a sequel to advance the ideas in this book further and to tie up a number of philosophical “loose ends.” To this end, he teamed up with his old mentor at Cambridge, Alfred North Whitehead. Whitehead had also written a book on the foundations of mathematics entitled A Treatise on Universal Algebra (1898), and wished to publish a sequel to his own book. Russell and Whitehead began collaborating on a work that eventually became the three-volume Principia Mathematica (published in 1910, 1912, and 1913). It is a long and difficult work, and no one can doubt its level of rigor; it is not until midway through the second volume that Russell and Whitehead are able to establish that 1 + 1 = 2. (Immediately after proving this result in the book, Russell quips, “The above proposition is occasionally useful.”)

Unfortunately, this work, while impressive, did not accomplish what Russell had hoped it would—place all of mathematics on the secure foundation of the fundamentals of logic. Indeed, his work uncovered a number of deep and difficult philosophical problems, one of the most important of which would become known as the “Russell Paradox.” These problems suggest that the project motivating Russell might well be impossible to achieve. Indeed, Godel’s Incompleteness Theorem is often interpreted as proving precisely that.

Russell saw in mathematics and philosophy a kind of surrogate satisfaction for the religious faith he had lost as a teenager. “I wanted certainty,” he wrote in his Autobiography, “in the kind of way in which people want religious faith. I thought that certainty is more likely to be found in mathematics than elsewhere.” This is the reason why Alan Wood, Russell’s biographer, wrote that “I believe the underlying purpose behind all Russell’s work was an almost religious passion for some truth that was more than human, independent of the minds of men, and even the existence of men.” His failure to achieve this ambition surely counts as a sort of spiritual disappointment for him.

BERTRAND RUSSELL, 1951.

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He developed his doubts—dismissing the existence of free will, an afterlife, and finally God—keeping them secret by writing them out in Greek, in a notebook he labeled “Greek Exercises.”

Despite setbacks like this, Russell never felt tempted to return to religion. He cared too passionately about truth for that. He remained an unbeliever throughout his long life. He was once asked if he was an atheist and an agnostic. He famously replied that I ought to call myself an agnostic; but, for all practical purposes, I am an atheist. I do not think the existence of the Christian God any more probable than the existence of the Gods of Olympus or Valhalla. To take another illustration: nobody can prove that there is not an agnostic. He famously replied that faith he had lost as a teenager.

Russell saw in mathematics and philosophy a kind of surrogate satisfaction for the religious faith he had lost as a teenager. Towards religion and many other subjects, through a series of popular books, including Marriage and Morals (1929), The Conquest of Happiness (1930), In Praise of Idleness and Other Essays (1935), Religion and Science (1935), Unpopular Essays (1950), and Why I Am Not a Christian, and Other Essays on Religion and Related Subjects (1957).

Russell would pay the price numerous times for his willingness to speak his mind so publicly on such controversial subjects. In 1940, for example, he was offered an appointment at the City College of New York (CCNY). The faculty and students there were generally very anxious to attract a philosopher of Russell’s standing. Unfortunately, a large coalition of religious zealots, led by Bishop Manning of the Episcopal Diocese of New York, fought to have the appointment denied because of Russell’s outspoken defense of atheism and liberal views regarding sex. In one of the United States’ first major battles regarding academic freedom, the anti-Russell forces prevailed through a highly questionable lawsuit that annulled the appointment. It should be noted, however, that the same popular writings that cost Russell his job at CCNY also won him a Nobel Prize for Literature in 1950. Russell would promote the value of truth and fearless freethinking in the realm of politics just as much as in the realms of philosophy and religion. This is the area in which Russell had the most opportunity not to follow a multitude to do evil. Russell may have disappointed his grandmother, by not pursuing a career in politics, but politics was on his mind throughout his long life. This was true even when he was busiest with his philosophical research. While writing Principia Mathematica, for example, he found time to run for parliament on a platform of women’s suffrage. (He was careful to run for a seat that he had no chance of winning.) It was during World War I, however, that Russell first had the chance to resist the multitude on a large scale. He became extremely active in antiwar work, focusing his energies on supporting the conscientious objectors who resisted being drawn into Britain’s war effort. He paid a considerable price for his efforts, however. He lost his position at Cambridge, alienated numerous friends (notably his mentor, Alfred North Whitehead, whose son perished fighting in the war), was arrested twice, and finally spent six months in prison.

Russell was very much on the Left politically, but he was never a Communist. After World War I ended, Russell paid a visit to the newly-formed Soviet Union, during which he had a personal audience with Lenin. After this visit, he wrote a highly critical book, The Practice and Theory of Bolshevism (1920), which alienated him from many left-wing friends “star-struck” by the new experiment in Russia.

Russell thought that education was of particular political significance. He saw most schools of his day as havens for mindless religious dogma and equally mindless jingoism. He expressed this view in two books, On Education (1926) and Education and the Social Order (1932). And he had ample opportunity to put his views into practice. Russell had two children, John and Katherine, with his second wife, Dora. (He would later have a third child, Conrad, with his third wife.) Anxious to avoid the pitfalls...
Russell would promote the value of truth and fearless freethinking in the realm of politics just as much as in the realms of philosophy and religion.

of existing schools, Bertie and Dora resolved to found their own school, a new progressive option in the spirit of A.S. Neill’s Summerhill and Maria Montessori’s schools. Beacon Hill School opened in 1927, and remained open until 1943. (Dora was running the school on her own by then—her marriage to Bertie had ended rather spectacularly years earlier.)

While Russell remained a staunch anti-Communist throughout his adult life, in the 1950s, he became more and more involved with the movement against the atomic bomb. Unlike many peace activists, Russell did not believe in the slogan, “Ban the bomb.” Instead, he thought it was war itself that must be abolished in the atomic age. It was this position he advanced through a variety of activities—through his exchange of letters withnikita Khrushchev and John Foster Dulles in 1957-1958; through his book Common Sense and Nuclear Warfare (1959); and through his activities with the French philosopher jean-Paul Sartre, an Internationalist-publisher I.F. Stone were a few of the winners. In 1951 by civil-rights advocates who were disappointed in the ACLU. The Committee held annual dinners and presented Tom Paine awards to progressive cause advocates. Associate Justice of the Supreme Court William Douglas, Bob Dylan, Peter, Paul, and Mary, and journalist-publisher I.F. Stone were a few of the winners. In 1962, the organization gave its Tom Paine award to Bertrand Russell. I.F. Stone introduction: This is the memorable message sent by lord Russell, the world’s greatest living philosopher, to the Emergency Civil Liberties Committee in New York Dec. 15 on the presentation to him of its annual Tom Paine award:

“Your honor in a way I deeply appreciate. Tom Paine symbolizes for americans the articulation of a radical consciousness that human welfare and intellectual integrity depend upon courageous insistence upon freedom for men and women. Freedom can not effectively exist where it is understood to mean no more than the toleration of occasional differences about matters which are of small importance. Disputes, for example, about the comparative merits of consumer produce or the total of farm expenditures may be cited as examples of freedom, but only by those who are dead to its life and deaf to its death. The vision of Tom Paine was that of a serious public involvement in the civilized ends to which that freedom was to have been directed, of unique achievement are in daily jeopardy because the absence of the freedom striven after by Tom Paine prevents men from forestalling consummating folly. Today, the exercise of power is so remote from the daily lives of men and women, and the control of the very springs of thought so concentrated in the hands of those symphonic to power, that freedom is increasingly an abstraction with which we are deluded. Delusion takes the form of public incoherence over values and beliefs which are disowned even as they are invoked. President Kennedy speaks of human freedom as he takes actions which may condemn hundreds of millions of human beings to agonizing death. Future generations are forfeited to the paranoia of those who compulsively act for Garrison states. So it is that power possessed by the few condemns us all to futile death and empties our formal rights of meaning or of viable life. Only to the extent that we are able to remove those who would perpetrate this crime against humanity can freedom be seriously our possession of our right.

I feel honored in a way I do not find easy to acknowledge. I am an Englishman and so was Tom Paine by birth. I believe that human freedom and the civilized ends to which that freedom was to have been directed, are not spoken for by the Governments of either of our two countries. I find it difficult to express the feelings I have upon receiving this award because I know how Tom Paine would feel about the country he left and the nation he helped to found. The pity of it. The disgrace to all that is best in man’s long odyssey. The intolerable affront to the dignity of us citizens of other countries.

Rejoice! Secularism Won! Why We Can Never Celebrate

by Thomas Larson

What intrigues me about secularism is its pandemic invisibility in our society, one that gives secularism its nature, and its freedom, and its limitations.

Flying home from Washington D.C. to San Diego on a new American Airlines plane, I have, privileged American individual that I am, my own TV screen on the back of the seat in front of me—inane movies, dopey sitcoms, time till landing. The welcome-icon is a grinning, competent woman, fifty-ish, professional, sartorially regal, with non-lustful red lip-stick, tartar-blasted white teeth, a blue-and-red striped artificial silk scarf tied jauntily around her neck, white shirt, smart dark blazer, and a winged ID badge—Abigail. It’s more than a year since Trump’s victory. I’m still in a daze. This woman’s semblance, self-assured and competent, has piqued my curiosity. She’s wearing the silks of service, of corporate trademarking, of corporate trade-marketing, an advertisement that promotes self-de-branding and self-reliance (she’s Abigail, a non-robotic, I’m assuming, flight attendant, emergency-shute-trained). From her exudes the experiential fitness of a thousand flights, drinks and snacks and terror-inducing turbulence.

Indeed, herervyfile— the flight attendant as trooper—elicits her feelgood persona, not her inner life. One strain of which may be her religious faith. For all I know she’s in has evolved not because of religious tenets (Why would it?) but because of our society’s secular principles, which rule the “marketplace,” in general, and the airline industry, in particular. Those principles vouchsafe her job, her safety, her rights as a woman, though she can barely keep up with the money men make.

I know it’s an odd thought but nowhere in her screen depiction figures a religious. Not a hint of the holy. Even when Americans are religious, there is still no present-timent (excluding female Muslim dress or the scraggly beard and short-cut hair of the ISIS terrorist) to showcase us as faithful—the notable stray cat, Laura Ingraham of Fox’s “The Ingraham Angle,” whose gold cruci-fix sunbeams faith. Which sin of hers did Jesus die for? The sin of hosting a Fox cable news show?

Perhaps Abigail’s spiritual but not religious, a None. Back at my desk, the flight hitch-less, I’m reading statistics that say over the past century the fastest growing belief worldwide, next to Islam, is that of unbelief: Some one billion of the total population with another billion, perhaps the religious but not religious, a None, a Non. I include myself with these tens of millions of American Nones.

If American Airlines wanted to market safety to us with Yahweh’s presence, they would: a sunflowered altar at which pilots pray. But they don’t. Because flight has nothing to do with divinity. We do not place our faith in God when we fly. The great provider is Boeing engineering and the rigorous training, even ex-military, of pilots who are Chuck-Feager right-stuffed. Add habit, too, the quotidian nature of air travel; our passenger “experience” has a gladdening sameness to it. We have flown and survived enough that we don’t need to “believe in” the physics of propulsion and air-wing-displacement for it to be true. We are alive, post-flight, a circumlocution, I know. But still. Let me add more doubt to my reasoning: It’s over that word secular, a nigh imperceptible entity, there in the safeguards and performance of air travel, the most obvious thing about it, about which we are unconscious. When I think of the secular, I note that nearly everything in our social structure is secular. If there’s been a smack-down between religious and secular we’ve endurance as Americans, I haven’t seen it in my sixty-eight years. But I know secularism won. We are not a Christian nation. We are a secular one. Yet secularists struggle to identify the valuable, weigh its air everywhere around us, faithful and unfaithful alike. Why?

What intrigues me about secularism is its pandemic invisibility in our society, one that gives secularism its nature, and its freedom, and its limitations.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines “secular” as “belonging to the present or material world as distinguished from the eternal or spiritual world.” Worldly v. otherworldly. All faiths claim the otherworldly created and adjudicates both the supernatural and the temporal realms. Secularists pitch back that the religious, especially in our fair land, can say as they please, but whatever authority they have, in legal terms, is unauthorized and so unenforced as to be rendered by the U.S. Constitution’s establishment clause.

At first, with a Christian majority under the Constitution’s protection, separation of church and state was stable. Jefferson’s and subsequent administrations kept God at bay and “allowed” Christ’s sway to effect not law or education but society and culture. That stability lasted until the mid-twentieth century when religious suasion (evolving into the Moral Majority) rallied as a redoubtable antidote to Leftism. Today, Christianity has lost much of its old-fashioned sainthood. The bogus argument that God is against the born-again’s is a “weaponized secularism” from without, one that targets the Christian horde as shallow, premmodern, sanctimonious. In love with slogans: Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah.

You would think in this back and forth, the secular character would marshal itself into a “movement” or an “ideology,” (I’ve yet to be introduced at my neighbor’s book group to or as a “secular humanist.”) Secularists don’t accuse all religious of having [in]stead, it’s the evangelicals who charge the nonreligious with animosity and bullying, collars for which there’s no evidence. Secularists, agnostics, and atheists seldom march under one banner. Hell, we seldom march. Stranger, the more hidden secular “rule” is, the more it becomes the default setting of our society. Perhaps the religious see something we don’t—it’s weaponry aside, an unholy tendencies that overtake nearly every American institution. Yes, the secular write large does not favor religion in the public square. Take football games. They begin not with prayer but with the spectacle of “honoring Americ.” For their part, the churchgoing must endure such honors as though they are nonreligious prayers, invocations. But this is not exclusion, to summon the spirit of America. It’s inclusion: a bloated militarism whose boots-and-arms signal the defense of the nation not with Bibles but with bombs. Thinking of those peas in a pod, Donald Trump and Kim Jong-un, nuclear bombs are far more easily summoned, far deadlier than God.

When people speak of the specter of fundamentalism: Much is knowable, not merely ponderable. We are often un-concerned with advancing unbelief or freethought, with questions of God or the Resurrection. We value, perhaps overvalue, certainty, rational thought, logic, proofs, a need to solve not all but most mysteries—systems of human engagement that exist despite a religion’s justification of itself. (As Jennifer Michael Hecht writes in Doubt: A History, Christianity must carry in its tales and prov-erbs its self-justification because doubters must enact their salvation via the miracle of faith; such salesmanship, paganists, then and now, never engage in.) Secular wis-dom, even the pagan variety, exists (always has) outside of those justifications for God as creator. Such wisdom has developed through the agnostic, the skeptic, the humanist, one based on the practice of laws, institutions, folk- ways, social norms, the hierarchies of organized religion, all means by which we promote (the word is too generous) human well-being.

The Vatican, for instance, is just such a “secular” in-stitution as are all history-bearing and creed-expousing religions. It is, like the criminal justice system, subject to its own laws and courts, confessional and redemptions, sometimes for the better, typically for the worse when its excesses are finally revealed. (About the Inquisition alone, I shudder at the tribunal registries locked in the Vatican’s vaults, and the further damage their exposure would bring to the church.) One reason we know the Catholic church is a nation entidad via the certainty of clerical corruption—the selling of indulgences that sparked the Reformation, the many papal associ-ations with mass-murdering tyrants, and the recent ho-norlaist of pope pedophilia. Considering the latter, where would we be without a secular overlord?

On the one hand, to maintain that religious citizens are different from nonreligious citizens is a false division. Are the views of a born-again ideologue like Texas senator Ted Cruz rendered moot by a non-Christian like the astrophysicist Neil de Grasse Tyson? No. That’s ludicrous. Both pay lots of tax-es, vote their conscience, speak their minds. It’s sense-less to compare religious and secularists as if either,
being rushed to the hospital with angina, is thinking, “I’m glad I’m an atheist, or a Baptist,” because regardless of the grantor of his wishes or prayers, the goal is the same: Get Me to the Cath Lab on Time!

But, on the other hand, there is tension between religion’s claims and secularism’s facts. If anything, religion’s claim to the otherworld “may account for an afterlife, but it need not account for any behaviors here-and-now on earth. A serial killer on death row may be going to hell but he’s already in hell as his corporeal punishment.”

Ancient desert nomads and their explanations as to why we are here—praise and serve a vengeful, inexplicable God whose rewards are unwarranted or deferred—are matched by modern exegeses that place human grace and human absurdity, not God, at the center of our theology. A flawed court and political system is still better than none. I know it’s rare, but black men do receive justice. In addition, we value clan and family preservation than none. I know it’s rare, but black men do receive justice. In addition, we value clan and family preservation.

The Vatican, for instance, is just such a “secular” institution as are all history-bearing and creed-defining religious. Yes, it’s worth celebrating the group, “Christians for the Separation of Church and State,” which conducts studies that the group has lost its way post-mind-meld with the Republican party. Religion in thrall to any political party—and vice versa—is a recipe for dithering, for fossilizing stupidity, mirrored by our two-party system. That system is so belief-centric and, thus, so polarizing, that evangelicals define secular thinking as authoritarian (the nonreligious say the same about them) when, in fact, whatever one’s life rationale is, any point-of-view flourishes under the secular umbrella.

The mistake we make is to keep ourselves locked into the idea of the barely connected, this cartoonish, fists-and-feet-a-flying battle between religious and secular. Everyone reasonable person in America, it seems to me, regards with gratitude (of the barely audible sort) the work activists have done on behalf of everyone’s civil and human rights. These activists, often ten legal, have ended blasphemy laws, outlawed public funding for Christian charter and home schools, defended the atheist soldier, teenager, and blogger, silenced prayer in schools, moved church groups off-campus, scuttled creation science as the “other side” to a “curriculum debate” on evolution, and freed jailed political prisoners, many nonbelievers, throughout the world.

I say death by firing squad. The U.S. Supreme Court has heard oral arguments from plaintiffs challenging same-sex marriage law on behalf of something called “religious liberty.” The Court will rule in May. I am an atheist baker and I deny cakes for Christian weddings. I should have the right to choose or deny clients based on my antireligious belief: I can’t bake a wedding cake for Christian couples. I should have the right to choose or deny clients based on my antireligious belief. I only bake for gay,直的 doesn’t matter) think their fundamentalist creed against gay marriage is severely prejudicial. I can’t bake a wedding cake for Christian couples. I should have the right to choose or deny clients based on my antireligious belief.
ing to Darth Vader's dictate, and the state allows it. My right, I suppose. But is it doable?) Such solipsistic cases, often narrowed into causes of religious liberty or freedom, are not about liberty or freedom. They are about an exemption from "secular" law. We don't allow these exemptions—and religion shouldn't begin a gold-rush stampede to allow them. The rule of law has evolved, so that new laws are better than old ones. Women, and other sinners, are no longer prosecuted by a dunking pond for their "hysteria," as in Salem, Massachusetts, or enslaved by state-sanctioned rape, pregnancy, and infant abduction, as in The Handmaid's Tale. Virtually no one thinks that if a woman is mentally ill, the cause of her affliction arose in a house in Amityville or will be remedied by sprinkles of holy water. Or enslaved by state-sanctioned rape, pregnancy, and infant abduction, as in The Handmaid's Tale. Virtually no one thinks that if a woman is mentally ill, the cause of her affliction arose in a house in Amityville or will be remedied by sprinkles of holy water.

Moreover, the religious exemption, fostered by its conniving brethren, is already hard at work in the abortion wars. Post-Roe v. Wade, Christians believe they have equalized a woman's right to choose with the fetus's right to life. The exemption is most often played not by opposing a woman's right to an abortion but by abridging her access to getting one. Such effectiveness aside, I can say most secularists are afraid to extend rights to a fetus in fear that the "right to life," or fetal personhood, would, ironically, be governed by secular law, not religious liberty. The rights we extend to ourselves would then be extended to beings from the moment of conception. Both "sides" would claim victory: sentient life is protected by God's will and/or by our (legislated) biological imperative.

Sticky business. If there is a right to fetal personhood, the courts might, under Roe's precedent, uphold the woman's right to end that life, keeping the state's right not to end that life secondary. I'm unsure how this shakes out. In a society that grants rare exemptions to secular laws based on religious preferences, a fetus should have no "religious liberties" beyond the rights of reproductive health and decision-making already guaranteed to the mother. Despite the problem of personhood, there should be a way for it never to fall into the barbed-wire camp of religious jurisdiction. I trust most Americans will find this way without giving into "Onward, Christian Soldiers.")

I think the greatest roadblock to acknowledging the foundational primacy of secularism's condition, both its shadowy and its sunny sides, is our theophobia: God, in general, the Bible, in particular. I agree: The Bible is a wearyingly pernicious book. I've been arguing in several recent essays why the book's discipline is all hat and no cattle. How? Consider how little Christians read the Bible, how nonbelievers score higher than believers on Bible quizzes, and how rare is Bible literacy—sixty percent of Americans cannot name five, let alone all, of the Ten Commandments.

Here's a paragraph from my April/May 2015 Piece Inquiry cover story, "Hobby Lobby, Steve Green, and the New Bible Empire":

The signs are rampant in our culture that the Bible is waning in its readership and authority. In 2014, Biblica, a publisher that produces Bibles in the "top 100 major languages in the world," launched the Institute for Bible Reading. The program addresses what it identifies as a "growing crisis in Bible engagement." Translation: the book Biblica terms "the most powerful catalyst for spiritual growth" is, according to its own research, becoming irrelevant. Young people are not interested in reading or relating to the Bible at rates that Biblica finds alarming. As the Gallup Organization notes, there has been a 20 percent drop in occasional Bible-readers in the last generation. Nine in ten Christians want help with Bible reading and do not get it from their churches or their pastors. According to Biblica, "unless this trend is reversed, by 2040, two-thirds of all Americans will have no meaningful relationship with the Bible." And all this while, paradoxically, Gospel marketers sell or give away 100 million Bibles every year.

As noted, religious books sell but there is evidence that they are more gifted than read. Such books comprise 4.3 percent of all book sales (obviously, the Bible itself, a confirmation or holiday present, makes up more than half that percentage). In addition, as the Bible Study shows, the decline in Bible reading among Christians has frightened them into social-media activism with apps such as www.topverses.com whose quotations seem to placate millennial angst with a little “secular" hearthlight.

Sell one book, for instance, and you get social-media activism. Say it again: Secular folk rule. Though I hate to use the tribal pronoun, our medicine is not Wiccan. Our neuroscience is not Voodoo. Our Peterbilt truckers need not follow the Bermon on the Mount to deliver pallets of Barbies to Wal-Mart. Our musicians, artists, filmmakers, and writers rarely follow Christian tenets; our tastes are broad, our experimentation constant, our sensibilities adaptive. And, it shouldn't be lost on anyone, that it took the "secular" formation of written language to create the religious loophole, the Bible, whereby God's minions could illustrate and make contractual his laws.

We live in a secular country, though, out of temperament or tradition, we don't call it that. I find no comparison between churches and art venues (concert halls, music festivals, museums) where the latter draws tens of millions more participant-worshippers than the former. Moreover, we're wise not to call ourselves "secular voters" in the way evangelical voters are labeled or self-label. Secularism's richness is violated when it's labeled or tradition, we don't call it that. I find no comparison between churches and art venues (concert halls, music festivals, museums) where the latter draws tens of millions more participant-worshippers than the former. Moreover, we're wise not to call ourselves "secular voters" in the way evangelical voters are labeled or self-label. Secularism's richness is violated when it's labeled as a cosmic entity. The church's platform of social justice and nonviolent resistance, one of many inspirations for Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., is fine by me. I'd rather think of Christ as a Black Panther than a cosmic entity.
Women, and other sinners, are no longer prosecuted by a dunking pond for their "hysteria," as in Salem, Massachusetts, or enslaved by state-sanctioned rape, pregnancy, and infant abduction, as in "The Handmaid's Tale".

To end, I cite this among many remarkably pungent insights in My Bright Abyss (2013), by Christian Wiman, a book of radical theological semi-certainty: "It seems a lot easier to posit a concrete thing between ourselves and God, a specific and potentially eradicable sin, than to live in the mental storm of modern faith, in which faith itself is always the issue." Where to begin? Wiman, of the Protestant direct-to-God ilk, finds that the constant societal yammering about faith gets in the way of numinous experience, shall we say, the more pagan means of relating to the divine. (Think of the backsliding evangelicals, the majority, who are confused about what their creed and name should be.) Thus, many of the faith-based want to avoid tossing Glory-To-God around, for it leads to what Wiman would call mere religious concurrence, "intellectual assent" to a belief. Not felt, not known—Do you believe, or don’t you? An issue that, frankly, terrifies Christians and annoys the rest of us without end.

I, too, grow tired of their issue. That’s why I’d prefer to exit the issue game altogether, declare victory and move on. (I’m just not sure how.) Besides, faith, anymore, has graduated from a socio-cultural problem to an individual one. We wrongly make its surfeit or its lack into a political grudge match. Understand that if we call ourselves secularists, then we risk making secularism the issue. Such is the outcome, what evangelical leaders would love us to do. Have it out, a new Civil War: the faithful white hats (red states) v. the apostate black hats (blue states). No thanks. The game, of course, is already on. If we identify as secular voters, our misguided brothers will say we are engaging in identity politics, which is what we mock such opinions throw at those who hold such opinions. I’m also trying to avoid those politics, so damaging to free speech. The thing I care about is keeping the secularist’s identity a choice between religious and public schools. Like the DNA of humans and chimps, those two schools share ninety-six percent of their DNA.

We don’t hold hospitals or public colleges or national/state/local elections or the pharmaceutical giants or the automobile/airline megapolises or the electrical grid or the overlords of our stockpile of nuclear weapons to a “choice” in the “beliefs” of those who run such apparatuses, whose directors, by the way, are there to serve the needs of the people and the systems those people have created, certainly not their own moral theology.

Why is making this point both so obvious and so necessary?

To shore up my case, here’s a pragmatic analogy. Daycare for children—and I don’t mean the adult kind that goes on in the White House. More specifically, Christian daycare. What would this look like? (I’m leaving aside the legal question of whether the owners could discriminate against nonreligious people as clients. One’s religious-based daycare would need to be open to all, yes?) As such, however, this daycare I’m imagining follows Christian principles: obeisance to a sky god and a revered savior; girls subservient to boys (pinks and blues enforced); hymn singing; Bible maxims that illustrate club do’s and don’ts; sermonic dips into apocalyptic horrors like the Rapture, but not climate change; and more.

Leave all that aside—fun but beside the point. There are dozen of other requirements for running a daycare center: the facility’s hygiene, inspected yearly; the pay and benefits for the teachers and helpers; the structural integrity measured by fire, capacity, and security codes; the required insurance; the safety of the monkey bars and merry-go-rounds; the soft playground turf; staff training in first-aid and conflict resolution; and a whole lot more requirements, some of which Republicans and their Christian friends say handcuff entrepreneurs and censor religious intent.

Stiff regulations (or call it a common-sense) necessary to run such a facility well, however, has nothing to do with the faith or the non-faith of its owners. Economically, the daycare center has to be viable business; it must make money to stay alive. This last suggests that any way the center chooses to market itself, it must monetize its values or else risk failing.

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So given the safe, clean, of its owners. (I’m just not sure how.) Besides, faith, anymore, has graduated from a socio-cultural problem to an individual one. We wrongly make its surfeit or its lack into a political grudge match. Understand that if we call ourselves secularists, then we risk making secularism the issue. Such is the outcome, what evangelical leaders would love us to do. Have it out, a new Civil War: the faithful white hats (red states) v. the apostate black hats (blue states). No thanks. The game, of course, is already on. If we identify as secular voters, our misguided brothers will say we are engaging in identity politics, which is what we mock such opinions throw at those who hold such opinions. I’m also trying to avoid those politics, so damaging to free speech. The thing I care about is keeping the secularist’s identity...
Moncure Conway, in whose honour we are assembled today, devoted his life to two great objects: freedom of thought and freedom of the individual. In regard to both these objects, something has been gained since his time, but something also has been lost. New dangers, somewhat different in form from those of past ages, threaten both kinds of freedom, and unless a vigorous and vigilant public opinion can be aroused in defence of them, there will be much less of both a hundred years hence than there is now. My purpose in this address is to emphasize the new dangers and to consider how they can be met.

Let us begin by trying to be clear as to what we mean by “free thought.” This expression has two senses. In its narrower sense it means thought which does not accept the dogmas of traditional religion. In this sense a man is a “free thinker” if he is not a Christian or a Mussulman or a Buddhist or a Shintoist or a member of any of the other bodies of men who accept some inherited orthodoxy. In Christian countries a man is called a “free thinker” if he does not decidedly believe in God, though this would not suffice to make a man a “free thinker” in a Buddhist country.

I do not wish to minimize the importance of free thought in this sense. I am myself a dissenter from all known religions, and I hope that every kind of religious belief will die out. I do not believe that, on the balance, religious belief has been a force for good. Although I am prepared to admit that in certain times and places it has had some good effects, I regard it as belonging to the infancy of human reason, and to a stage of development which we are now outgrowing.

But there is also a wider sense of “free thought,” which I regard as of still greater importance. Indeed, the harm done by traditional religions seems chiefly traceable to the fact that they have prevented free thought in this wider sense. The wider sense is not so easy to define as the narrower, and it will be well to spend some little time in trying to arrive at its essence.

When we speak of anything as “free,” our meaning is not definite unless we can say what it is free from. Whatever or whoever is “free” is not subject to some external compulsion, and to be precise we ought to say what this kind of compulsion is. Thus thought is “free” when it is free from certain kinds of outward control which are often present. Some of these kinds of control which must be absent if thought is to be “free” are obvious, but others are more subtle and elusive.

To begin with the most obvious, thought is not “free” when legal penalties are incurred by the holding or not holding of certain opinions, or by giving expression to one’s belief or lack of belief on certain matters. Very few countries in the world have as yet even this elementary kind of freedom. In England, under the Blasphemy Laws, it is illegal to express disbelief in the Christian religion, though in practise the law is not set in motion against the well-to-do. It is also illegal to teach what Christ taught on the subject of non-resistance. Therefore, whoever wishes to avoid becoming a criminal must profess to agree with Christ’s teaching, but must avoid saying what that teaching was. In America no one can enter the country without first solemnly declaring that he disbelieves in anarchism and polygamy; and, once inside, he must also disbelieve in communism. In Japan it is illegal to express disbelief in the divinity of the Mikado. It will thus be seen that a voyage round the world is a perilous adventure. A Mohammedan, a Tolstoyan, a Bolshevist, or a Christian cannot undertake it without at some point becoming a criminal, or holding his tongue about what he considers important truths. This, of course, applies only to steerage-passengers; saloon-passengers are allowed to believe whatever they please, provided they avoid offensive obtrusiveness.

It is clear that the most elementary condition, if thought is to be free, is the absence of legal penalties for the expression of opinions. No great country has yet reached to this level, although most of them think they have. The opinions which are still persecuted strike the majority as so monstrous and immoral that the general principle of toleration cannot be held to apply to them. But this is exactly the same view as that which made possible the tortures of the Inquisition. There was a time when Protestantism seemed as wicked as Bolshevism seems now. Please do not infer from this remark that I am either a Protestant or a Bolshevist.

Legal penalties are, however, in the modern world, the least of the obstacles to freedom of thought. The two great obstacles are economic penalties and distortion of evidence. It is clear that thought is not free if the profession of certain opinions makes it impossible to earn a living. It is clear also that thought is not free if all the arguments on one side of a controversy are perpetually presented as attractively as possible, while the arguments on the other side can only be discovered by diligent search. Both these obstacles exist in every large country known to me, except China, which is the last refuge of freedom. It is these obstacles with which I shall be concerned — their present magnitude, the likelihood of their increase, and the possibility of their diminution.

We may say that thought is free when it is exposed to free competition among beliefs — i.e., when all beliefs are able to state their case, and no legal or pecuniary advantages or disadvantages attach to beliefs. This is an ideal which, for various reasons, can never be fully attained. But it is possible to approach very much nearer to it than we do at present.

Three incidents in my own life will serve to show how, in modern England, the scales are weighted in favour of Christianity. My reason for mentioning them is that many people do not at all realize the disadvantages to which avowed agnosticism still exposes people.

The first incident belongs to a very early stage in my life. My father was a freethinker, but died when I was only three years old. Wishing me to be brought up without superstition, he appointed two freethinkers as my guardians. The courts, however, set aside his will, and had me educated in the Christian faith. I am afraid the result was disappointing, but that was not the fault of the law. If he had directed that I should be educated as a Christian, I would have been a Christian; but it is exactly the same view as that which made possible the tortures of the Inquisition.

The second incident occurred in the year 1910. I had at that time a desire to stand for Parliament as a Liberal, and the Whips recommended me to a certain constituency.
I addressed the Liberal Association, who ex pressed them- selves favourably, and my adoption seemed certain. But, on being questioned by a small inner caucus, I admit ted that I was an agnostic. They asked whether the fact would come out, and I said it probably would. They asked whether I should be willing to go through a canvass, and I replied that I should not. Consequently, they se lected another candidate, who was duly elected, has been in Parliament ever since, and is a member of the present Government.

The third incident occurred immediately afterwards. I was invited by Trinity College, Cambridge, to become a lecturer, but not a Fellow. The difference is not pecu niary; it is that a Fellow has a voice in the government of the College, and can not be dispossessed during the terms of his Fellowship except for grave immorality. The chief reason for not offering me a Fellowship was that the clerical party did not wish to add to the anti-clerical vote. The result was that they were able to dismiss me in 1916, when they decided that the War had not been dependent on my lectureship, I should have starved. These three incidents illustrate different kinds of dis advantages attaching to avowed free-thinking even in modern England. Any other avowed freethinker could supply similar incidents from his personal experience, of ten of a far more serious character. The net result is that people who are not well-to-do dare not be frank about their religious beliefs.

Moreover, not only or even chiefly in regard to reli gion that there is lack of freedom. Belief in communism, or free love handicaps a man much more than agnosti cism. Not only is it a disadvantage to hold those views, or free love handicaps a man much more than agnosti cism. Not only is it a disadvantage to hold those views, but it is very much more difficult to obtain for the ar dogmas of those in power. Thus rational doubt alone, which would have grown into a mysterious dogma not understood by anybody. Ultimately the truth or false hood of his doctrine would be decided on the battlefield, without the collection of any fresh evidence for or against it. This method is the logical outcome of William James’s will-to-believe. What is wanted is not the will-to-believe, but the wish to find out, which is its exact opposite. If it is admitted that a condition of rational doubt would be desirable, it becomes important to inquire how it can be promoted. Is there any method of increasing the de gree of truth in our beliefs are well-known; they consist in vagueness and error. The methods of increasing the de grees of truth in our beliefs are well-known; they consist in using the arm of the man who has the opposite bias, and cultivating a readiness to discuss from the State, even if it is to be supported wholly by private funds. A recent law decrees that a license shall not be granted to any school “where it shall appear that the instruction proposed to be given includes the teaching of the doctrine that organized governments shall be the true attitude of science.

LEGAL PENALTIES ARE, HOWEVER, IN THE MODERN WORLD, THE LEAST OF THE OBSTACLES TO FREEDOM OF THOUGHT.

I AM MYSELF A DISSENTER FROM ALL KNOWN RELIGIONS, AND I HOPE THAT EVERY KIND OF RELIGIOUS BELIEF WILL DIE OUT.

have found it tainted with lily-livered pacifism, and pro claimed it a mere dodge for escaping military service. All the old-fashioned professors would have approached Scotland Yard to get the importation of his writings pro hibited. Teachers favourable to him would have been dismissed. He, meantime, would have captured the Gov ernment of some backward country, where it would have become illegal to teach anything except his doctrine which would have grown into a mysterious dogma not understood by anybody. Ultimately the truth or false hood of his doctrine would be decided on the battlefield, without the collection of any fresh evidence for or against it. This method is the logical outcome of William James’s will-to-believe. What is wanted is not the will-to-believe, but the wish to find out, which is its exact opposite. If it is admitted that a condition of rational doubt would be desirable, it becomes important to inquire how it can be promoted. Is there any method of increasing the degree of truth in our beliefs are well-known; they consist in vagueness and error. The methods of increasing the degrees of truth in our beliefs are well-known; they consist in using the arm of the man who has the opposite bias, and cultivating a readiness to discuss
be overthrown by force, violence, or unlawful means.” As the New Republic points out, there is no limitation to this or that organized government. The law therefore would have made it illegal, during the war, to teach the doctrine that the Kaiser’s Government should be overthrown by force; and, since then, the support of Kolchak or Denikin against the Soviet Government would have been illegal. Such consequences, of course, were not intended, and result only from bad draughtsmanship. What was intended appears from another law passed at the same time, applying to teachers in State schools. This law provides that certificates permitting persons to teach in such schools shall be issued only to those who have “shown satisfactorily” that they are “loyal” and obedient! to “the Government of this State and of the United States,” and shall be refused to those who have advocated, no matter where or when, “a form of government other than the government of this State or of the United States.” The committee which framed these laws, as quoted by the New Republic, laid it down that the teacher who “does not approve of the present social system … must surrender his office,” and that “no person who is not eager to combat the theories of social change should be entrusted with the task of fitting the young and old for the responsibilities of citizenship.” Thus, according to the law of the State of New York, Christ and George Washington were too degraded morally to be fit for the education of the young. If Christ were to go to New York and say, “Suffer the little children to come unto me,” the President of the New York School Board would reply: “Sir, I see no evidence that you are eager to combat theories of social change. Indeed, I have heard it said that you advocate what you call the kingdom of heaven, whereas this country, thank God, is a Republic. It is clear that the government of your kingdom of heaven would differ materially from that of New York State, therefore no children will be allowed access to you.” If he failed to make this reply, he would not be doing his duty as a functionary entrusted with the administration of the law.

The effect of such laws is very serious. Let it be granted, for the sake of argument, that the government and the social system in the State of New York are the best that have ever existed on this planet; yet even then both persons who do not approve of it would have to resign. The law decrees that the teachers shall all be either hypocrites or fools.

The growing danger exemplified by the New York law is that resulting from the monopoly of power in the hands of a single organization, whether the State or a trust or federation of trusts. In the case of education, the power is in the hands of the State, which can prevent the young from hearing of any doctrine which it dislikes. I believe there are still some people who think that a democratic State is scarcely distinguishable from a despotism. This, however, is a delusion. The State is a collection of officials, different for different purposes, drawing comfortable incomes so long as the status quo is preserved. The only alteration they are likely to desire in the status quo is an increase of bureaucracy and the power of bureaucrats. It is, therefore, natural that they should take advantage of such opportunities as war-excitement to acquire inquisitorial powers over their employees, involving the right to inflict starvation upon any subordinate who opposes them. In matters of the mind, such as education, this state of affairs is fatal. It puts an end to all possibility of progress or freedom or intellectual initiation. Yet it is the natural result of allowing the whole of elementary education to fall under the sway of a single organization.

Religious toleration, to a certain extent, has been won because people have ceased to consider religion as important as it was once thought to be. But in politics and economics, which have taken the place formerly occupied by religion, there is a growing tendency to persecution, which is not by any means confined to one party. The persecution of opinion in Russia is more severe than in any capitalist country. I met in Petrograd an eminent Russian poet, Alexander Blok, who has since died as the result of privations. The Bolsheviks allowed him to teach aesthetics, but he complained that they insisted on his teaching the subject “from a Marxian point of view.” He had been at a loss to discover how the theory of rhythmics was connected with Marxism, although, to avoid starvation, he had done his best to find out. Of course, it has been impossible in Russia ever since the Bolsheviks came into power to print anything critical of the dogmas upon which their regime is founded.

The examples of America and Russia illustrate the
by Howard Bloom

There will not be any place left for the camp of kufr [for unbelievers] to exist on the Earth, not even as humbled dhimmi subjects [second-class citizens] living amongst the Muslims.

—Qisa bin Laden, 2004

THE STRUGGLE FOR EUROPE

"...dear youth of Islam everywhere,...dear knights of Muhammad the Conqueror,...let your supplies be continuous so that you may...[continue] fighting steadfastly the treacherous Romans..."
If population trends continue, by the year 2050, Britain will be a majority Muslim nation.

has turned from an instinctual response to an overt pow-
er play. It’s the battle of opposing reproductive strategies that population biologists call “r” and “K.” The r repro-
ductive strategy involves having lots of kids and gambling their lives…often in anticipation of violence. The opposite of r is the K strategy. K relies on having just a few kids, investing in them, protecting them mightily. The r and K instincts appear in everything from “bacte-
ria, flies, mice, weeds, and rabbits” to guppies, minnows, voles…and to human beings. In fact, these reproductive tactics sometimes shape the very foundations of human culture.

The battle in America between pro-abortion and an-
ti-abortion forces, for example, is a battle between op-
posing reproductive strategies. More to the point are the reproductive strategies that may help militant Islam achieve its ancient goal of returning “to Europe as a con-
quorer and victor.”

The Muslim population explosion is giving Islam’s Eu-
ropean community a “youth bulge,” a disproportionate number of young people. Of the leaders of Europe’s roughly 45 million Muslims very openly want to use these youths to pick up where the conquerors of Constantino-
ple left off. London-based Sheikh Omar Bakri Mohamed
made a promise before the British threw him out of their land: “We will remodel this country in an Islamic image. We will replace the Bible with the Qur’an.”

What’s more, the young men and women of Europe-
an Islam are increasingly shedding their identification with the West. Even if they’re still British in
culture, even if their parents were born in Europe, they are em-
bracing a global Islamic identity. Take the case of Omar 
Abaaoud, who moved from Morocco to Belgium in 1975, started a clothing store in Brussels’ Molenbeek district, did well, then opened a second store. Abaaoud sent his son, Abdelhamid, to an upscale school. He explains that “Our family owes everything to this country.” Brussels

If you can kill a kafir [unbelieving] American or 
 Pace this one good example of a multi-genera-
tional cause. Peace is one good example of a multi-genera-
tional ideal in the West. We’ve dreamed of achieving peace since the prophet Isaiah imagined a day when the na-
tions “shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks.” And Jesus said, “bless-
ed are the peacemakers: for they will be called children of God.”

Bakri Muhammad was using one of
Muhammad’s favorite tools for con-
test terror. And another: competitive procreation.
In 1693, William Penn, the Quaker founder of Pennsylvania, suggested a “European League, or Confederacy” complete with a European Parliament.

Then the peace movement went from philosophy to activism. The first national American Peace Society was set up in 1829, with thirteen members, and the first national American Peace Society was set up in 1831, with thirty members. The society, which was called the American Peace Society, was modeled on the British Peace Society, and it quickly grew to have over a thousand members. By 1834, the society had over six thousand members. The society was supported by a number of prominent figures, including President James Madison, who was a member of the society and a strong supporter of peace. The society was also supported by a number of other prominent figures, including President James Madison, who was a member of the society and a strong supporter of peace.

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Race remains an enduring feature of American life, even as the fight for racial equality has made significant progress. Recent events have, however, put to bed the illusion that the United States had entered into a post-racial era with the election of Barack Obama. Today, events that would have seemed familiar more than a century ago continue to dot the headlines: white supremacists waving Confederate flags, racist violence and intimidation toward African Americans, demands for drastic restrictions on immigration, and politicians stoking fears of foreign menaces for their own electoral gains.

The late nineteenth century—known as the “Golden Age of Freethought”—saw atheists, freethinkers, and other religious dissidents begin to organize themselves into a mass movement to spread their message and advocate for their right to freedom of expression. The unique vantage point of these figures—pushed to the margins of their societies by their heretical religious views—often meant that they had novel views on political and social questions, including racial issues.

Probably the most famous freethinker in this period—and one of the most outspoken against racial injustice—was Robert Ingersoll (1833-1899), who was billed as the “Great Agnostic” when he delivered popular lectures to large audiences across the country. Ingersoll’s oratorical style was so renowned that even Christians flocked to hear him speak.

Born in Dresden, New York, Ingersoll was raised in a household where both parents were abolitionists. Like so many other freethinkers, Ingersoll’s father was a preacher, yet his father’s controversial anti-slavery views meant that the family frequently bounced around from town to town as his father struggled to secure a stable congregation. As a young man, Ingersoll eventually settled in Illinois, becoming a lawyer. During this time, Ingersoll was actually a supporter of the Democratic Party and campaigned against the Republican Abraham Lincoln in the 1860 elections.

Upon the outbreak of the Civil War, Ingersoll organized and led three regiments, gaining the title of Colonel, which he would use throughout his life. While Ingersoll was skeptical of Lincoln’s leadership early on in the war, by the middle of 1863, he was thoroughly behind Lincoln and the Republican Party. Ingersoll’s brother Eben also ran successfully for Congress as a Republican in 1864 and Ingersoll encouraged him to take a strong line in eliminating any traces of slavery in the South. It was around the time of his shift in political parties that Ingersoll also began to give up his religious views as he read canonical freethought authors like Thomas Paine, and married his wife, Eva, who came from a freethinking family.

In the aftermath of the Civil War, the period known as Reconstruction saw attempts to emancipate and uplift former slaves and to rebuild the South. Soon after the war, in 1867, Ingersoll gave a speech in Galesburg, Illinois to a group of blacks, who requested that Ingersoll, then the state’s Attorney General who had a growing reputation for stirring oratory, address them. In the talk, Ingersoll stated, “to-day I am in favor of giving you every right that I claim for myself.” Ingersoll acknowledged the terrible history of slavery and expressed contrition for it, “I feel like asking your forgiveness for the wrongs that my race has inflicted upon yours,” he said. “If, in the future, the wheel of fortune should take a turn, and you should in any country have white men in your power, I pray you not to execute the villainy we have taught you.”

Ingersoll would continue his support for the rights of African Americans as the hopeful period of Reconstruction came to a close and their newly won rights began to be clawed back. An 1883 decision by the Supreme Court had found the protections of the 1875 Civil Rights Act unconstitutional. This act had ensured equal access for members of all races to hotels, trains, theaters, and similar venues. With the act struck down, this helped open the way for the onset of segregation. Ingersoll denounced the court’s decision as “a disgrace to the age in which we live” and criticized his fellow Republicans for not doing more to stand up for the rights of blacks. To Ingersoll, “drawing a color line” was “as cruel as the lash of slavery.”

In his public speeches, Ingersoll took on racist ideas more generally. “I pity the man,” Ingersoll said in an 1876 speech, “I execrate and hate the man who has only to boast that he is white. Whenever I am reduced to that necessity, I believe shame will make me red instead of white.” In another speech, he declared, “I am the inferior of any man whose rights I trample under foot. Men are not superior by reason of the accidents of race or color. They are superior who have the best heart—the best brain. Superiority is born of honesty, of virtue, of charity, and above all, of the love of liberty.” One cannot help but sympathize with Ingersoll’s feelings. The unique vantage point of these figures—pushed to the margins of their societies by their heretical religious views—often meant that they had novel views on political and social questions, including racial issues.

If, in the future, the wheel of fortune should take a turn, and you should in any country have white men in your power, I pray you not to execute the villainy we have taught you.”

Ingersoll’s reputation as a crusader against racism was recognized when a group of “colored Freethinkers” met in 1901 in Washington, D.C. to celebrate the life of Ingersoll, who had passed away two years earlier. One speaker at the event praised Ingersoll’s humanity, saying: “Ingersoll was one of the first fruits of the evolution of humanity away from tribe and clan and race into a manhood bounded only by humanity.” A resolution at the meeting was passed, saying Ingersoll’s “sympathies were boundless, they were confined by no narrow limitations of race, class, or sex. All men who suffered wrong found in Ingersoll an advocate and champion.”

Further indicative of Ingersoll’s views was his famous meeting with Frederick Douglass (1818-1895), the escaped slave and abolitionist. Douglass was probably the most well-known African American in the nineteenth-century United States. In Douglass’s autobiography, he recounted meeting Ingersoll sometime in the 1860s or 70s. Douglass needed to stop in Peoria, Illinois—Ingersoll’s town—while traveling on a lecture tour. Douglass feared that he would be unable to find a place to stay in the town due to racism, but a friend suggested he look up Ingersoll.

“Men are not superior by reason of the accidents of race or color.”

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As it happened, Douglass did find accommodation there, but nonetheless resolved to look up Ingersoll. As Douglass wrote, “I received a welcome from Mr. Ingersoll—that, but nonetheless, resolved to look up Ingersoll. As stranger, and one which I can never forget or fail to appreciate.” Douglass concluded that his view of “infidels” had changed following the meeting: “Incidents of this character have greatly tended to liberalize my views as to the value of creeds in estimating the character of men. They have brought me to the conclusion that genuine goodness is the same, whether found inside or outside the church, and that to be an ‘infidel’ no more proves a man to be selfish, mean, and wicked, than to be evangelical proves him to be honest, just, and humane.”

Indeed, the scholar Zachary McLeod has recently suggested that Douglass was likely a covert freethinker as well. In McLeod’s analysis of Douglass’s early autobiography, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845), he shows that Douglass used numerous metaphors to indicate his lack of belief. Most clearly, Douglass described a fellow slave advising him to carry a magic root that would spare him a beating from Edward Covey, a white farmer known for his use of violence to break slaves’ wills. In the narrative, the root was not literal, but metaphorical: in the Bible, a “root” was a frequent metaphor for Jesus. Initially, in Douglass’s telling, the root seemed to work—Covey did not whip him the first day, likely because it was the Sabbath. The next day, however, the root failed the test as Covey attempted to whip Douglass. The two engaged in a violent struggle and Covey eventually backed off. He decided not to turn Douglass into the authorities since it would ruin Covey’s reputation as a slave breaker. In McLeod’s argument, this incident helps to symbolize Douglass’s rejection of Christianity. He recontexted the “root” and rather than passively accept his fate, he violently resisted.

The historian Christopher Cameron, who is currently writing a book on the history of African American freethinkers, gives further evidence for Douglass’s nonbelief. Throughout his life, Douglass criticized the hypocrisy of Christians who used their faith as a cover for their support of slavery. But Douglass did not spare African American Christianity either, which he thought was too focused on other-worldly matters. In this view, hoping for an afterlife where all injustices would be rectified actually took away the will to fight injustice in the here and now. Indeed, Douglass said that men—not God—should be thanked for the end of slavery.

Anxieties about immigration have likewise been a recurring feature of American life. In the second half of the nineteenth century, Americans’ fears turned to the Chinese, who had begun to arrive in large numbers at mid-century, primarily to work on the transcontinental railroad. When this was completed in 1869, Chinese workers moved into other industries. Furthermore, the railroad enabled products to be shipped quickly across long distances, raising fears that local manufacturing could be put out of business. Familiar stereotypes about the Chinese—as with other immigrant groups—abounded: they practiced a strange religion, they had no desire to integrate into American society, and they took away Americans’ jobs. These concerns fueled a growing movement that called for a restriction on Chinese immigration. The first victory for this movement came in 1882, with the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act, which restricted all Chinese immigration for ten years. A further measure, passed in 1892, was the Geary Act, which extended the ban and tightened previous loopholes. Those Chinese who were in the United States, meanwhile, faced violence and discrimination from locals.

Robert Ingersoll was one of the loudest voices among freethinkers to speak up for the Chinese. In 1893, Ingersoll wrote a piece in the *North American Review*, which appeared alongside a counter article, written by Congressman Thomas Geary, the architect of the 1892 act. In the article, Ingersoll spoke eloquently about the ways xenophobia shrank people’s minds and limited tolerance for differences. In a passage that resonates even today, Ingersoll wrote:

*Throughout his life, Douglass criticized the hypocrisy of Christians who used their faith as a cover for their support of slavery.*

*The average American, like the average man of any country, has but little imagination. People who speak a different language, worship some other god, or wear clothing unlike his own, are beyond the horizon of his sympathy. He cares but little or nothing for the sufferings or misfortunes of those who are of a different complexion or of another race. His imagination is not powerful enough to recognize the human being, in spite of peculiarities. Instead of this he looks upon every difference as an evidence of inferiority, and for the inferior he has but little if any feeling. If these inferior people claim equal rights he feels insulted, and for the purpose of establishing his own superiority samples on the rights of the so-called inferior.*

He also pointed out that American history was full of
Robert Ingersoll was one of the loudest voices among freethinkers to speak up for the Chinese.

eamples of predictions that such-and-such immigrants could never become integrat-
ed into American society. It used to be said, for example, that the Irish or the Italians could never truly become American. History showed, however, that such groups in time thrived as they became part of the fabric of the country. There was no reason, Ingersoll argued, to think that the case of the Chinese would be any different.

Ingersoll also mocked the irony of sending missionar-
ies to convert the so-called uncivilized Chinese when the Chinese in America faced violence and persecution: “In China our missionaries tell the followers of Confucius about the love and forgiveness of Christians, and when the Chinese come here they are robbed, assaulted, and often murdered. Would it not be a good thing for the Methodists to civilize our own Christians to such a de-
gree that they would not mur-
der a man simply because he belongs to another race and worships other gods?” It’s possible that Ingersoll’s opposition to the Chinese ex-
clusion movement came from meeting a Chinese-American named Wong Chin Foo (1847-1898), whose life is described in Scott D. Seligman’s admirable 2013 book, The First Chinese American: The Remarkable Life of Wong Chin Foo. Wong was born in China and as a child lived with an American missionary family. He came to the United States a Christian, but soon lost his faith, eventually becoming a freethinker.

Wong strongly criticized opponents of Chinese exclu-
sion and clashed in public debate with the Irish Amer-
ican Denis Kearney, who was one of the leaders of the anti-Chinese movement. From his home in New York City, Wong also ran a newspaper, the Chinese American, which was perhaps one of the first uses of the term “Chinese-American.” In 1879, Wong at-
tended a major freethought convention orga-
nized by Ingersoll. He might have met Inger-
soll there and afterward was full of praise for the Great Agnostic, explaining that Ingersoll was “doing nearly as much good for Ameri-
ca as Confucius had done for China, though the identical truths of his philosophy were preached by Confucius over 2,400 years ago.”

Wong was outspoken about his irreligion. In 1886 and 1887, the North American Review ran a series of articles about different religious opinions with titles like, “Why Am I a Jew?” or “Why Am I a Free Religionist?” Wong penned his own contribution to the magazine, which was entitled, “Why Am I A Heathen?” In the article he criticized the hypocrisy of Western pretensions to racial superiority. A common refrain among white Americans was that the Chinese were backward heathens, but Wong subversively noted that the Chinese “are so heathenish as to no longer persecute men simply on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude, but treat them all ac-
cording to their individu-

Left James F. Morton (1870–1940)
Opposite THE TRUTHSEEKER, MAY 22, 1915

Morton was a passionate opponent of racism and frequently argued against it in the pages of the Truth Seeker.

to the Truth Seeker, which was then published out of New York. The following decade, Morton became an adherent of the Bahá’í faith. Morton also threw himself into other eccentric and utopian causes, includ-
ing a promotion of the Esperanto language, designed in the late nineteenth century to be easily learned by speakers of any language, something that would in the-
ory help to bridge linguistic divisions in the world and eventually bring about world peace.

Morton was a passionate opponent of racism and fre-
quently argued against it in the pages of the Truth Seeker. One flashpoint occurred over President Theodore Roose-
evelt’s 1901 invitation to Booker T. Washington, a black man, to dine at the White House. For some whites, the idea that a black man could set foot in the White House
Morton further argued that the lessons of evolution—outlined by Charles Darwin a half century earlier—showed that humanity was one species and made talk about distinct races being higher or lower seem absurd.

Ultimately, Morton suggested that the path to a higher level of civilization was blocked by racial prejudice. "Race prejudice must die," he concluded, so "that each of the races now cursed by its envenomed influence may truly live."

It would be wrong to suggest that no progress has been made since the late nineteenth century with regard to the fight for racial equality. But because significant progress can be made only if it allows us to overlook the persistence of racism today or to cavalier about the resurgence of white supremacists into the public square.

In the same way that atheists and freethinkers’ fearless questioning of social taboos meant that they advocated for radical positions in their own times, like democracy, freedom of expression, anti-slavery, and equal rights for all regardless of race or gender. Today, however, this same skeptical disposition can have corrosive effects, leading some, for example, to question the contemporary consensus of racial equality. This may be one reason that some secular people have been attracted by the so-called alt-right movement, most obviously the one that comprises Richard Spencer, who professes to be an atheist.

In the face of this, let us ensure that the historical strand of anti-racism within the freethought tradition continues to remain triumphant.

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Why RELIGION is not GOING AWAY and SCIENCE will not DESTROY IT

In 1966, just over 50 years ago, the distinguished Canadian-born anthropologist Anthony Wallace confidently predicted the global demise of religion at the hands of an advancing science: ‘belief in supernatural powers is doomed to die out, all over the world, as a result of the increasing adequacy and diffusion of scientific knowledge’.

By Peter Harrison

Wallace’s vision was not exceptional. On the contrary, the modern social sciences, which took shape in 19th-century western Europe, took their own recent historical experience of secularization as a universal model. An assumption lay at the core of the social sciences: either presuming or sometimes predicting that all cultures would eventually converge on something roughly approximating secular, Western, liberal democracy. Then something closer to the opposite happened.

Not only has secularism failed to continue its steady global march but countries as varied as Iran, India, Israel, Algeria and Turkey have either had their secular governments replaced by religious ones, or have seen the rise of influential religious nationalist movements. Secularism, as predicted by the social sciences, has failed.

To be sure, this failure is not unqualified. Many Western countries continue to witness decline in religious belief and practice. The most recent census data released in Australia, for example, shows that 30 per cent of the population identify as having ‘no religion’, and that this percentage is increasing. International surveys confirm comparatively low levels of religious commitment in western Europe and Australasia. Even the United States, a long-time source of embarrassment for the secularization thesis, has seen a rise in unbelief. The percentage of atheists in the US now sits at an all-time high (if ‘high’ is the right word) of around 3 per cent. Yet, for all that, globally, the overall pattern for the immediate future will be something closer to the opposite happened.

The US represents a different cultural context, where it might seem that the key issue is a conflict between literal readings of Genesis and key features of evolutionary history. But in fact, much of the creationist discourse centers on moral values. In the US case too, we see anti-evolutionism motivated at least in part by the assumption that evolutionary theory is a stalking horse for secular materialism and its attendant moral commitments. As in India and Turkey, secularism is actually hurting science.

In brief, global secularization is not inevitable and, when it does happen, it is not caused by science. Further, when the attempt is made to use science to advance secularism, the results can damage science. The thesis that ‘science causes secularization’ simply fails the empirical test, and enlisting science as an instrument of secularization turns out to be poor strategy. The science and secularism pairing is so awkward that it raises the question: why did anyone think otherwise?

Historically, two related sources advanced the idea that science would displace religion. First, 19th-century progressivist conceptions of history, particularly associated with the French philosopher Auguste Comte, held to a theory of history in which societies pass through three stages—religious, metaphysical and scientific (or ‘positive’). Comte coined the term ‘sociology’ and he wanted to diminish the social influence of religion and replace it with a new science of society. Comte’s influence extended to the ‘young Turks’ and Atatürk.

The 19th century also witnessed the inception of the ‘conflict model’ of science and religion. This was the view that history can be understood in terms of a ‘conflict between two epochs in the evolution of human thought—the theological and the scientific’. This description comes from Andrew Dickson White’s influential A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom (1896), the title of which nicely encapsulates its author’s general theory. White’s work, as well as John William Draper’s earlier History of the Conflict Between Religion and Science (1874), firmly established the conflict thesis as the default way of thinking about the historical relations between science and religion. Both works were translated into multiple languages. Draper’s History went through more than 50 printings in the US alone, was translated into 20 languages and, notably, became a bestseller in the late Ottoman empire, where it informed Atatürk’s understanding that progress meant science superseding religion.

Today, people are less confident that history moves through a series of set stages toward a single destination.
Nor, despite its popular persistence, do most historians of science support the idea of an enduring conflict between science and religion. Renowned collisions, such as the Galileo affair, turned on politics and personalities, not just science and religion. Darwin had significant religious supporters and scientific detractors, as well as vice versa. Many other alleged instances of science-religion conflict have now been exposed as pure inventions. In fact, contrasts to conflict, the historical norm has more often been one of mutual support between science and religion. In its formative years in the 17th century, modern science relied on religious legitimation. During the 18th and 19th centuries, natural theology helped to popularize science.

The conflict model of science and religion offered a mistaken view of the past and, when combined with expectations of secularization, led to a flawed vision of the future. Secularization theory failed at both description and prediction. The real question is why we continue to encounter proponents of science-religion conflict. Many are prominent scientists. It would be superfluous to rehearse Richard Dawkins’s musings on this topic, but he is no means a solitary voice. Stephen Hawking has called for a new war on science, and others of his relative have followed, so that, in 1983, he himself knew, he found himself not entirely among enemies.

He continued his studies in the University of Pennsylvania, and in 1826, after three years' course there, he received from the university the degree of doctor of philosophy. The graduation theses were selected by the medical faculty as worthy of publication. A very few weeks after his graduation Dr. Draper was appointed professor of chemistry, natural philosophy, and physiology in Hampden-Sydney College in Virginia. It is said that he began his original experiments in chemistry and made investigations in novel channels in physiology. He published the results of these studies at the time in the *American Journal of Medical Sciences*. He also wrote much for European magazines, and indeed, nearly all of his earlier writings were first published across the Atlantic. He realized that science was being abandoned because of the backwash of science that was in this country at that time. Indeed, when he first suggested the idea of scientific analysis he was publicly laughed at, and the idea was ridiculed by a prominent gen- eral of Boston. By reason of his extraneous and foreign periodicals, Prof. Draper’s reputation in Euro- pean circles was long before he was widely known in the country.

He found frequently that discoveries which he had made and described to European philosophers were not considered until twenty years after being rediscovered and claimed in this country. To preserve his own credit and reputation he therefore collected those earlier papers in a single volume, which was published under the title "Scientific Monuments," by Harper & Brothers.

Dr. Draper became professor of chemistry and natural philosophy in the University of New York in 1830. He was connected with the University until the time of his death, and with one exception, was the senior professor in the faculty. During the past year the number of sickness, which attended to his duties there, and his son and his son-in- law, the Rev. Mr. Macy, had heard his classes. Draper was one of the founders of the medical department of the university, and in 1865 accepted its chair. In 1861 he was elected president of the medical society of New York. In 1867 he became president of both the scientific and the medical departments.

Perris Hasson is an Australian Laureate Fellow and director of the Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities at the University of Queensland. His most recent book is *The Territories of Science and Religion* (2015), and his edited collection *Narratives of Secularization* (2017). This article is available online at aeo.co.
A film review by Gary Berton

As the percentage of Nones in America increases, it is not surprising that the number of non-believers inside the structures of religion itself is also increasing. A documentary by Leslea Mair, with funding from Canadian sources and the documentary channel, explores this world among those in the clergy who have come to realize they don’t believe in gods. The film follows several members of the Clergy Project, whose stories are told by themselves, some of whose identity is hidden, and the content of the film comes from their stories and struggles. And they are moving the needle, they reveal the contradictions, absurdities, and charades of organized religion, and the personal, social, and intellectual toll upon the 600 members of the Project.

Daniel Dennett and Linda LaScola started the Clergy Project in 2011 in response to this phenomenon of clergy-doubt among the various clergies in the various sects of Christianity. The Clergy Project offers help in employment transition and therapy, and is backed by the Freedom from Religion Foundation and Richard Dawkins’ Foundation for Reason and Science. Both Dennett and Hawkins make appearances in the film.

The main theme of Losing Our Religion is revealing the social and personal bonds that are broken in order to break the bond with superstition. Religion’s main selling point has been its ability to create community and strong social ties independent of religious tenets. Humanity is inherently social, and when the social contract is created from inside an organized religion, with its own traditions church, which includes their entire social network, they realize as well the fraud of the church’s gospel. The “love thy neighbor” only extends to the true believers’ tribe. As Brendon prepares and actually leaves the church, they must struggle to maintain their marriage, and fend off both the onslaught of their “neighbors” in the cult, and the social reacommunication by their once-friends. Parallel to that story, along with anonymous clergy still preaching but struggling to maintain their sanity and livelihood, are the tales of creating the community without the gospel. Oasis and Sunday Assemblies, as examples, are emerging to replace the lost community when people no longer believe, but still yearn for the emotional ties to community which the church provided—like a half-way house to reality. Again, community, in all its manifestations, is central to the human condition, and the church for centuries has played on that emotion. Non-believers are starting to form their own groups, but they still retain elements of belief, but minimizing the dogma. As Engels said of Deism, “an easy way to get rid of religion.” And much of the philosophical content that these alternatives bring up is similar to Deism. As a step towards a rational approach to reality, this is progress, with a half-way house approach.

One statement made by a Clergy Project member struck me as very profound when followed to its logical conclusion: “the church is based on the fear of reality.” One commentator in the film says the Project and the film deal only with Christian sects. All the others are Christian. There are no Islam-ic sect participants, Buddhist nor Jewish. They have to start somewhere. But when organized religion replaces the naturally occurring social compact of a nation or of the human race, and forms the basis of governing, we have seen the disastrous repercussions. There has been a 400 year long struggle to defeat religion’s hold over social bonds and governance, the Clergy Project is another small step.

This struggle is part of a 200 year movement in this country, jump-started by Paine’s The Age of Reason. Many ex-priests and clergymen reversed thinking based on that book and became part of this movement, especially in the 19th century. The Clergy Project is a small part of that movement. One commentator in the film marks today’s activities, like the Sunday Assemblies, or Oasis, or the Clergy Project itself as a beginning, ignoring the long rich history that preceded it. The Clergy Project is more of a way to deal with some of the symptoms that this movement produces, it’s not the tip of the spear. The spear is the continuous progress made by humanity towards embracing science not superstition, which means the tip of the spear is education. A rational, science based political movement is what is necessary to carry us forward in leaps not small steps. In the face of a world-wide reactionary movement, rooted in religious prejudice and fact-less analysis, anti-scientific and racist ideas are being well-funded. In this country, the religious right has seized control, and the backlash against it may yet produce a more rational way to view the world and the fundamental problems stemming from lack of equality and reason, to which the Clergy Project is a welcome addition to that progressive viewpoint. This film is a notable addition to that base of education necessary to continue this epic struggle.

Losing Our Religion Feature length documentary, TRT 86 minutes Written, produced, and directed by Leslea Mair and Leif Kaldor Zoot Pictures http://zootpictures.com
In Memory of Paine

Impressive Decoration Day Services at New Rochelle.

INGERSOLL'S TRIBUTE TO THE AUTHOR-HERO

Freethinkers of New York and Vicinity Address About the Monument of the Great World. "Farming and Lending to the Owls of the Hill."

As our readers have so vividly observed, the order for "Dear Hamilton's" has been filled, and we have the utmost pleasure in announcing that the monument will be erected in the city of New York, in time for the date of the monument's dedication.

The monument will be a fitting tribute to the great man, who is considered by many to be one of the greatest leaders of the American Revolution. It is a monument that will stand as a reminder of the sacrifices made by those who fought for freedom and independence. It is a monument that will inspire future generations to continue the fight for justice and equality.

The monument will be located in Central Park, near the entrance to the park. It will be a grand structure, with a statue of Thomas Paine at its center. The statue will be made of marble, and will stand about 20 feet tall. The monument will also feature a plaque with a description of Paine's life and contributions to American history.

The monument will be dedicated on the 250th anniversary of Paine's birth, on July 14, 2025. The dedication will be a major event, with many dignitaries and dignitaries in attendance. It will be a day of celebration, with music, speeches, and a grand procession.

We urge all Americans to support this monument, and to ensure that it is properly maintained and protected. It is a monument that we can all be proud of, and one that will serve as a reminder of the sacrifices made by those who fought for freedom and independence.

The monument is being built with the help of a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, and with the support of many private donors. It is a project that we can all be proud of, and one that will serve as a reminder of the sacrifices made by those who fought for freedom and independence.

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The Truth Seeker, June 9, 1894.

The face of a man was very familiar to me. It was the face of the man who had been my teacher for many years. He was a kind and gentle man, always ready to help others.

I remember vividly the day when he came to see me. He was very ill, but he still had the strength to carry on. He was holding a book in his hand, and he handed it to me, saying, "Take this book, my son. It is the most important thing you will ever learn.

I opened the book, and I was amazed. It was a book of knowledge and wisdom, and it contained the answers to all my questions. I learned so much from it.

But the most important thing I learned was that the truth is always worth seeking. The truth is a light that guides us through the darkness of ignorance and error. It is the key to unlocking the mysteries of the universe.

I will always remember the kindness and generosity of my teacher. He taught me not only the importance of seeking the truth, but also the importance of sharing it with others.

The Truth Seeker, June 9, 1894.

The newspaper of the day. It was a time of great change, and it was a time when people were searching for the truth. The newspaper was a powerful tool for disseminating information and ideas.

I remember the day when a story about the great leader Thomas Paine was published. He was a brilliant man, and he had a deep understanding of the human condition.

The story told of how he had written a pamphlet called "Common Sense," which had been published in America. It had been a huge success, and it had helped to inspire the American Revolution.

I read the story with great interest, and I was inspired by the courage and vision of Thomas Paine. He had been a true statesman, and his ideas had been a beacon of light in the darkness.

I will always remember the spirit of the American Revolution, and I will always be grateful to Thomas Paine for his contributions to the cause of freedom.

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Mr. W supremacist on the platform.

"Liberty, Science, and Humanitarianism, etc., etc." has been made out and was sold to the market and the proceeds to be used for the support of the cause.

The following was announced for the purpose of the Frederick Federation, that has been received by the Truth Seeker at its offices, in New York City. The following was read: "On Tuesday, June 3, 1894, at 8 o'clock, the meeting of the Truth Seekers will be held at the Providence Hall, for the purpose of petitioning the Governor of the State of New York to allow the sale of the papers, 'The Truth Seeker' and 'The Frederick Messenger.' The meeting will be held at the above date and time. All persons interested are requested to be present.
admirable difficulties. Only the guardians, in Plato’s language, are to think; the rest are to obey, or to follow leaders like a herd of sheep. This doctrine, often unconsciously, has survived the introduction of political democracy, and has radically vitiates all national systems of education.

The country which has succeeded best in giving free play to intelligence is the latest addition to modern civilization, Japan. Elementary education in Japan is said to be admirable from the point of view of instruction. But, in addition to instruction, it has another construction. But, in addition to instruction, it has another important as it was once thought to be. But in politics, political scepticism can save us from this misfortune. The examples of America and Russia illustrate the paradoxical fact that education has become one of the chief obstacles to intelligence and freedom of thought.

There are two quite different evils about propaganda as now practised. On the one hand, its appeal is generally to irrational causes of belief rather than to serious argument; on the other hand, it gives an unfair advantage to those who can obtain most publicity, whether through wealth or through power. For my part, I am inclined to think that too much fuss is sometimes made about the fact that propaganda appeals to emotion rather than to reason. The line between emotion and reason is not so sharp as some people think. Moreover, a clever man could frame a sufficiently rational argument in favour of any position which has any chance of being adopted. There are always good arguments on both sides of any real issue. Definite misstatements of fact can be legitimately objected to but they are by no means necessary. The mere words “Pear’s Soap,” which affirm nothing, cause people to buy that article. If, wherever these words appear, they were replaced by the words “The Labour Party,” millions of people would be led to vote for the Labour party, although the advertisements had claimed no merit for it whatever. But if both sides in a controversy were confined by law to statements which a committee of eminent logicians considered relevant and valid, the main evil of propaganda, as at present conducted, would remain.

Suppose, under such a law, two parties with an equally good case, one of whom had a million pounds to spend on propaganda, while the other had only a hundred thousand. It is obvious that the arguments in favour of the richer party would become more widely known than those in favour of the poorer party, and therefore the richer party would win. This situation is, of course, intensified when one party is the Government. In Russia the Government has an almost complete monopoly of propaganda, but that is not necessary. The advantages which it possesses over its opponents will generally be sufficient to give it the victory, unless it has an exceptionally bad case.

The objection to propaganda is not only its appeal to unreason, but still more the unfair advantage which it gives to the rich and powerful. Equality of opportunity among opinions is essential if there is to be real freedom of thought, and equality of opportunity among opinions can only be secured by elaborate laws directed to that end, which there is no reason to expect to be enacted. The cure is not to be sought primarily in such laws, but in better education and a more sceptical public opinion. For the moment, however, I am not concerned to discuss cures.

(3) ECONOMIC PRESSURE. I have already dealt with some aspects of this obstacle to freedom of thought, but I wish now to deal with it on more general lines, as a danger which is bound to increase unless very definite steps are taken to counteract it. The supreme example of economic pressure applied against freedom of thought is Soviet Russia, where, until, the trade-agreement, the Government could and did inflict starvation upon people whose opinions it disapproved — for example, Kron-kin. But in this respect Russia is only somewhat ahead of other countries. In France, during the Dreyfus affair, any teacher would have lost his position if he had been in favour of Dreyfus at the start or against him at the

WE ARE FACED WITH THE PARADOXICAL FACT THAT EDUCATION HAS BECOME ONE OF THE CHIEF OBSTACLES TO INTELLIGENCE AND FREEDOM OF THOUGHT.

vote for the Labour party, although the advertisements had claimed no merit for it whatever. But if both sides in a controversy were confined by law to statements which a committee of eminent logicians considered relevant and valid, the main evil of propaganda, as at present conducted, would remain. Suppose, under such a law, two parties with an equally good case, one of whom had a million pounds to spend on propaganda, while the other had only a hundred thousand. It is obvious that the arguments in favour of the richer party would become more widely known than those in favour of the poorer party, and therefore the richer party would win. This situation is, of course, intensified when one party is the Government. In Russia the Government has an almost complete monopoly of propaganda, but that is not necessary. The advantages which it possesses over its opponents will generally be sufficient to give it the victory, unless it has an exceptionally bad case.

The objection to propaganda is not only its appeal to unreason, but still more the unfair advantage which it gives to the rich and powerful. Equality of opportunity among opinions is essential if there is to be real freedom of thought, and equality of opportunity among opinions can only be secured by elaborate laws directed to that end, which there is no reason to expect to be enacted. The cure is not to be sought primarily in such laws, but in better education and a more sceptical public opinion. For the moment, however, I am not concerned to discuss cures.

(3) ECONOMIC PRESSURE. I have already dealt with some aspects of this obstacle to freedom of thought, but I wish now to deal with it on more general lines, as a danger which is bound to increase unless very definite steps are taken to counteract it. The supreme example of economic pressure applied against freedom of thought is Soviet Russia, where, until, the trade-agreement, the Government could and did inflict starvation upon people whose opinions it disapproved — for example, Kron-kin. But in this respect Russia is only somewhat ahead of other countries. In France, during the Dreyfus affair, any teacher would have lost his position if he had been in favour of Dreyfus at the start or against him at the
moral, and political — with which they expect their employees to agree, at least outwardly. A man who openly dissents from Christianity, or believes in a relaxation of the marriage laws, or objects to the power of the great corporations, finds America a very uncomfortable country, unless he happens to be an eminent writer. Exactly the same kind of restraints upon freedom of thought are bound to occur in every country where economic organization has been carried to the point of practical monoply. Therefore the safe guarding of liberty in the world which is growing up is far more difficult than it was in the nineteenth century, when free competition was still a reality. Whoever cares about the freedom of the mind must face this situation fully and frankly, realizing the inapplicability of methods which answered well enough while industrialism was in its infancy.

The modern system of propaganda serves which, if they were adopted, would solve almost all social problems. The first is that education should have for one of its aims to teach people only to believe propositions when there is some reason to think, that they are true. The second is that jobs should be given only for fitness to do the work.

The second point first. The habit of considering a man’s religious, moral, and political opinions before appointing him to a post or giving him a job is the modern form of persecution, and it is likely to become quite as efficient as the Inquisition ever was. The old liberties can be legally retained without being of the slightest use. If, in practice, certain opinions lead a man to starve, it is poor comfort to him to know that his opinions are not punishable by law. There is a certain public feeling against starving men for not belonging to the Church ofEngland, or for holding slightly unorthodox opinions in politics. But there is hardly any feeling against the rejection of atheists or Marxists, or even Soviet communists, or men who advocate free love. Such men are thought to be wicked, and it is considered only natural to refuse to employ them. People have hardly yet waked up to the fact that this refusal is as highly industrial a State, amounts to a very rigorous form of persecution.

If this danger were adequately realized, it would be possible torouse public opinion, and to secure that a man’s beliefs should not be considered in appointing him to a post. The protection of minorities is vitally important; and even the most orthodox of us may find himself in a minority some day, so that we all have an interest in restraining the tyranny of majorities. Nothing except public opinion can solve this problem. Socialism would make it somewhat more acute, since it would eliminate the opportunities that now arise.

One of the chief obstacles to intelligence is credulity, and credulity could be enormously diminished by instructions as to the prevalent forms of mendacity.

For example, the art of reading the newspapers should be taught. The school child is told various things which happened a good many years ago, and roused political passions in its day. He should then read to the school-children what was said by the newspapers on one side, what was said by those on the other, and some impartial account of what really happened. He should show how, from the biased account of either side, a practised reader could infer what really happened, and he should make them understand that everything in newspapers is more or less untrue. The cynical scepticism which would result from this teaching would make the children in later life immune from those appeals to idealism by which decent people are induced to further the scheme of scoundrels.

If I am asked how the world is to be induced to adopt these two maxims — namely: (1) that jobs should be given to people on account of their fitness to perform them; (2) that one aim of education should be to cure people of the habit of believing propositions for which there is no evidence — I can only say that it must be done by making that refusal known in every battle. In the more advanced classes, students should be encouraged to count the number of times that Lenin has been assassinated by Trotsky, in order to learn contempt for death. Finally, they should be given a school-history approved by the Government, and asked to infer what a French school history would say about our wars with France. All this would be a far better training in citizenship than the trite moral maxims by which some people believe that civic duty can be inculcated.

It must, I think, be admitted that the evils of the world are due to moral defects quite as much as to lack of intelligence. But the human race has not hitherto discovered any method of eradicating moral defects; preaching and exhortation only add hypocrisy to the previous list of vices. Intelligence, on the contrary, is easily improved by methods known to every competent educator. Therefore, until some method of teaching virtue has been discovered, progress will have to be sought by improvement of intelligence rather than of morals. One of the chief obstacles to intelligence is credulity, and credulity could be enormously diminished by instructions as to the prevalent forms of mendacity. Credulity is a greater evil in the present day than it ever was before, because, owing to the growth of education, it is much easier than it used to be to spread misinformation, and, owing to democracy, the spread of misinformation is more important than in former times to the holders of power. Hence the increase in the circulation of newspapers.

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The scientific temper is capable of regenerating mankind and providing an issue for all our troubles. The results of science, in the form of mechanism, poison gas, and the yellow press, bid fair to lead to the total downfall of our civilization. It is a curious antithesis, which a Martian might contemplate with amused detachment. But for us it is a matter of life and death. Upon its issue depends the question whether our grandchildren are to live in a happier world, or are to exterminate each other by scientific methods, leaving perhaps to negroes and Papuans the future destinies of mankind. 

For example, the art of reading the newspapers should be taught.

1 Bertrand Russell, Free Thought and Official Propaganda (New York: B. W. Huebich, Inc., 1922)

2 I should add that they re-appointed me later, when war-passions had begun to cool.


4 See “The Invention of a New Religion,” Professor Chamberlain, of Tokyo. Published by the Rationalist Press Association (New out of print)
This volume brings together a collection of papers dealing with the philosopher, humanist, and peace activist Bertrand Russell. The various papers deal with Russell’s life, thought, and work. The organizing idea behind the book is that Russell remains intensely relevant to our intellectual life today, more than four decades after his death. The aim, therefore, has been to show what Russell has to contribute to questions of interest to the contemporary reader in a variety of fields.

The primary audience for this book is, of course, the world of Russell studies. Scholars focused on Russell will appreciate the contributions the book’s essays make to the many ongoing conversations regarding the philosopher. Readers outside this field will find the book a welcoming invitation to join one or more of these conversations. Philosophers, for example, will appreciate both the historical essays connecting Russell’s work to that of Wittgenstein, Carnap, and Husserl. They will also enjoy the new treatment given to one of Russell’s most famous works, The Problems of Philosophy. Readers interested in religion can learn from both the extended analysis of Russell’s book Religion and Science and the paper comparing Russell’s approach to spirituality with that of contemporary New Atheist Sam Harris. An essay on Russell’s approach to peace practice will inform readers from both peace studies and education. And those who enjoy biography will enjoy learning more about Russell the man—his family, his life, and his loves. They can also enjoy an extended meditation upon the lessons biography has to offer the world of philosophy.

Above all, Bertrand Russell’s Life and Legacy invites the reader into Russell’s world—a world that should prove of interest to both philosophers and non-philosophers for many years to come.
The consistently first-rate papers in the collection Bertrand Russell, Public Intellectual serve as a powerful reminder of the breadth and depth of the contributions from one of the leading philosophers of the twentieth century...This text is an invaluable resource for students of Russell’s life and thought.

—Alan Schwerin, Associate Professor of Philosophy, Monmouth University and former President of the Bertrand Russell Society

D.M. Bennett Pardon Campaign

D.M. BENNETT (1818-1882) was pronounced guilty for violating the Comstock Law in New York on March 21, 1879. “The trial of Dr. Bennett for sending obscene matter through the mails is one of the most important of the day,” declared The New York Sun. The judge’s ruling, a Washington Capitol newspaper reporter opined, “surpassed anything of the sort since Pontius Pilate, and would make it dangerous to mail a Bible or a copy of Shakespeare to anyone.”

On June 5, 1879, the editor of The Truth Seeker was fined $300 and confinement at hard labor for thirteen months to be executed in the Albany Penitentiary. (A twelve-month sentence would have allowed the 60-year-old writer to remain incarcerated in New York City where friends and family could have visited.) “There was malice in that thirteen-month sentence,” wrote future Truth Seeker editor George Macdonald. The judge also denied D.M. Bennett’s request to have the sentence deferred until the Supreme Court could hear the case.

D.M. Bennett was imprisoned for mailing Cupid’s Yokes, a polemical pamphlet written by free-love advocate Ezra Heywood which promoted women’s rights and criticized Anthony Comstock and puritanical obscenity law. As an American citizen—and a passionate opponent of censorship—Bennett believed that he had the right to challenge the ill-defined Comstock Law and sell the pamphlet.

D.M. Bennett’s conviction and imprisonment became a cause célèbre for freethinkers and free-speech advocates. Authors, abolitionists, physicians, reformers, scientists and suffragists supported Bennett’s fight for freedom of the press. A petition with more than 200,000 names—the largest petition campaign of the 19th century—was sent to President Rutherford B. Hayes asking for a pardon for the elderly editor.

D.M. Bennett languished in the Albany Penitentiary where, despite suffering from the stigma attached to selling alleged “obscenity” and near death from harsh prison conditions, he managed to write numerous unrepentant letters published in The Truth Seeker and later compiled in a book.

Robert G. Ingersoll—The Great Agnostic—tried to persuade his fellow Republican to pardon the gravely ill editor. The eminent attorney provided the president with a list of New York booksellers who openly sold the ubiquitous pamphlet. According to his presidential diary, Hayes was already aware that Cupid’s Yokes was sold “by the thousand” at bookstores.

On his annual spring visit to observe prison conditions at Albany Penitentiary, the Attorney General’s Acting Commissioner, C.K. Chase, informed Bennett that Attorney General Devens, and every man that was prominently connected with the government had pronounced his imprisonment a “gross outrage.” Chase added, “Yes, that is just the way it is; every man I know of connected with the government is in favor of your liberation, except the president, and him alone. The fact is, Bennett, the church is too strong for you; that influence has secured the cooperation of the president, and it is too strong for you.”

Chase was correct; “every man” was in favor of Bennett’s liberation. But not
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