

**An autobiography**  
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For as long as I care to remember, religion, like the striptease, has always been a display of the power of suggestion. Like the Virgin Birth, it has all too often supported an immaculate deception.

As a boy, I remember the hypocrisy of Catholic school kids who, after peeling off like dive-bombers from the end of a long line walking to church, disappeared into the local candy store to gamble by playing blackjack. Their church had little hold on them. I remember that at the height of the Great Depression, when folks hardly had enough to eat, a rabbi from Brooklyn, N.Y., would visit our community in South Jersey to collect money for Yeshiva students. No doubt they felt it was more important to buttress rabbinical studies than to help those who had empty wallets and emptier stomachs. Such experiences left a sulfuric taste in my mouth.

During WWII, I volunteered for the U.S. Navy. My first job was to learn how to use and repair the first top-secret, all-electronic fire-control equipment. This gear was designed to shoot down enemy aircraft by directing the anti-aircraft guns on the battleship at attacking Japanese planes. I spent most of my service in the Pacific where my battleship, the U.S.S. Arkansas, fought the Japanese. I recall vividly the Japanese all-out kamikaze attacks on the fleet. Another indelible memory was when, during the month-long battle for two Jima, I proudly saw our flag unfurled at the top of Mt. Suribachi.

After the war, I went to Temple University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where I got my degrees in an experimental program in which undergraduate and graduate classes were mixed, the purpose being to reduce the number of years it took to get I those degrees.

During my business life, I daily confronted the irrational. After all, I was a commodity and stockbroker who had worked a lifetime at making a living by trading, say, pork belly futures and IBM. As such, I and my clients went through many boom-and-bust markets. These could not be explained until after the fact - and often not even then. Even though Jesus proclaimed that you cannot worship both God and Mammon, and even though most of my clients were Christians, they ignored their Savior's admonitions and stayed with me through all the market gyrations. Because of the business boom-and-bust cycles, I concluded that I might learn something helpful by studying religion, an even more irrational area than the markets I traded in. I learned a great deal about the irrationalities called religion, but unfortunately, it was of no help in beating the markets.

Like a hound dog on the trail, I went wherever the scent took me. Nothing was too bloody, too bizarre, or too embarrassing to stop my investigations. In over fifty-plus years I've researched just about every area pertaining to religion. What follows is a brief evaluation of the many divisions of religion as I've categorized them in my mind.

The first area concerns the ideas of god and the gods, their gender, power and other human characteristic people assign to their deities. A study of these inconsistencies alone was enough to convince me that deities sprang from the minds of men, not the other way around - not like Athena from the brow of Zeus.

Likewise I found revealed religion, the religion of the Bible, and natural religion, as disclosed in the arguments of philosophers, equally faulty. This includes the latest gasp by the faithful called „Intelligent Design." Those who still persist in using these ersatz arguments only prove that they tailor their religion to suit their own prejudices.

All the religions of the West have their Achilles' heel in the problem of evil. Of the many attempts to explain evil, none has been successful. Fundamentalists of western religions - including their political representatives - want us to regain our alleged loss of morality by following God's Word as revealed in the Bible. That this is impossible is easily proven by an objective reading of their „sacred" books. They will find it full of immoralities, obscenities, and stories unfit either for their children or their grandparents, its contents more suitable for a bawdyhouse than that of a place of worship. Contrary to the current outcry for political correctness, the book of books, the Bible, is the most „politically incorrect" series of instruction

ever put together in one source.

Since all western religions, including that of Islam, are replete with magic and miracles, this alone should be damaging enough to turn people from them. Paganism-which these religions ridicule-employed much the same strategies to keep their own followers in line. Any decent study of the history of present religious artifacts, symbols and practices will show that the ghosts of the pagan past are now resurrected in the Christian present.

Lately, there have been a few „experiments" that have concluded that „faith is good for your health." These test results are doubtful. Has faith been good for the Roman Catholic Church with its history of abusive priests and its current „cafeteria-style" and „half-believing" congregants? Did faith prevent the Protestant movement from instituting its own jihad-inquisitions-after the Reformation? Why are there always far more criminals in our jails who are professedly religious and „twice-born" than there are atheists and agnostics? Why is the jihad still such an integral part of medieval and modern Islam?

Why has „love" been espoused by believers more in the breach than in practice? Why are the Christian scriptures schizophrenic, on the one hand showing Jesus to be so loving while on the other so hateful? Why does Jesus tell us to love one another in some portions of scripture while in others he promises eternal torment to those who do not believe in him? Why is the murder of humans condemned, while the murder of Jesus is praised as necessary for the salvation of mankind? Why have the Jews been condemned for eternity as deicides since they were merely instrumental in carrying out God's plan? In view of all of this, can we truly agree that Jesus was „Mr. Nice Guy"? Archie Bunker was wrong when he said: "Jesus Christ is who's great, little girl. I knew that long before them rock and roll freaks made him a 'superstar.'"

I've read many times that Jesus was the first-and some say the last-Christian. As Cesar Chavez put it: „I'm sure Christ wore a mezuzah. He certainly didn't wear a cross." This brings up a most embarrassing observation about Christianity: How can so many diverse Christian institutions claim Jesus as their own when their theologies not only differ but too often contradict one another? Is this what God and his Son, Jesus the Christ, intended?

Another important area has suffered a sea-change: the archeology of the Bible. It used to be said that archeology „proves" the Bible. No more. In fact, it's just the opposite. For the last one-hundred and fifty years a war has been waged over the historical reliability of the Hebrew scriptures. Recent dramatic discoveries of biblical archeology have cast serious doubt on the familiar accounts of ancient Israel and the origins of the Judeo-Christian tradition. Though the Bible credits Abraham as the first human to realize there is only one God, we now know that there is no evidence for monotheism for many centuries after the reported time of Abraham. Nor is there any archeological evidence for the Exodus, for Joshua's conquest of Canaan, or for the vast „united monarchy" of David and Solomon. Each of the leading characters of the testaments, Moses and Jesus, is a composite character, not an individual hero.

Miracles, once the most sustaining evidence for belief in a benevolent Providence, has been all but destroyed in the eyes of many of the faithful by arguments advanced by Hume and Kant. Thus the spade has been more useful in digging the grave of biblical events than in resurrecting them.

Finally, there is a renewal of the argument that there is *no* conflict between religion and science. According to Stephen Jay Gould, each area has its own „magisterium" which do not overlap, hence no conflict. To refute this, Gould and others of the same mind ought to reread the Bible; it is chock-full of „scientific" statements that have been upended by science. To name a few: a cosmos created by a deity in six days; the age of the earth only about 10, 000 years old-utterly refuted by geology; the creation of all species at one time-utterly refuted by evolution; a world-wide flood as punishment for the sexual sins of the sons of God with the women of the world; the translation of Enoch to heaven-a miraculous feat repeated by Jesus; the many miracles enacted during the Exodus by Moses and Aaron; the physical location of heaven and hell-now admitted by Pope John Paul II to be merely a condition of the mind; the mistaken view of the biblical writers of the geography of the world; the virgin birth of Jesus, a miraculous birth repeated much earlier by three other women in the Jewish Bible; water changed to wine by Jesus at the wedding in Cana; the multiplication of a few loaves and fishes by Jesus to feed a large crowd; the first resurrection of Jesus after his crucifixion; Jesus' raising the dead Lazarus; his cursing of a fig tree because it would not grow fruit out of season. This list could easily be expanded but I think the listing is sufficiently convincing. No conflict between science and religion? Is this the age of a new religion-Confusionism?

These are my main reasons for being an atheist. Have I substituted anything for my rejection of religion? Of course, it's called „secular humanism." And what is secular humanism? I like to summarize it as *the philosophy of our American Founding Fathers-less their religion*.

I've read that Pope John Paul II thinks Catholicism to be the greatest humanist force in today's world. This is a fine example of the kind of creative semantics religion has resorted to from its beginnings. John Paul's definition of humanism and our definition butt each other like two Rocky Mountain goats fighting for supremacy. Although he didn't state it, the pope's definition clearly included God and the supernatural; ours emphatically does not. Secular humanism has no truck with the supernatural or the superstitious. Being scientifically oriented, secular humanism is focused on this world, not on the next. Religion has told so many lies that you couldn't believe its spokespersons even if they told you they were lying! Just as our containers must now have the proper labeling, so should religion. Its label should contain the statement „Read between the Lies!"

Secular humanism is completely people-oriented. It's convinced that we would be better off, much better off, by ignoring the „pie-in-the-sky" rewards guaranteed by clergy, faith healers, televangelists and religious con artists.

It is politically democratic. Its emphasis and demands for constitutional rights-with free inquiry topping the list-stems from the bloody and repressive history of Western religions, including Islam. It's a sad fact that after many successful battles, we are still faced by many anti-secularist trends: dogmatic, authoritarian religions; fundamentalist, literalist and muscular Christianity; rabid and uncompromising Islamists; nationalistic Jewish orthodoxy; and the resurrection and creation of the so-called New Age religions.

We deplore the growth of religious groups that foment hatred and religious intolerance. No religious organization must be allowed to impose its biased views on the rest of us about what they consider to be proper morality, education, sexual behavior, marriage, divorce, birth control, abortion, stem cell research by legislating their private prejudices on the rest of us. Our ethics are based upon critical analysis.

We secular humanists think that those who want to require that creationism be taught in science classrooms are either ignorant, mad, charlatans, or a combination of these. Instead, we insist that evolution, as well as all other scientific disciplines, be taught in all levels of education.

We trust the head more than the heart, yet we do uphold the arts and humanities as an integral part of life.

Some of the most noteworthy personalities in history have been secularists and humanists: Epicurus, Lucretius, Spinoza, David Hume, Thomas Paine, Diderot, Mark Twain, John Stuart Mill, Charles Darwin, Margaret Sanger, Thomas Edison, Albert Einstein, H. L. Mencken, Bertrand Russell, Ernest Nagel, Sidney Hook, Isaac Asimov, Walter Kaufmann, B. F. Skinner and Francis Crick. These and many other notables furnish a brilliant genealogy for our movement.

We have much to celebrate, but also much to be done. Remember the steam kettle: Though it's up to its neck in hot water, it continues to sing!

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