

# **ATHEISM**

## **An Affirmative View**

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1980

What is Atheism that it survives?

Every religion, from earliest times, has hated and condemned those who could not believe whatever it was that those old religions happened to believe. All through the ages there have been the 'intellectual outlaws' who have questioned the "unquestionable," and doubted even the very existence of the gods. And those individual thinkers have been hated, hunted, persecuted, and murdered by the religious believers. Yet the Atheists and doubters are very much with us today, but those old religions, and the gods they created, have long since ceased to trouble the thoughts of mankind.

If Atheism is considered to be a religion, then it is easily the oldest living religion in the world. Properly stated, Atheism is truly "that old time religion" that the Baptists keep singing about.

Atheism is a difficult subject only because of the slander and misrepresentations preached and published against it. Even the information that is available in our most trusted and respected reference books is the distorted and prejudiced view presented by religion. Just as in Communist countries, where the articles on Capitalism, democracy, politics, etc., are always written by Communists and from the Communist point of view, so in Christian dominated societies, such as the United States, all articles on Atheism, Rationalism, Freethought, etc., that are to be found in encyclopedias and other reference books, are written by theologians, and from the Christian point of view.

The article on Atheism in the current edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica was written by a Roman Catholic Jesuit Priest, Rev. Cornelio Fabro, Professor of theoretical Philosophy, University of Perugia, Italy. In the Encyclopedia Americana the article on Atheism was written by Roger L. Shinn, a professor at Union Theological Seminary. It seems that religion, like Communism, can survive only when it can control the information about conflicting beliefs.

This system of writing the most trusted and basic reference and information books from the point of view of the dominant ideology in every society has the dangerous effect of further polarizing and isolating the peoples of the world within their own narrow beliefs, and of creating contempt and distrust for all others.

America was not established to have any dominant ideology, The United States was meant to be 'a free marketplace of ideas,' where every opinion could be heard and considered. Today we must consider the various ideas and opinions as they are presented in great newspapers and reference books.

And so it is of the utmost importance that these ideas and opinions be presented honestly, by the people who accept them, believe in them, and are convinced they are the best answers to the problems under consideration. Then, and only then, will people have any real opportunity to make an intelligent decision about the beliefs they are investigating. The American people have a right to know that in Atheism there is a moral, sensible, and scientific alternative to religion.

There can be no doubt but that the people of this nation (The United States) must be among the most deceived and brainwashed in the world, at least, at very least, in the area of religion. As an Atheist I have a very special reverence for truth, real truth, truth with fact and proof behind it. And it is infuriating to me when I go into a public library and read the lies and misrepresentations that are being fed to the eager, active, and searching young minds that use our libraries in their quest for truth and understanding.

The first step, then, in understanding Atheism is to disregard all the lies and propaganda that religion has spread against it. Atheism is more than just the knowledge that gods do not exist, and that religion is either a mistake or a fraud. Atheism is an attitude, a frame of mind that looks at the world objectively, fearlessly, always trying to understand all things as a part of nature. It could be said that Atheism has a doctrine to question and a dogma to doubt. It is the human mind in its natural environment, nothing is too holy to be investigated, nor too sacred to be questioned. The Atheist Bible, it could be said, has but one word: "THINK." Atheism is the complete emancipation of the human mind from the chains and fears of superstition.

There is absolutely nothing negative about Atheism; truth can never be negative. The Atheist demands proof, or at least reasonable evidence, and simply rejects whatever does not meet the basic requirements of common sense. Throughout history all progress in society has come from doubting and rejecting old ideas, old customs, and old beliefs. The tree of human knowledge dies as it grows, with new growth growing out of the dead and dying parts, and replacing it with better and truer beliefs. The Theologian is an owl, sitting on an old dead branch in the tree of human knowledge, and hooting the same old hoots that have been hooted for hundreds and thousands of years, but he has never given a hoot for progress.

Morally speaking, Atheism has a great advantage over religion. The great failure of religious morality comes from their illusion of a morality above right and wrong. The religious mind has always known it is wrong to murder and torture, wrong to persecute and hate, wrong to force its beliefs upon others. Religion has always known these things to be wrong, but the religious mind suffers from the illusion of a "higher morality," and because of that illusion all history runs deep with innocent blood. In the name of their "god" and a "higher morality," Christians have waged holy wars of extermination, have plundered, tortured and murdered those who could not agree with their religion, or who had never even heard of it. In the name of this "higher morality" Christians have hated, hunted, persecuted, and burned alive the "heretic," the "infidel" and the "atheist."

And today, as always, when the religious person does a thing that even he recognizes as being wrong and immoral, his illusion of a "higher power" and a "greater morality" allows him to perform some ritual, confession, or prayer, and presto, miraculously, "all his sins are taken away", and he is free again from all pains of conscience and regret.

Such foolish illusions do not comfort the Atheist mind. The Atheist knows there is no morality above right and wrong, and no escape from the pains of conscience and remorse. Murder is murder, and robbery, hate and persecution are all crimes against humanity. Morally speaking, it is better to be murdered than to be the murderer; better to be robbed than to be the robber, and better to be hated and persecuted than to be among those who hate and persecute. Morally speaking, then, history tells us it is better to be an Atheist than to be a Christian.

Religion claims that immorality always springs from a lack of religion, but the facts prove just the opposite. Christianity has never been stronger than it is today, Christians have churches in every community, they monopolize radio and television time with religious propaganda, they have forced their religion into our government, our laws, and into our schools. They have done these things against the Constitution of the United States, and against the most basic and sacred rights of all other Americans. Like a sinking ship, with water rushing in and filling every compartment where it was not supposed to be, so religion has attacked our nation, rushed in where it was not supposed to be, where it has no business to be, silencing all opposition, all opposing views, poisoning the wells of our knowledge, and endangering the very roots of our nation.

Christianity is that strong today, and yet we have not achieved any respectable amount of morality in this country. Nowhere is the failure of Christian morality more evident than in America. During the same time that

Christianity has been growing ever stronger and ever richer, over the past thirty years or so, the use of harmful drugs has become a national scandal, the crime rate has been climbing ever higher and ever faster, the divorce rate has skyrocketed, and during that time our nation has been embroiled in more wars and international conflicts than in any other similar time period in its history. During that time, our nation was also getting its 5000 or so weird religious cults, a byproduct of Christian indoctrination. Right to-day we have the highest narcotics abuse rate, the highest crime rate, the highest divorce rate, and the highest 'religion rate' that we have ever had in the history of this nation. What does Christianity say about these facts and how to cure them? They tell us we need more religion and they are determined to force it upon us. Christianity feels so strong today that it is moving into politics to try to force its failing morality upon every American through a Christian Dictatorship and a new Dark Age.

Once Atheism is achieved, and the mind has escaped entirely from the religious fears and beliefs that are put upon us from earliest childhood; and once we can look at religion objectively and impartially, it becomes entirely obvious that religion has all the characteristics of a form of insanity. To one degree or another the religious mind must accept, and believe in, another world; a supernatural or unnatural world, a world filled with all sorts of imaginary beings called gods, devils, angels, saints, demons, etc. These imaginary creatures are talked to, asked for favors, guidance, "signs," or miracles, and then blamed or thanked for natural events that follow. Except for the cloak of religion, such beliefs and actions would otherwise cause an individual to be judged insane, and committed to an institution for treatment.

The study of history will further corroborate the theory that religion is a form of insanity. No sane and healthy minds could have waged the bloody religious wars and crusades where the conquered were slaughtered, men, women, and children, even infants, all were put to the sword simply because they were "infidels" or "heretics." The dungeons and torture chambers of the Holy Inquisition could not have been run by sane and healthy minds. And it had to be the insane mind, the religious mind, that would tie a woman to a stake, pile wood and fagots around her and burn her alive for the impossible crime of being a witch. No sane person could read of the horrors, rape and slaughter in a savage book and call that book "the word of God." And the Jesus myth, about a god who must become a man and be murdered before he can forgive mankind, is the most insane of all.

Today, Christianity chooses to ignore, or to hide and deny, its own bloody history and to claim that it is the very foundation of our morals, and even of our civilization. Religion also claims to be our only hope and guide

for the future. In view of Christian history these claims are, in themselves, sheer insanity.

But Christianity is not the only form of organized insanity in the world today. The Atheist, being an individual who stands outside all belief systems, is well aware that there are other religions and beliefs that are equally insane and dangerous. Christianity is simply most dangerous to the United States; to our government, our freedom and our future, because it is here, it is powerful, it is wealthy, and it is entirely unscrupulous. In addition to its illusion of a morality above right and wrong, I must add, and emphasize, that it also has an illusion of a "higher allegiance" to something above truth, above justice, and above America and national patriotism. It does not require that a person be an Atheist to be aware that Christian Fundamentalism is today the greatest threat to our nation and its freedom.

Communism is by far the worst thing that has happened to the world in the last two hundred years, but it is also the best thing that has happened to Christianity since the plagues. During the plagues the churches received great wealth from people who gave possessions and land to the church in the hope that God would spare their lives, and the lives of their loved ones. And so today religion is again growing rich and powerful from our modern-day plague; Communism.

Christians are constantly using Communism as a club to beat down all opposition to their religion, their power and their schemes. Anyone who disagrees with them, Atheist or not, is denounced as being a "Communist." Religion implies that there is an inseparable connection between the political-economic dictatorship called Communism, and the freedom from religion called Atheism. Religion ignores the fact that Atheism is older than Communism and Christianity put together.

Even the fear and hate that religion is preaching against Communism is not aimed at the political-economic ideology that is the cause of our trouble, but at the "atheistic" aspect that is not the problem.

Let us consider very carefully what the connection is between Atheism and Communism in Russia. There can be no doubt but that Atheism is the reason for the success of Communism. Atheism is the force that brought the Russian nation up from being one of the most backward, primitive and religious nations in Europe in 1917, to the point of being one of the most advanced, scientific and technological, nations in the world today, whether we like it or not, we must admit that Communist Russia is a powerful modern force, and a very dangerous potential enemy. Communism is an external threat to our nation, and to our very world, that is of great concern to all Americans, Atheists and Christians alike.

It must be admitted that Atheism is the engine and the thrust behind Communism that has allowed it to move forward into the modern world in such a short time. Atheism is the engine and the thrust, but it is not the steering wheel. The dominant, controlling ideology in Russia is the economic-political dictatorship known as Communism. Even the Christians, if they could be taught to hate a little less, and think a little more, would have to admit that.

Atheism is, has been, and will continue to be, the force for progress throughout the Communist world, it is the powerful engine that powers an evil ideology. Today we are in a desperate race for our very survival. America and the free world cannot win that race if we continue to allow a primitive, medieval superstition to hinder our progress. Because of that superstition we have lost our lead, and because of that superstition we may lose the race.

What is the difference between our own Christian dominated society, and the Atheist-oriented society in Russia? What is it that will make such a great difference in the future progress of these two societies? According to a special report in 'Science 80' Magazine concerning the Communist threat, it reads: "This challenge is expressed not only in growing military strength but in a bid to outpace the United States and other Western nations through an educational "mobilization" program designed to prepare all Soviet youth to participate fully in an advanced technological society."

The article goes on to say "The Soviets have put massive resources behind their assumption that a decisive advantage is to be gained by raising the level of scientific literacy and numeracy of their population."

And what are we doing in the United States to keep up with the Communist efforts to advance even further their scientific and math education systems, systems that are so very important to any modern technological, military society? At present we have a great push by Christianity to have their primitive "creation" myth hidden under the guise of "Scientific-Creationism," taught in our public schools on an equal basis with the well established and accepted modern theory (law) of organic evolution.

This is the same battle that was fought in the courtroom during the Scopes "monkey trial" in 1925, a trial which made this country the laughing stock of the modern world. It is the same war that has been raging between Christianity and the modern world since 1859 when Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species* was first published. For over one hundred and twenty years Christianity has tried to prevent us from making any progress in this basic science. The truth is, of course, that Christianity has always fought every fact of science and modern knowledge that did not conform to its

primitive Bible, written and copied, as it were, by ignorant, half-civilized nomads some four thousand years ago.

How can we hope to survive as a nation, keep our freedom and remain a force in the modern world unless we cast aside the superstitions of primitive times, and adopt the scientific, technological, "Atheistic" if you will, society that reason and common sense demands? It is time, and long past the time, for Atheists in America to come out of their libraries and defend our modern world and our nation against Christianity and Communism.

Today we live in a world divided and tuned for war; tuned for a war so unlike any previous war that wisdom can only shudder at the thought of it. This is a world always fearful that the other side may strike first, and thus gain some decisive advantage. It is fearful also to strike first itself, lest it fail to devastate the enemy completely, and leave him able to retaliate with devastation. Thoughtful people all over the world realize that the situation is more dangerous than the enemy. That each side has a tiger by the tail, and both sides are afraid to let go, or even to lessen its grip, lest that side be utterly destroyed. Intelligent people all over the world are working for an easing of tensions, a lessening of armaments, and are searching for a common ground upon which both sides might find some point from which to begin establishing a working relationship. A relationship that would lead to a progressive lessening of the threat of a nuclear holocaust, and the eventual establishment of a peaceful and lasting coexistence.

Intelligent people all over the world are working for these things, but Christian fundamentalists are not. Christians are shouting "No coexistence with Godless Communism" and "Atheistic Communism must be destroyed." This is indeed the final proof that religion is a form of insanity. We must judge Christianity by what it has done throughout its history, and it has never been a force for peace. We must judge what Christianity is doing today in preaching hate against that part of our world that has outgrown and rejected Christianity. And we must judge what chance we have for survival if our part of the world continues to be held back by religion. Atheism has brought the Russian nation great progress in scientific and technological advances, and has made Communism a powerful force in the world. But Atheism could have been doing great things for us also, if we had allowed our society to lay aside, through education, the foolish old beliefs that are hindering our progress, our defense, and our very survival.

Where do we begin our long journey back to reality, back to sanity? I would start with an 'International Encyclopedia of Information,' written by those who believe the ideas and from their point of view. Imagine an American going to a library and learning what Atheism is, instead of what it

is not. Imagine a Russian going to his library and learning what Capitalism is instead of what it is not. Imagine people all over the world going to their libraries and reading the same histories, truthful histories, histories that will not need to be changed when ever there is a political or religious power change. Let Communism write what it believes, let Capitalism write what it believes. Let both work together to write a universal history, and if they can't agree about the facts of history, let them both write their view of history and let them be published side by side, and let the reader be the judge. Let the purpose of a history or an encyclopedia be education, not propaganda.

After all, it was the Encyclopedia, the French encyclopedia of Diderot and others, that was so instrumental in bringing Europe out of the Christian Dark Ages during the Renaissance. There is every reason to believe that a universal source of basic information would be a great step toward ending much of the distrust and confusion that is at the very root of our trouble in the world today.

There is no part of the world where the people are all bad, and another part where the people are all good. When nations go to war, people go out and kill people. People who, under different circumstances, might well be their honored and trusted friends. Christianity has never prevented a war, but has been responsible for many wars because of its prejudice against all other religions, and especially against Atheism.

Some time ago I prepared "An Atheist's Message to America." I have read it at other talks and meetings. It reads:

THE OVERABUNDANCE OF RELIGIOUS PROPAGANDA IN THIS COUNTRY WOULD LEAD US TO BELIEVE THAT THE PRIMARY PURPOSE OF THIS NATION IS THE PRESERVATION AND EXPANSION OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION. BUT THAT IS NOT TRUE.

OUR NATION IS NOT, AND MUST NOT BECOME, THE BATTLESHIP OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION. OUR STRUGGLE IN THE WORLD IS IN DEFENSE OF LIBERTY. TO PRESERVE OUR OWN, AND, IF POSSIBLE, TO HELP OTHERS GAIN AND KEEP THEIRS.

THIS NATION IS NOT FIGHTING "GODLESS ATHEISM" NOR "ATHEISTIC COMMUNISM," NOR ANY OTHER GROUP OR NATION THAT HAS HAD CHRISTIAN HATE TERMS APPLIED TO THEM.

WE, AS A NATION, ARE OPPOSED TO COMMUNISM BECAUSE COMMUNISM, LIKE CHRISTIANITY, IS AN IDEOLOGICAL FORCE



THAT IS DESTRUCTIVE TO HUMAN RIGHTS AND FREEDOM. IT IS, IN FACT, NONE OF OUR BUSINESS WHETHER ANOTHER NATION, OR ANOTHER INDIVIDUAL, BELIEVES IN A GOD OR NOT. OUR ONLY CONCERN IS THAT EVERY INDIVIDUAL MUST HAVE THE LIBERTY TO DECIDE JUST WHAT HE, OR SHE, CAN AND WILL BELIEVE. AND HAVE THE FREEDOM TO EXPRESS, PUBLISH AND PURSUE THOSE BELIEFS IN PERFECT SAFETY.

IN SHORT, OUR ONLY CONCERN IN THE WORLD IS EXACTLY THOSE IDEALS THAT THIS GREAT NATION OF OURS WAS ORIGINALLY FOUNDED UPON.

And so after all this, let us look again at our original question: "What is Atheism that it survives?"

Atheism is the world of reality; it is reason, it is freedom, it is human concern, and it is intellectual honesty to a degree that the religious mind cannot begin to understand. Magnificent in its simplicity, Atheism is merely the bed-rock of sanity in a world of madness.

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The talk you have just read was delivered at the Thomas Jefferson Unitarian Church in Louisville, Kentucky on Sunday, October 19, 1980, and was published as an essay in the July-August 1981 *American Rationalist* magazine and was sold as a pamphlet by them for a number of years.