

i am a deist

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The Congregational Church on Hamilton Street was my theater of the seasons: summer concerts by Wid Eddy's brass band, old timers in white ducks and navy blue blazers; ice cream socials in back; Halloween pumpkins and hard cider; Thanksgiving turkey dinners; bright star on the steeple and a manger scene out front; spring rally climbing in the spooky predawn with family up Thompson Park past the zoo to watch Easter sun slide over the town, ham and egg breakfast in the church basement.

Our watchful preacher, Doctor Stokes, shiny black suit, theological PhD, smooth funeral-director-type paid-for smile, to me the presence of the church; the impression that everything in his Bible was straight from the lips of God, the Supreme Being, capitalized but never explaining, only commanding and demanding.

My Sunday morning began in the large sand box in the basement while my mother and father went upstairs to church. Later on I was handed over to our spinster Sunday school teacher Clare Goshim. One Sunday after reading some embarrassing things in the Bible, she told us we should forget what she just read and look for parables and allegories. "The *Bible* wasn't written to be taken literally and everything really important has a hidden meaning; one has to interpret for rational cognizances." I'll never forget *cognizances* but I never looked them up; I couldn't spell it.

There are two stages in the criticism of myths; the first treats them angrily as superstitions, the second smilingly as poetry. We must seek, rather, to honor the piety implied and understand what the poetry embodies. The Bible is literature not dogma. I realize that the Jews who provided half of the Bible used by Christians never took their own testament literally but was that reason for Europeans to take the whimsical poems and metaphors of the Jews for science? Nothing would be as beautiful as Christianity were it not taken so literally. I do belie/her, though, even when I know she lies. - George Santayana, Former Catholic Harvard philosophy Professor

A critic remarked, Santayana believes there is no God and Mary is his mother.

I could understand how Mark Twain felt about his grandmother's story-

After supper she got out her book and learned me about Moses, and the bulrushes and I was in a sweat to find out all about him; but by and by she let it out that Moses had been dead a considerable time; so then I didn't care no more about him because I don't take no stock in dead people.

Like other kids, I was taught by rote rather than reason to accept religious dogma thoughtlessly, to avoid intelligent imagination, accept supernatural effects and supposed occurrences that bypass Nature and logic. In this unthinking way, I assumed the surface of my father's beliefs as had his father and his father's father and his father's father's father further back than can be remembered, beyond the original fears of the hell and brimstone of my Puritan forefathers; never considering happy alternatives.

My mother introduced me to the frustrating abstractions she inherited, assuming, as had Goulds for centuries, that I would unquestionably adopt the series of unbelievable myths and organized fantasies or have something bad happen to me.

As I knelt by my bed each night, eyes closed, hands folded on the bedspread, she supervised the pledge-

*Now I lay me down to sleep,
I pray the Lord my soul to keep.
If I should die before I wake,
I pray the Lord my soul to take.*

Not that mother feared that I would die in my sleep; but the catchy ditty from a colonial primer, the closest to poetry I ever heard at home, sounded safely antique and profoundly Christian, saving my parents the time and effort of trying to explain what they themselves failed to understand.

The threatening quatrain was handed down from my forefathers on my father's side from a time when little boys may have been more prone to die in their sleep. I had no idea what it meant, other than a sinister threat by the Lord to snatch my soul while I slept and couldn't defend myself

I often lay in bed staring at the dark doorway, afraid to go to sleep, worrying that the Lord would slip into my room, take my soul out of me, and leave my body for my mother to find in the morning.

I feared darkness, what might happen when sight deserted me; had nightmares and walked and talked in my sleep. "Pray the Lord my soul to take" was all the more frightening because I had nothing to say about it. And just what was the soul that it could be taken so arbitrarily? Where would it be taken? To do what?

I tried to convince myself, assume if not really believe, that like our educated preacher I might learn to unravel the secrets of Christian beliefs capable of predicting verifiable results; but since I never found time, opportunity, or money to check out such esoteric facts, which I thought were explained exclusively at theological seminars, I remained on the surface as reasonably an obedient Christian as necessary to be sociable. After all, its conduct of morals, almost identical to those of other organized religions, blended well with my strict puritanical upbringing.

Christianity, the congregational puritan type, was to me a childhood of denial of original thoughts, a time of stylized belief, glossed over, bored by rote, taught by a well-meaning, thoroughly programmed father "whose ideas were hackney; a cold, professional preacher who studied hard to deceive; and a flaky spinster Sunday school teacher-all of whom threatened me second-handedly with Hell, the description of which depended on an Italian poet, offering nothing more intangibly pleasant in return than a "many mansionsed heaven," as far as I could understand, eternal vacuity.

Miracles remain the most outrageous insults to my intelligence: Lot's wife being turned to salt, "but his wife looked back from behind him and she became a pillar of salt," Genesis 19:2-6; dividing the Red Sea, Exodus 15:23-25; the Jordan river stopped so Israelites could cross dry-shod, Joshua 3:14-17; particularly one inscribed on a bronze tablet at the main entrance to my father's church-

I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever loveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believeth thou this. - Jesus of Nazareth

"Believeth thou this" made me wonder if it might have been a question, and I checked this quotation in the book of John. Jesus brought Lazarus back from the dead after Lazarus's sister, Martha, who sent for him for help, complained that he was late. "Lord," she scolded, "by this time he stinketh, for he hath been dead four days." (John 11.39) Reverend Stokes never explained how anyone could bring back a guy who was putrefying.

Fortunately, my father's church didn't harp on miracles but that whopper about Jonah and "a great fish" (whales were unknown) is still in the Bible-" Jonah remained in its belly three days and three nights," and Jonah prayed and the Lord spake unto the fish and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land." Jonah 2:1

I couldn't get it through me why Jesus with all his clout let himself be crucified. What did it prove anyway? And that bit about the so-called 'original' sin is as incomprehensible as God letting Satan go when he had him down; every kid I knew would've pounded the hell out of him. How many times does a sin have to be paid for, or atoned, or whatever they do, and I don't understated why preachers had to convince little kids they are born sinners just so Jesus could have an excuse to be killed. There's more to this than I could ever get to know. I might have worked harder to understand the Christian Bible had it tried to explain the soul to me and had there not been so many unbelievable absurdities raised like Braille across its pages.

One might chide, don't judge a book by its cover; don't judge religions by their leaders. But, really, one hypocritical liar after another since the death of Jesus? Just how long should honest people seeking salvation on Sundays embrace religions altered to meet the whims of such powerful, pious debauchers as political popes and Catholics slaughtering Protestant Huguenots in the Dragonnades; the flesh merchants of African blacks, one of whose ships was christened *Jesus of Lubic* and whose captain penned sacred Christian hymns; and Catholic Inquisitors and witch-hunting Puritans of Salem, Massachusetts?

Men never do evil as completely and cheerfully as when they do it from religious conviction.

- Blaise Pascal

Too often religious front men were monsters rather than disciples who put weapons of hate and destruction into the hands of believers, counseling them to swing swords indiscriminately; putting angry curses in the mouths of Christians, Jews and Moslems, who Shiites, Persians, and Sunnites, Arabs, killed one another as they still do, beginning in 661 AD with the murder of the Shiite leader and his two sons.

The first invader of the New World had not only Christian permission but personal blessings from the King of Thieves, Pope Alexander VI, guilty of simony, selling benefices and other religious preferences, publishing a papal bull (L. *Bulla*, seal attached to an official Catholic document) handing the Queen Most Catholic Isabelle I a monopoly in the cruel, bloody civilizing of the New World.

The follies of Christian leaders of time past are too flagrant to overlook, as Popes Leo IV and John VII declaring *ex cathedra* that all who fell in the Holy Wars of the crusade died as Christian martyrs and would have their sins remitted, and Irish prelate James Ussher establishing a chronology of Christianity for the King James version of the Bible decreeing that the world was created by God at 6:00 PM, Thursday, October 22, 4004 BC, and it was commonly known in one sect that soon good people in heaven all age 38 would be clothed alike.

Growing into my teens my parents did nothing to encourage me to attend church and having a very inquisitive mind I became a *fibre penseur*, concluding that Christianity was a horrible old fairy story that swears that when one adheres to ten select rules and pleases an abstract being, his soul will live happily ever after on a sacred pension in an elevated heavenly mansion. A prominent Egyptian religion held its followers to forty commandments.

Christians vainly sought some acknowledgement from God of any gift he might be pleased to give them-

But as it is written, eye hath not seen nor ear heareth, neither entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. -1 Corinthians 2:9

Love Him, a familiarity I felt only for my immediate family? How is love supposed to be felt for a strange, powerful, unknown thing that reportedly "lives up there"? Loving an abstract, what kind of love is that? Isn't belief enough? Belief and love are different things. It is said that man has two needs-a need to know and a need not to know but believe, "The heart has its reasons," Blaise Pascal agreed, "a great reason knows nothing about; all arguments against it, but all belief for it."

Endless wonderment eroded my faith as I reacted against a religion that threatened eternal damnation. Instead, I nourished a comfortable thought of belonging someplace else where souls could not be burned. Instead of bodies being of the highest priority, the most sacred; my soul, was the real me, not flesh and bone.

Even though I was a doubting Thomas, I was content to know that a mysterious being, probably also celestial, might accept my soul after I got awfully old, protect me from bad thoughts, and offer me eternal peace, whatever that is. It didn't bother me to feel aloof from our ancestral religion because I was leading a charmed life without it, my smug dependence proof that there was some kind thing out there to depend on. Then one day my hope was rudely ended by the chance reading of a little poem.

*A man said to the firmament,
"Hey, look, I'm living!"
"Oh," replied the firmament,
"That fact awakens in me no sense of giving. "* --Stephen Crane

The doctrine, that hell-fire is a punishment for sin, is a doctrine of cruelty. It is a doctrine that put cruelty into the world and gave the world generations of cruel torture. -

Bertrand Russell

I cannot conceive a God who rewards and punishes his creatures, or has a will of the kind that we experience in ourselves. Man would be in a poor way if he had to be restrained by a fear of punishment and hope of reward after death. The idea of a God in the religions taught at present is a sublimation of the old concepts of the gods I believe in mystery and, frankly, sometimes face this mystery with great fear. In other words, I think that there are many things in the universe that we cannot perceive or penetrate, and that also we experience some of the most beautiful things in life only in a very primitive form. Only in relation to these mysteries do I consider myself to be a religious man. But I sense these things deeply. - Albert Einstein

I found that by never saying anything about religion everyone assumed by the company of religious friends I kept that I was a good Christian. I could have gone on and on practicing this deception for the remainder of my life, as many do.

Man created God because his mind is too puny to stretch to the Absolute.

- a Buddhist nun

God is the highest subjectivity of man, abstracted from him. - Ludwig Feuerbach, German philosopher

Religion is a universal obsessional neurosis of mankind which operates as an escape mechanism, born of a wish for protection from the terrors of life. All forms of worshiping and all dogmatic belief are wish projections. God is a rationalization of the father ideal and consequently a purely human creation. It is a pathological illusion of immaturity from which man for his own good will one day recover. Religion is a superstitious structure of incoherent metaphysical notions. - Sigmund Freud

Freud also termed the yearning for immortality "the oldest, strongest and most insistent wish of mankind." Near the end of his life, he wrote that if he had his life to live over, he would concentrate on parapsychology or psychic research because "its evidence implies postmortem survival."

A common trust in the reasoning powers of man is not only a secular but a religious concern. Statements of creeds reflect the limited knowledge of the day they were recorded, not supported by present day valid facts, and when God and man are mutually exclusive, a great number of problems arise with no support in fact.

Christianity, as man fabricated it, evades explaining anything as interesting as the soul and dwells on criminal morbidity and moral rights and wrongs pertaining solely to miserable days of the human flesh on this earth. My search for the *soul* led me far away from their blind conjecture to physics and cosmology, which led to a blind faith in the ability of science to know or learn to know.

There is no evidence that anything regarding religion or science begins outside the human brain, despite allegations of revelations from afar and by philosopher Immanuel Kant's introduction of what he called *moumenon realities*, intuitive ideas perceived directly from out of the universe by a tuned-in soul. He also wrote-

The deity is beyond the reach of our senses, therefore inaccessible to the human mind.

Science, the study dealing with a body of facts or truths systematically arranged showing the operation of general laws or rule, has outdistanced the observable universe, entering that of pure thought, intuition and reason, One of the most difficult theories now being proposed by science, quantum gravity, supergravity, fails to have even a workable starting point and like religion depends upon blind faith. Even as religious persons depend on blind belief for their biased education, satisfaction and understanding, scientists in the field of quantum mechanics blindly believe such psychophysical impasses as the so-called uncertainty principle, an outstanding paradigm in which the concept of human consciousness is emerging as central to work in many fields, as philosophy, neuroscience, medicine, physics and psychology.

Ordinary experiences of man are susceptible to scientific languages, unnatural mythical experiences of religions are beyond the ken of science, not comparable to anything perceived by the senses. Religious traditions such as origins and records of divine interactions and revelations are based and depended upon to maintain and spread a particular faith, as Christianity, which has a language entirely its own.

Creeds, accepted systems of religious belief, are all limited to the little knowledge at the time they began when few problems could be solved satisfactorily, not so much due to the incapacity of the human brain, but from the fact that little data needed for those solutions were available.

There is more religion in man's science than there is science in his religion.

- Henry David Thoreau

Nearly all nuclear and high-energy physics postulate a priori, deduce, and take for granted without particular need for laboratory control replication, proof, or perception by human senses. This has always been basic in religions, where believers are automatically theonomous, subject to God's authority without theophany, the visible manifestation of God's existence. This phenomenon causes Christians to be utterly appalled when anyone suggests that their Bible is not self-evidently true.

Likewise, physicists today no longer feel they have the right to insist that their new inferential facts in, say, quantum mechanics, be accepted unquestionably while demanding material, observable proof from psychologists, philosophers, and theologians. After all, will not science soon be psychophysically humanistic?

Hard science already aids in explaining the phenomenology of life and death, as support is rendered by wholly nonphysical physics, inspired by such illustrious leaders as Albert Einstein, who once commented on a graduate student's reluctance to admit to an interest in mental telepathy. "Don't apologize. It probably has more to do with physics than psychology." Some time later he volunteered a complimentary preface to Upton Sinclair's book on telepathy, *Mental Radio*.

I spent many hours in our local library and the states-wide interlibrary loan taking notes on what deep thinkers said about life and death and God and searched copies of scriptures and other sacred writings and often found other than truths, even historical inaccuracy, calculated fears and soothing balms, forms of moral poetry inscribed by a long succession of imaginative spiritual leaders, contributed over centuries to highly polished constructs of terror, prolonged imaginings systemized and imitated with no founding in reality, no matter how hard Biblicists rationalized.

*The reflections of devout and learn'd
Who rose before us, and as prophets burn'd
Are all but stories, which, awoke from sleep,
They told their comrades, and to sleep return'd.*

Omar Khayyam, the tent-maker,

Persian Sufi poet of the latter part of the 11th century.

Some say that Christianity is Greek mythology blended with Hebrew morality. Greek mythology certainly prevails in the Roman Catholic version of Christianity; in Protestantism the characterization of the stern, humorless, Hebraic moral code quite naturally begat the horrors of English Calvinist Puritanism.

The Old Testament was compiled entirely by Hebrews and Greek neo-Platonism was the first philosophy borrowed by Christians for the New Testament, largely by Titus Flavius Clemens (St Clement of Alexandria), former pagan, Shepherd of Hermas, along with his student, Greek philosopher Adamantius Origen, the greatest of all patristic theologians, who met the challenges of hostile Greek philosophers and manipulated them to save faltering Christianity.

The Christian Middle Ages until the 12th century were guided mainly by platonic Christians, and elements of other Greek philosophies and ethical codes mixed with Jewish histories. In fact, whole sections of Greek ethical philosophic thought appear almost verbatim without credit in early Christian writings and philosophemes.

For a god to appear anthropomorphically in the form of man, it seemed natural that Christianity follow the other large religions through deification of 'lower' animals as had Egyptians with Horus the hawk, Greek centaurs, half-man-half-horse semigods, on to early Christian God's assistants, angels, one-fifth bird and four-fifths young girls, to the ultimate Christian abstraction glowing in the sky, a view never officially sanctioned but always assumed to be an old Caucasian who never had a haircut-God Almighty Himself.

Hero of the American War for Independence, Thomas Paine, related how closely early Christians imitated Greek pagans (people who are not Christians, Jews or Moslems)-

It is curious to observe how the theory of what is called the Christian Church sprung out of the tail of the heathen mythology. A direct incorporation took place in the first instance by making the reputed founder to be celestially begotten. The trinity of gods that then followed was no other than a reduction of the former plurality, which was about twenty thousand; the statue of Mary succeeded the statue of Diana of Ephesus; the deification of heroes changed into the canonization of saints; the Mythologists had gods for everything; the Christian Mythologists had saints for everything; the Church became as crowded with the one as the Pantheon had been with the other, and Rome was the place of both. The Christian theory is little else than the idolatry of the ancient mythologists, accommodated to the purposes of power and revenues.

Every national church or religion has established itself by pretending some special mission from God communicated to certain individuals, as if the way to God was not open to every man alike. Each of these churches share certain books which they call revelation, or the word of God. Each accuses the others of unbelief; and, for my own part, I disbelieve them all Revelation is something revealed to a certain person, something communicated immediately from God to man; not revealed to any other person. When that man tells it to a second person, a second to a third, a third to a fourth, and so on, it ceases to be revelation to all those persons. It is revelation to the first person only and hearsay to every other, and consequently they are not obliged to believe it.

I believe in one God and no more, and I hope for happiness beyond this life; I believe in the equality of man, and I believe that religious duties are in doing justice, loving mercy and endeavoring to make our fellow creatures happy. I do not believe the creed professed by any church that I know of. My own mind is my church. ... It is necessary to the happiness of man that he be faithful to himself. It is impossible to calculate the moral mischief mental lying has produced in society.

As the American Revolution began Paine wrote: "We have our power to begin the world over again. A situation such as the present hath not happened since the days of Noah until now. The birthday of a new world."

How Mary conceived Jesus is explained by Paine-

It is not difficult to account for the credit that was given to the story of Jesus Christ being the son of God. He was born at the same time when the heathen [Greek] mythologist had still some fashion and repute in the world, and that mythology had prepared the people for belief in such a story. Almost all extraordinary men that lived under the heathen mythology were reputed to be the sons of gods. It was not a new thing at that time to believe a man to have been celestially begotten. The intercourse of gods with women was a matter of familiar opinion. Zeus had cohabited with hundreds. The story therefore had nothing in it

either new, wonderful or obscene; it was conformable to the opinions that prevailed among the people called Gentiles of Mythologist and it was these people only that believed it. The Jews, who had kept strictly to the belief of one God, always rejected the heathen mythology and never credited the story.

Like George Washington and Abraham Lincoln, deist Thomas Jefferson refused to partake of communion. His *Statute for Religious Freedom*, adopted by Virginia while he was governor, sparked a worldwide movement for religious tolerance and understanding-

Whereas almighty God hath created the mind free; all attempts to influence it by temporal punishments or burdens, or by civil incapacitation, tend only to beget habits of hypocrisy and meanness, and are a departure from the plan of the holy author of our religion ... and uninspired men have assumed dominance over the faith of others, setting up their own opinion and modes of thinking as the only true and infallible and as such endeavoring to impose them on others, have established and maintained false religions over the greatest part of the world, and through all time ... our civil rights have no dependence on our religious opinions no more than our opinions in physics or geometry.

Fix reason firmly in her seat, and call to her tribunal every fact, every opinion. Question with boldness even the existence of God; because if there be one, he must more approve of the homage of reason than that of blindfolded fear My religious reading has long been confined to the moral branch of religion. which is the same in all religions; while in that branch which consists of dogmas all differ. It is the speculation of crazy theologians which have made babel of religion the more moral and sublime ever preached to man, and calculated to heal and not create differences I am a sect by myself as far as I know.

Jefferson was wont to paraphrase Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*. "In religion what damned error but some sober brow will bless it, and approve it with a text, hiding the grossness with fair ornament."

Both Washington and Lincoln were viciously maligned for not attending services; Washington paying pew rent to the Christ Church Episcopalian in Philadelphia was attacked from the pulpit by Dr James Abercrombie; Lincoln by his political rival, the Reverend Peter Cartwright.

There is no indication that any deist lacked appreciation of the works of Jesus. The deist Isaac Newton left papers of his study of the prophecies of Daniel, concluding that scientific materialism is but a disposition of religion. However, deists do not believe in the deity of Jesus, or the organized religion that taught Jesus was an essence of the Trinity-Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

The prime way deism differs from other forms of Christianity is obvious in its title, one God only. Father, Son and Holy Ghost, a trinity of God and Godlike, originated as part of the liturgy of the Catholic Church at the Council of Constantinople in 381 AD. Then the Holy Ghost or Spirit was selected by the Father only, creating a serious riff in the church until the Nicene Creed was introduced at the Synod of Toledo in 447 with the Filioque Creed adding the Son to the selection process. The Father is God, the Son Jesus, but who or what is the Holy Ghost or Spirit? According to the King James Version of the Bible, "The Holy Spirit is the Third Person within the Godhead, the knowledge of whom depends on the Revelation of the Father and the Son from both of whom proceeds the Ghost [spirit] in the life-giving presence with the Church." Third Person?

"He who shall introduce into public affairs," wrote deist Benjamin Franklin, "the principles of primitive Christianity that will change the face of the world."

Of all the systems of morality. ancient or modern, which have come under my observation, none appear to me as pure as that of Jesus. He who follows this steadily need not, I think, be uneasy, although he cannot comprehend the subtleties and mysteries erected on his doctrines by those who, calling themselves his special followers and Javorites, would make them come into the world to lay snares for all understanding but theirs. In all the new testament there is internal evidence of the fabric of very inferior minds. It is easy to separate those parts as to pick diamonds from dung hills. I have made a wee little book from the same materials, which I call the Philosophy of Jesus. It is a condensation of his doctrine, made by cutting the texts out of the book and arranging them on the pages of a blank book. - Thomas Jefferson

General Washington never knelt in the snow at Valley Forge nor was otherwise known to pray. All pretenses of his supposed religious belief were concocted in the early 1800s by inconscient liars Parson Weems, Daniel Webster and other unscrupulous ones, as the bowdlerizer Reverend Jared Sparks, history professor at both Harvard and Yale.

For over a century filiopietistic writers created and accumulated countless lies about the General's devotion, portraying a nonexistent religiosity by supposition.

Jefferson wrote that when clergy addressed President Washington on his departure from government-

It was observed in their consultation that he had never on any occasion said a word to the public which showed a belief in the Christian religion and that they should so pen their address as to force him at length to declare publicly whether he was a Christian or not. They did so. However, the old/ox was too cunning/or them. he answered every article in their address particularly except that, which he passed over without notice.

Washington once wrote in answer to a question put to him by Lafayette, "Being no bigot myself to any mode of worship, I am disposed to indulge the professors of Christianity with that road to heaven which to them shall seem the most direct, plainest, easiest and least liable to exception."

It is impossible to explain why God made a covenant with a Jew named Abraham, then with followers of another Jew called Jesus, and with the Arabian prophet Muhammad who taught Islam. In the overcrowded three-times-holy-city of Jerusalem, Hebrews, Moslems and Christians have for centuries worshipped the same God while slaying one another for their religious beliefs.

Yet another covenant exists between God and the Jews: Genesis 17:9-14 -

This is my covenant which ye shall keep between me and you and thy seed after thee: every man child among you shall be circumcised [cut off the tiny foreskin, prepuces] and it shall be a token of the covenant between me and you.

There is only one religion, though there are a hundred versions of it.
- George Bernard Shaw

I searched other religions and philosophies of living, as Humanism, any system of thought or action in which human interests, values and dignity predominate, especially an ethical theory that sometimes rejects the importance of belief in a God, that provide moral, *modus vivendi* (ways to live), and what was the beginning of life and what the end, what is the purpose of life anyway, the reason behind it all, what, where and in what shape is my soul while I live, and afterward? What is our true relationship with the psyche?

All I ever got from my father's Bible was that my soul was the real me after the death of my body. What did it do before and after that? The only thing explained in the Christian Bible is that it, the mysterious soul, is transported up to Heaven to do what was never explained beyond living in a heavenly mansion.

Finding no secular dogma to replace Christianity, concentrating on my soul, which I believed was more than a free ride to heaven, I searched for an appealing, that is, comfortable commonly-held belief that might introduce my soul to me, but found I did not have enough mental endurance to sustain it; as the English minister, mystic John Donne, I was too easily distracted to be a deep thinker-

I throw myself down in my chamber and I call in and invite God and his angels thither, but when they are there I neglect God and his angels for the noise of a fly, for the rattling of a coach, for the whine of a door.

Great progress in deep thinking has come during my lifetime, giving me reason to hope that the soul will soon be discovered. A year before my birth in 1920, the *atomos* (Greek for undivided), atom, was divided and seven years later the quantum theory introduced in the microworld as a contradiction to classical Newtonian physics. Nine years later Heisenberg's *matrix mechanics* was proposed, and ten years after that Erwin Schrodinger's *wave mechanics*. I joined the Boy Scouts the year the *neutron* was found, along with the *positron*, and was entering my sophomore year at college when the *meson* was isolated and named.

As ancient mariners in faraway waters were in awe of strange night skies, I bow to cosmology. The more I learn the more wonderful and quieting the calm, the closer to finding my soul, my immortality, which lies within me.

Even though its true being remains far above understanding, I insist on believing that each soul has personal energetic contacts with the rest of the universe, knowing that things named and unnamed were long before us and will be after we as an animal species join the dinosaurs; somehow I believe that the true *Homo sapiens'* energy cosmologists tell us was in that teaspoon of matter, that cosmic egg, primeval atom, that began it all. Puzzled as I am about the reason and beginning of our individual presence, I cannot begin to accept the disgusting decay of flesh as an ending.

Belief in one's soul is the ultimate abstraction of life, mercifully ending all hopeless labored thought and serious conjecturing, entailing the single simple belief that energy is one great system of matter within restless energies of many force and life fields, intermingled, multiconscious, from energy to matter and back interchangeably throughout the universe.

I could never believe as atheists do, that there is no god at all, and for sociability regret finding myself unable to embrace the popular religion of Christianity. Like many would-be believers, I seek an upward friendly movement to my shallow existence, crave purpose in an orderly cosmos for my unknown soul from the chaos of life, with worthy tasks with reasons unknown and a reward in afterlife. Should my search for religious truths fail I can become extremely desolate, forced according to William Butler Yeats to-

*Drain our souls to empty sops
Crawl unsheltered to our lonely grave Where all ladders start
In the foul rag-and-bone of the heart.*

When man, raised to believe blindly, is no longer tuned to his god, the ladder, soul, is gone by which he could have climbed to salvation instead of falling back into a flat, inexplicable death. I have seriously considered little-known panpsychism that contends that all Nature is psychical and every physical motion a rudimentary mental process involving the soul. I suspect that this fits somewhere into quantum mechanics. Gustav Fechner, a panpsychist, believed in a hierarchy of souls, subordinate to a world soul, the soul of God, whose body is Nature, and began a branch of learning called psychophysics, which tried to abolish artificial differences between mind and body, treating each as a different side of the same reality. Panpsychism comes from the Greek, *pan*, all, and *psyche*, soul, which like Plato's belief is based on *hylozoism*, an ancient Greek Ionian belief that all matters are animated life connected to man's mind (soul, not brain). These beliefs are entirely compatible, along with pantheologism, the concept that Nature is the intelligent activity of God.

My thoughts on the soul derive directly from Nature, firm, though not scientifically provable; not secondhand, psychopathic, threatening nightmares emanating from so-called holy scriptures; dead, musty opinions, revelations about a heaven and a hell, many mansions and fire and brimstone, described not by an emissary from God but by an Italian poet and ancient prophets (people who spoke for God) whose knowledge was gross ignorance of the subject.

I finally realized without being coached that I had something to believe in. I was a deist, a Naturalist, part of the grand scheme of the vast universe, a deist, belief in one God as the basis of Nature and reason, with an accompanying denial of revelations to individuals.

All are but parts of one stupendous whole. Whose body Nature is and God the soul.
-Alexander Pope

While living, one needs reassuring faith related to life's familiars, and so I embrace the beautiful concept of naturalism, which broadly believes that God, the cosmic energy, and the universe are one. Nature is the manifestation of the persuasive cosmological background, the belief that phenomena are ordered by technological laws of science.

Christians teach that their God created the world and that He is transcendent because He came before Nature (which they fail to capitalize). Being of but little knowledge, no one of the old religions mentioned the universe. They knew nothing about where they existed in that simple little world, that pale blue dot of Carl Sagan, third planet from the sun.

During its brief appearance in world affairs, deism made uncoordinated efforts to establish itself as a religion and a science and expunge non-rational elements from the Christian religion. Most deist, however, though learned and mentally active, were easily contradicted by full-time paid Christian propagandists. Deism had no sales emphasis, no over-all organization or written creed, aside from Unitarianism, which too was against belief in a trinity of Gods.

God is Nature, *Deus sive Natura*, an active intermingling, all-determining process of the cosmos, Nature, impossible to limit or modify God the eternal immanent cause of it all, the great cosmic energy, in which every bodily change is also a mental 'change effected by the soul. My soul, to me potentially powerful, is no pawn to be moved around recklessly by any deity or tucked away in any heaven that offers nothing but mansions or being tossed into a pit of magma. It exists apart from any anything in the Christian Bible or dictated to by any religion fabricated by *Homo sapiens* from tribal lore, popular beliefs, and utterances; copied and often wishfully altered; opinions of religious leaders of the still bloody Mideast; vague memories of long-dead spiritual leaders such as Abraham and Moses, whose messages would, by any legal consideration today, be mere hearsay; dreams or nightmares called heavenly 'revelations' made to a select few acquiring false histories.

I am approached by religious men who are certain they represent the Divine Will. I hope it will not be irreverent for me to say that if it be probable that God would reveal His will to others on a point so connected with my duty, it might be supposed He would reveal it directly to me. -Abraham Lincoln

Carl Gustav Jung-

Faith is the antithesis of progress. Faith strives to retain a primitive mental condition on mere sentimental grounds. It is unwilling to give up the primitive childlike relationship to mind created and hypothesized figures. It wants to go on enjoying the security and confidences of a world still presided over by powerful, responsible and kindly parents.

I hold to Karl Marx: "Religions are hallucinogens prescribed to make men immune to the fear of death," written in an essay critiquing Hegel's *Philosophy of Law*-

Religion is the sight of the hard-pressed creature, the heart of the heartless world, as it is the soul of soulless circumstances. It is the opium of the people.

Organized, *revealed* religions are essentially fictive, free invention of the human brain, depending on the word of one or two so-called holy men, found necessary to fill a vacuum for those who do not think for themselves, as television entertains those who will not or cannot read. Begun in ancient times and perpetuated by ignorant family and peer pressures, a habit of belief was established and an obligation assumed, making attendance of church on Sunday as habitual and rewarding to the average believer as soap operas on weekdays. In this sleepwalking social atmosphere, this planned phatic situation, preachers continue their sad, stifling business of infantilizing man.

Superstitious Sundays do, however, as do other social gatherings, provide mutually protective, thoughtless environments for sharing such common emotional burdens as fear, grief and loneliness. With this built-in mutual protection plan, most individuals willingly remain religiously obedient and intellectually numb, with no fear of being ridiculed.

Man is the religious animal. He is the only religious animal. He is the only animal that has these true religions---several of them. -Mark Twain

To feel superior to 'lower' animals, animal man has a larger, more active brain, a waste system unknown and unneeded by 'lower' animals for disposing a wide variety of stresses, many of which are known only to man to be fatal. Plagued by the knowledge of the certainty and finality of death, teased by many abstractions which he cannot apply to his longevity, unlike 'lower' animals man loses a long growing-up period due to ignorant parents trying to explain how to exist in a short-lived mystery ending in death.

*Faces along the bar
Cling to their average day;
The lights must never go out,
The music must always play
Lest we should see where we are,
Lost in the haunted wood,
Children afraid of the night
Who have never been happy or good.*
- Wystan Hugh Auden

At the time of the American Revolution, deism surfaced as a revolution of intellects accepting a single all-powerful God, assuming a superior source of energy for all living matter. Unlike in the Christian Bible, their deist God never begot a son, being far too occupied begetting the sun.

Few today have heard of deism for it was never a crusade, movement or belief offered to the average man, but to those psychologically adult; never appealing to the average man for it requires thinking rather than believing.

Thomas Paine's *Age of Reason* amounted to a theological treatise about the place of religion in society. Even as scientist Isaac Newton and such philosophers as John Locke discovered a systematic harmonious universe through the laws of physics, Paine concluded religion should be located by reason alone. "Of all the tyrannies that affect mankind," he wrote, "tyranny in religion is the worst. Every other species of tyranny is limited to the world we live in. Religion strides beyond the grave to pursue us into eternity."

According to a biography by Philip S. Foner, *Rights of Man*, First Carol Publishing Group Edition, 1991-

He went "marching through the Christian forest with an axe," And as he marched through the Christian forest he destroyed the stories of creation, the garden of eden, the resurrection, mysteries and miracles, prophecies and prophets, and everything else through to revelation, basing all his arguments on science and reason.

After completing his journey through the forest, Paine concluded: "Of all the systems of religion that ever were invented, there is none more derogatory to the Almighty, more unedifying to man, more repugnant to reason, and more contradictory to itself than this thing called Christianity."

This does not mean, however, that Paine denied the greatness of Jesus as a man. "Nothing that is said here can apply," he wrote, "even with the most distant disrespect to the real character of Jesus Christ. He was a virtuous and amiable man. The morality that he preached and practiced was of the most benevolent kind. Paine's entire religious creed if put simply, by unaided reason man could know that there is a God, that he has certain duties toward him and his fellowman, and that the performance of these duties made for his welfare in the present life and hereafter. He ended Age of Reason on a note of hope: "Certain I am that when opinions are free, either in matters of government or religion, truth will finally and powerfully prevail"

He could not foresee that there were those who were not interested in allowing opinions to be free and deism into a popular movement would make life miserable for him. He underwent a barrage of calumny and vituperation such as has been visited upon few men in our history. Falsely accused of being an atheist, considered the same as a deist by his ignorant New Rochelle, New York neighbors, Paine was buried on the farm given him by Congress instead of in the public cemetery. Ten years later his bones were dug up and shipped to England to be displayed in a traveling side show, then sold individually as grim souvenirs.

The policy of those who prepare dictionaries is to hold deism to the lower case print, as are atheism and agnosticism, for they are not organized, revealed, widely embraced religious beliefs. Nor is the deist God to be worshipped or bowed to for it is purely intellectual rather than personal or emotional; physical secularist of social philosophy that rejects the restraints and personalities of conventional religions.

Deism is the totality of Nature, everything in the universe, open to free thought, inquiries and reasoning, working through the laws of Nature rather than being restricted to dated fictitious miracles of local concern.

In trying to replace old religious habits with deism, some are dismayed when they fail to find customary diversions of spiritual exercises as prayers and rituals. Deism, reason alone, produces no assistance when facing sorrow, grief or loneliness for deism has no company of fellows to practice and occupy time with, instead it requires an exceptional intellectual self-contained mind which cannot, despite pleasant illusions created by religious cults, ritual and prayer, accept the many contradictions in other religions. '

A number of Christian philosophers and other deep thinkers in England in the 17th and 18th centuries during the Age of Enlightenment sought to begin a *natural* reasonable sect with one God and no supernatural revelations. Its birth was also in protest of the ugliness of existing Christian sects: Catholic Inquisitions, constant brutal warring of Catholics against Protestants and vice versa, Witch Crazes and horrors of Calvinist Puritans to such an extreme as putting a child to death because he disobeyed his parents.

The appearance of deism was triggered spectacularly by discoveries of mathematician Isaac Newton, among the highest achievements of human thought, such as differential calculus and the theory of universal gravitation, the pull of the sun on our planet, the force that holds our universe in order preventing celestial bodies colliding, understood by the average person no further than falling apples.

'Tis the temper of the supersensitive part of mankind in matters of religion ever to be fond of mysteries and for that reason to like best what they understand least.

-Sir Isaac Newton

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