

CHURCH, STATE AND RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

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Let me begin by presenting and destroying a number of very pervasive and pernicious myths, long regarded by millions as guideposts in American life, as bright stars in the constellation of our highest national ideals:

1. Most of the people who left the Old World to come to the New World did so to enjoy religious freedom;
2. The Founding Fathers were God-fearing good Christian men;
3. Religious freedom is that which reflects the will of the majority, democratically expressed and codified law;
4. Religious toleration is to be cultivated and practiced by all.

The passenger list of the early boats to reach Jamestown and Plymouth were filled with dissenters, malcontents, troublemakers, criminals, social pariahs, and not a few religious fanatics. It is true that in 1689, England put into effect the Act of Religious Toleration, but this should not be confused with a charter for religious freedom. Under its provisions, Catholics and Unitarians (to name just two) were excluded and therefore unable legally to practice their respective disciplines. Well, then, didn't these folks board ship for the New World and for religious freedom? The answer is an emphatic "No!" Most of the religious dissidents came to the New World to escape British tyranny by creating a tyranny of their own! Once settled and in a majority, they would visit upon dissenters in their midst the same punitive treatment once experienced in England. In other words, they would do unto others as had been done unto them. Yes, here and there, there were remarkable exceptions, particularly in the persons of Roger Williams and Thomas Jefferson. Williams, an individualistic Baptist preacher and thinker, established a haven for religious heretics in Providence, Rhode Island. Most of the colonies, however, had a colonial church, generally Anglican or another Protestant denomination, but you should know that the overwhelming majority of immigrants were completely unchurched. According to the most reliable estimates, no more than 4% of the American population was churched in 1789. So much for the happy memories the once-churched heretics brought with them to the New World. The power structure has always seen the value of religion in controlling the masses. Attempts to establish colonial churches were not always happy, easy experiences. In Virginia, where a most oppressive and severe colonial church existed, Jefferson and Madison worked a near miracle in securing the Statute for Religious Liberty for the State of Virginia. This accomplishment, indebted as it was to Roger Williams in Rhode Island, the Quakers in Pennsylvania, and to Jefferson's lifelong crusade for a wall of separation between church and state, reflected the emerging power of the rationalists, the deists, and the Unitarians. The practices in Virginia of religious non-conformists were almost as bad as those in England prior to the Act of Religious Toleration there. The actual punishments are little short of barbaric and the practices were widespread. Eventually, of course, the Jefferson-Madison-Virginia experience would become the national practice with the adoption of the Constitution's First Amendment in 1791. Frequently overlooked by historians and teachers alike is Madison's classic statement, "Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments," and attempt

to force through taxation the support of the Protestant Episcopal Church in Virginia. His (Madison's) reasoning attacked the substantive evils and tyranny of taxing people to support religion.

One of the most amazing myths to enjoy permanence and an almost reverential quality is the idea that the founding fathers were God-fearing Christians. Naturally, there were a few, but the ones we cherish most were highly individualistic men who hardly fit the Falwellian stereotype of the good Christian. Consider this largely overlooked and very unpublicized fact: When the Constitutional Convention opened in May of 1787 (it would wind things up by Sept. 17th), Benjamin Franklin, in his 80's, was the grand old man of American politics. He also was no longer playing with a full deck, or at least he couldn't handle the cards as he once had. Why do I say this? Because he suggested at the first meeting that each day's deliberations begin with a prayer and that some local clergyman be invited to conduct the spiritual calisthenics. The delegates assembled did not know quite what to do, not wanting to injure Franklin's feelings, yet without any interest in his motion, tried simply to ignore by silently postponing the matter. Franklin brought it up again and this time his motion died for want of a second! Does this reflect the thinking and faith of "good God-fearing Christians," who comprise what we today call the Founding Fathers? The action taken by the delegates was completely in accord with their loathing of any attempt to mix church and state. Their knowledge of history, here and abroad, had convinced them that this new government would be secular in nature. (As Ingersoll would observe a century later, somewhat optimistically perhaps, "Our forefathers retired God from politics!" Don't we wish!)

If rejection of Franklin's motion is not evidence enough as to the views of the framers of the Constitution as to the necessity of not mixing church and state, consider the fact that nowhere in the document does the word "God" or "Christian" appear. This was no accident. It was not an oversight. It was a rational, deliberate and calculated act. Church folk of the time were scandalized and lodged vigorous protests. Mass meetings were held in an effort to get God into the Constitution. Jefferson, who did not attend the Constitutional Convention, was not satisfied with the omission. He wanted more, much more. He wrote to Madison, from Paris (where he was serving as Franklin's successor as American Ambassador to France): "I will now add what I do not like. First, the omission of a bill of rights providing clearly and without the aid of sophisms for freedom of religion, freedom of press. . . a bill of rights is what the people are entitled to against every government on earth, general or particular, and what no just government should refuse or rest on inference."

Jefferson and Patrick Henry sparked the writing and eventual adoption of the First Amendment, without which our Constitution would not be worth the parchment it was written on. The reason that Jefferson, Henry and others insisted on the specific language was that they considered these freedoms of the utmost importance and not to be left to chance or inference. Otherwise the prevailing sentiment of any churched majority might, in fact, seek to force its views on society as a whole. In the generations that have followed, more and more citizens have become convinced that the age-old,

reliable standard of majority rule ought to hold sway in matters of religion. Why not simply take a vote, preferably by secret ballot, and if the majority is theistic and Christian, what does majority rule mean if it is not then our national standard and posture? This popular, simplistic position is utterly ridiculous. Let us draw a parallel. Let us assume that in your neighborhood you occupy a huge triple lot, on which you have built your home. The neighborhood desperately needs a recreational space, a playground for the dozens of children who reside in the neighborhood. A neighborhood meeting is called. A secret ballot is taken, and guess what, you have lost two-thirds of your triple lot to a neighborhood playground. You protest? How dare you, a vote was taken and there were only two dissenting votes, those of you and your spouse. Was this not done fairly? Was not a fair and secret ballot taken? We all recognize this is absurd because it involves a tangible property right. The same principle, however, is that religious convictions and beliefs are the property of each individual and cannot be subjected to majority-vote determination. It makes no difference whether there is but one member of a cult who may believe that when you die your soul goes to a garage in Buffalo, that wacko is entitled to the same protection under the First Amendment as the most eminent prelate of the most conformist church in the country. Majority rule simply has no meaning when applied to matters of conscience, speech, assembly or the press. There are some limitations as we shall see, but majority rule is not one of them.

The fourth and final myth to be considered in these opening remarks concerns the role and nature of toleration. Tolerance has long been heralded as a worthy human characteristic, a fine value that makes for harmony in our society. In reality, it simply closes people's mouths, often in the presence of the absurd. But I get ahead of myself. The first problem with tolerance is that it implies a superior position by those who are exhibiting tolerance towards others whose beliefs are different. Actually, we tolerate weather (what else can we do, we cannot control it!). Who am I to tolerate another's beliefs? By what right do we feel that the majority is in a position to tolerate a minority when the First Amendment guarantees to each and every person total freedom of conscience in all matters? What we perceive here is the easy trap that has caught many a religious non-conformist and some of Humanism's best spokespeople. I refer to the idea of belief vs. disbelief, of believers vs. disbelievers. This is one of the most obnoxious and poisonous myths of all. If there is religious freedom there can be no official or orthodox belief system. Whenever a Unitarian, Humanist, rationalist, freethinker allows the orthodox to establish what is "belief" and what is "disbelief," non-conformity, apostasy, creative heresy is in peril. Because Humanists reject orthodox views of creation, Commandments, sacraments and Biblical notions does not mean that we have no beliefs. It means that we reject the antiquated and specious because of what we do believe. Negation is the act by which we clear the land to provide clean soil for a new growth. If Humanists can do no more than harvest weeds and never get beyond calling attention to the harvest, they are doomed to remain small and ineffectual in the lives of people. Humanists do believe, they believe with passion and many have suffered mightily for giving public expression to their views. To allow any group, combination of groups, traditions or theologies to set up what is belief, is to admit that those who differ from

orthodoxy are somehow inferior. This is part and parcel of this nonsense of tolerance. We will tolerate you because of our understanding of the First Amendment, so say the Falwellians with obvious condescension and some regret, but they are 100% wrong. Under the First Amendment we are free to exercise our consciences as we see fit whether our views are shared by 1,100, by one million, or 100 million. Numbers simply are not the test.

The worst aspect of the tolerance argument is that it has closed public debate on controversial matters if they are incorporated in somebody's religious faith. "Shhh, you can't attack that, that's his/her religious belief. That's off-limits!" Consider how idiotic this stance is. In what other human discipline do we allow this artificial barrier to protect ignorance. I am again forced to quote Ingersoll: "Two times two is four; that needs no miracle. Two times two is five; no miracle can help that!"

Let me give a precise, factual example. When I was a student at Boston University in the late 1940's, the issue of legalizing birth control in Massachusetts became a matter for a public referendum. The Roman Catholics mounted a huge publicity campaign against the public referendum. Millions were spent in huge billboards declaring, "Vote No on Proposition 7: It's Against God's Law!" Apparently the Almighty is not registered to vote in Massachusetts or if God is registered, there was some uncertainty as to whether he could stuff the ballot box and insure the right outcome. Some of my professors found it difficult to address this issue publicly. They were not alone. The power and pressure of the church, economic sanctions, et al., plus the distorted view of tolerance tended to keep the issue off-limits from public debate. I feel exactly the same way about registering my views today. I cannot be silent because I may be stepping on somebody's religious beliefs. I am not here to protect ignorance simply because there are many ignoramuses in our land. When a Catholic says to me, "Our present Pope is very learned, he can speak in more than a dozen languages," I am not impressed because the Pontiff is multilingual in his expression of antiquated nonsense that is very detrimental to the future of the human race. The tolerant response is to nod your head and take another drink. But silence means that you are giving your support to that which you abhor.

One of the roots, perhaps the taproot of the arguments for this kind of "toleration," is the idea that the framers of the Constitution did not intend to be "hostile" to religion, only neutral. There are some, and I regret to say altogether too many, justices who have occupied the U.S. Supreme Court, who see nothing wrong when the government as evidence of its neutrality aids ALL religions. The any or all argument has plagued the jurists and constitutional law experts for decades. It is obvious to all that it would be a violation of the First Amendment for the government to aid one particular religion. But would it be wrong if the government were to bestow its blessing on ALL religions? Would this not remove any possibility of having discriminated against some group if all are provided for by the government's actions. Being a Jeffersonian in this matter, I am not persuaded that "aiding all" is a sound idea and in line with the First Amendment. In my judgment, if one is neutral, then you cannot be "for" some particular action. That's tantamount to being an official at the Olympic

Games who declares, I'm neutral but I'd like to see all the Americans win gold medals. Preposterous! To me being neutral is being neutral and not doing anything for or against a particular question. Now here is where the fundamentalists and the Romans come together to protest. In their judgment, not to do something is evidence of the government's hostility which, they say, is nowhere to be found in the First Amendment.

Close on the heels of this protest is that old favorite of the Romans that they experience double taxation as it is and that therefore relief ought to be provided for tuition tax-credits or a voucher system. Pause and reflect on the illogic of the double taxation argument. First of all we long ago agreed in this nation that public education is a public responsibility. Private education is a choice and a right, but no one's responsibility save those who are interested in the enterprise. As citizens we have a responsibility to support public education. As citizens we have a right to send our kids to private/parochial schools, but in so doing we do not somehow shed our public responsibility. "But we are freeing the schools of a great burden by sending our kids to private schools. The state should reimburse us for so doing!" Sounds logical, except no one asked you to not use the schools and you are not freed from paying subsidies to a municipal transit authority simply because you do not use it. The chances of your not having used the fire department does not give you a tax reduction for the municipal service you have not used. The examples are legion but they are unnecessary in any event because of a much more compelling argument.

When the Romans and others ask for tuition tax credits or a voucher system, they are in actuality, asking for a double subsidy. The problem is not double taxation. The reality is that tax credits would represent a double subsidy because the churches and church schools are already tax exempt. Do you know of anyone who would regard NOT having to pay taxes as anything other than a subsidy by the government? If instead of your paying income tax next April, you got every cent back that you had paid, this would not be a subsidy to you? But, it is suggested the government cannot tax churches because of the First Amendment and the separation of church and state. Find me the proof for that in the Constitution or in judicial decrees and it will be a major discovery. People's Church in Kalamazoo, Michigan has paid taxes for 27 years. For the first ten we did it voluntarily. When we moved to our new headquarters, we continued to make a gift in lieu of taxes. I acquired, for the church, a parcel of 6.7 acres immediately adjacent to our original piece of ground, on which we built. Within months we received an assessment and later in the year a tax bill. (The amount levied was far less than the gift we had been making which shows you the brilliance of the township financial wizards who run this activity!) No, churches are taxed out of government courtesy, not law. There are a number of notorious cases involving tax dodges by groups engaged in private enterprise claiming "religious exemption." A good case in point is the Christian Brothers Winery which sought to hide behind a monk's habit, but the matter was finally resolved in favor of sanity and taxing the good brothers.

Logic has never been the determining factor in these matters until it

reaches the Supreme Court. Please do not assume that I feel that the Court has always been right (or Jeffersonian) in its decisions. Far from it. You must remember or learn, perhaps, that the Court did not really get involved in the matter of church and state until this century. For decades people assumed that whatever was done must be legal, else it would have been outlawed. A comforting idea, but totally without merit. First of all someone has to bring an action against some entity that is violating the First Amendment's protections. This is not easy and it is very expensive. It is not often that we can rely on government to take the initiative in protecting the First Amendment's guarantees. To my immediate recollection, Jefferson was the last President to perform this great public service. A group of well-meaning clergymen came to the White House and asked Jefferson, as President, to issue a Proclamation of Thanksgiving. Jefferson heard them out and then politely but firmly refused. Thunderstruck, the divines repeated their pitch and Jefferson held his ground. He was the last President to act in this manner, though JFK came very close in his support of the Supreme Court's famous and highly controversial Regent's Prayer case in 1963. Between Jefferson's first term (1800-1804) and 1963 is a long wait.

Of course, some have been light-headed enough to actually believe in what they were doing. But that's another matter over which we have no control. If there isn't a Jeffersonian sitting in the White House and a church-state issue slips by and it is not contested, it becomes a tradition and hence people assume it is legal. An excellent illustration is the case of Mr. Pollock, who was once superintendent of the mint in Philadelphia. To quote Ingersoll: "He (Pollock) was almost insane about having God in the Constitution. Failing in that, he got the inscription on our money, 'In God We Trust.'", Never able to leave a fact without getting a laugh out of it, Ingersoll hastened to add: "As our silver dollar is now worth 85 cents, it is claimed that the inscription means that we trust in God for the other 15 cents!"

Let me digress once more to illustrate how the freethinkers led by Ingersoll were not afraid to speak their piece in public on matters religious. Long after the last gun of the final battle had been fired, Congress finally approved a law that would redeem all of the paper greenbacks that had been printed during the conflict. Upon learning of this good news, Ingersoll called the newspapers in New York City and said he would appear on the steps of a principal bank with an important announcement. At noon a huge crowd had gathered when Ingersoll took to the top step. Taking a paper bill from his pocket and waving it grandly before the crowd, he shouted, "I know that my redemmer liveth!" There may have been a better time for freethought and the separation of church and state, but no one enjoyed it more than Ingersoll and his hordes of admirers.

To return to the inscription on our coins. Whether it is or is not a violation of church and state, it went uncontested too long. To be stricken now would be a costly and senseless gesture. It is too late. More about timing later.

The length of time that an unconstitutional practice has gone on does not

insure its being invulnerable to being outlawed once it reaches the Supreme Court. Some of you here may know Roy Torcaso. His case is one of the great victories achieved on behalf of the wall of separation espoused and erected (in part) by Jefferson. Roy Torcaso may be known to you, or he may not. He is one of those unsung heroes of religious freedom. In 1960 he applied for a notary public's license in the State of Maryland. He met all the requirements, filled out the forms, paid his fee and then was asked to raise his right hand and take the oath. The oath contained, among other things, a recognition of a divine Creator in the universe. Putting it more directly, it amounted to a test oath indicating that you believed in God. Torcaso was not only outraged, he refused to mouth the words. The clerk then refused to grant him the license. Torcaso protested, but to no avail. He lodged a protest with the clerk's bosses who were adamant, "Take the oath and you get licensed." Obviously it meant, "Don't take the oath and you don't get licensed!" Torcaso took his case to court in Maryland and lost - decisively. He appealed and ultimately the Maryland Supreme Court ruled against him. Not to be deterred, this quiet but courageous man got a hearing before the U.S. Supreme Court. This was a long, frustrating and expensive battle, all over a "few words that people have said since Maryland was a colony, well over two hundred years ago!" The Court gave Torcaso's case and arguments the greatest consideration. When the decision was reached and the verdict announced, Roy Torcaso could hardly believe his ears. He had won 9 to 0. The Court said simply, but emphatically: "A state cannot require notaries public to proclaim a belief in God as a test of office." Everyone in this room and across our nation owes a great debt to this man who virtually single-handedly cleared the air and removed an odious practice from our land. The fact that the Court reversed the Maryland Supreme Court by a 9-0 vote was indeed heartening to the cause of church-state issues. Three years later the Court spoke again, almost unanimously outlawing the Lord's prayer and Bible readings in the public schools.

The Court has not always been this devoted to the Jeffersonian view. Take the famous *Gobitas* case just before World War II. A young Jehovah's Witness was denied access to public education in West Virginia because on religious grounds he refused to participate in the morning flag-salute ceremony. Incredible though it may seem, the high Court held that the state could make such a requirement of students as a condition of being enrolled in a public school. Justices Jackson and Douglas were particularly outraged. Several years went by and without any change in the Constitution or in the laws of the land executed under that Constitution, there came before the Tribunal a case involving the identical set of circumstances and also from West Virginia. In *West Virginia v. Barnette*, the Court reversed itself and Douglas was never more eloquent declaring: "If there is any fixed star in our Constitutional constellation, it is that no official high or petty, can prescribe what shall be orthodox in politics, nationalism, religion or other matters of opinion or force citizens to confess by word or act their faith therein." Hooray for the Jeffersonian ideal.

The picture, however, is not altogether clear or consistent and we have ample reason for alarm in the present era. Those who can benefit by putting their hand in the public till for parochial interests are unremitting in their

efforts to succeed. Part of the impetus occurred as a result of the Everson School Bus case. When Kennedy was elected, many devout Romans forgot that he was a non-parochial school Catholic and a keen student of church-state issues and the fact that as a public Catholic he must show himself to be a Jeffersonian first and foremost. Therefore, in 1963, following the Lord's prayer decision, when he was asked about aid to parochial schools, he sought to make clear and public the subtle distinction reached in Everson that did not represent a breaking down of the wall of separation. The case involved the State of New Jersey. A law had been passed that provided free bus transportation to parochial school students. By the narrowest of margins, 5-4, the Court upheld the state's free busing law. Kennedy pointed out: "The Everson case clearly prohibits aid to the school, to parochial schools. I don't think there is any doubt of that." Kennedy went on to point out that the Court's majority felt it was not a church-state issue as much as the state's right to protect the health and welfare of its citizens, the so called police powers which in this instance focus on the well-being of parochial school children. Compelling though the logic may be, it failed to convince and convert 4 of the 9 justices. Justice Jackson declared that "aid to the children attending the parochial schools was indistinguishable from aid to the church itself."

Suffice it to say here that Jeffersonians were upset by the Everson decision and have remained so. It is the old "nose of the camel in the tent" that worries the purists who see this breach in the wall of separation as the start of a major assault on the wall itself in its entirety. There have been subsequent breaches, notably *Zorach v Clauson*, which reversed the spirit of the *McCullum* case regarding released time religious instruction in public schools. The *McCullum* case was celebrated because a young mother had carried the case all the way to the Supreme Court and, like Roy Torcaso, was upheld by the Court. Since *McCullum* we have had *Zorach*, which permits a slightly altered released time program but which had Justices Jackson, Black and Frankfurter dissenting vigorously, but to no avail. The year was 1952, and nothing has happened since to enhance or even establish the Jeffersonian posture.

I now come to the most challenging and difficult aspect of the entire church-state matter. As a rule the genuine Jeffersonians, the true libertarians in this matter, have placed altogether too much confidence and reliance upon the Courts of the land to maintain the wall Jefferson and others erected. While the Court has been rather faithful to the Jeffersonian heritage overall, it does not function in a cultural vacuum. To suggest that the Supreme Court is not influenced by the *Zeitgeist*, the spirit of the age, the climate of the times, is to reveal a woeful naivete. Few pundits or columnists are willing to point their commentaries at the real danger to our nation. The candidates will studiously avoid the issue, save those who are on the wrong side. Every once in a while I am asked by somebody who is unacquainted with the church I have served for 27 years, "How can you spend your life in religion. Don't you think religion is dead and, if not dead, totally irrelevant to today's problems in the nuclear age?" (Of course, it all depends on how you define religion, does it not?) Well, I think the question

is superficial and misreads the present climate badly. Four years ago this November, Anthony Lewis, a columnist of the New York Times, made this observation: "If you take longer view than tomorrow's polls, the most important issue in the 1980's election is not inflation, or foreign policy or unemployment. It is the role of religion in American politics." In 1984 the same holds true if you substitute "federal deficit" for "inflation." What makes Lewis' statement tragically true is that very few people seem to be aware of what he is saying. Most of the life-threatening problems confronting humanity today are grounded in antiquated religious notions. The real threat to human survival, I believe, is not located in Moscow and Washington, but in Mexico City. "Mexico City? Have you gone daft, Roger?" By the year 2000, Mexico City will have the greatest population of any city on planet Earth. It will also be less likely to cope with the numbers than any existing city of 3 million or more. Right now it staggers under the weight of industrial pollution, immigration, huge unemployment and a totally unresponsive government.

Writing in 1950, Julian Huxley said, "Population is the problem of our age!" Nobody who was running for office listened. In the late 70's Linus Pauling was asked what was the optimum population for the USA? "Oh, about 150 million," he replied with that devastating smile of his. No one who was running for office listened. Population is the number one church-state issue of our time as well as the first and foremost challenge to human survival. It is, very simply, a church-state issue because too many millions of the world's population agree with the Pope, and Reagan, that abortion and family planning ought not to be a part of government's concern or support. During August, a conference on population problems world-wide was held under the auspices of the UN in Mexico City. The American delegate might as well have been in the employ of the Vatican. James Buckley insisted that population pressures and problems can be solved through the free market economy and that abortion and family planning are not the right approach at all. Here he is speaking in a city where just having to breathe the air is equivalent to smoking two packs of cigarettes a day; where thousands of homeless, huddled in shacks and rundown tents scrounge dumps for sustenance, with millions more due to join them in the next 16 years. Yet his value system tells him family planning and abortion are not the right courses of action.

I have no trouble admitting that abortion is not good birth control, that it becomes necessary through the failure of conception control. I love Margaret Sanger, but she made a terrible blunder referring to her initial efforts as "birth control." What she was really trying to promote was conception control that precludes the necessity for any action at or before birth. If we had intelligent, universal, safe conception control, the need for abortion would be greatly reduced. The Pope is still promoting abstinence, continence and rhythm, a trinity more worthless and ineffective than the Trinity of the Nicene Creed.

Since the school prayer and Bible reading decisions, the country has witnessed a resurgence of the religious far-right. It is handsomely endowed with millions and millions of dollars. It is carefully orchestrated and or-

ganized. It has skillfully targeted candidates regarded as Satan incarnate and taken them out of office. More threatening than getting a few good men out is the trend to getting a lot of mediocre ones in. The climate is right for religious fundamentalism of the far right to dominate American politics. If you were like me, you watched a lot of the recent summer Olympics. God was entered in almost every event and God received more verbal gold medals than all of the competitors combined. This is not a time for Humanists to be silent on any and all questions affecting church and state. The courts cannot save us. We must build a climate in which the Court can be assured that the direction in which decisions should go have some relevance to contemporary values and concerns.

At the heart of the present difficulties is our inability to face up to need for humanity to control its own numbers both quantitatively and yes, even qualitatively. (We need no more people as pets or better and bigger special Olympics.) What we need is improved pregnancy testing to remove from the birth process the hopelessly defective. At the other end of life's journey we need to come to grips with the urgency of practicing euthanasia whenever requested and when not requested, but where the condition is irreversibly hopeless. But is there not a danger of mistakes, of a genocidal use coming into play? A remote possibility and not a sufficient threat to warrant our sticking our heads in the sand for yet another generation. A lifeboat can hold just so many people. Planet Earth is one big lifeboat. How many can it hold? I for one do not want to find out.

The Pope and his devotees still talk about human fecundity as if we needed to continue to go forth and multiply. As a Humanist, I say, go forth and subtract, starting now.

The Supreme Court will not do this for us. It is doubtful that the Congress will act until public pressure pushes them into acting. We know that the overwhelming majority of women favor abortion and family planning, but do our governments and institutions cater to this sentiment? The future is now, not tomorrow or a year from now, or the turn of the century. In fact, some feel it is already too late. With the optimism befitting Ingersoll, as a Humanist I must act as if I believe that human destiny is in human hands because if it isn't, I'm hard pressed to discover any entity, cosmic or otherwise, who gives a damn about this bustling little family on this crowded planet of astral dust, a microscopic speck in the vastness of the universe, chasing itself around its insignificant sun and all the time whining, pawing the air and asking for outside help, help that never once has come.

Fellow Humanists, church-state is the issue in 1984. It is our job, our task, our responsibility to spread the word, and so seek to make humanity responsible for itself. Let us retire God from politics and ask the best of ourselves.