

# How and Why Now Fading Religious Supernaturalism Has Proven Incapable of Dependably Minimizing Societal Ills from Juvenile Mortality to Wars

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## Abstract

The commonly held premise that speculative supernaturalistic religion is critical to maximizing the socioeconomic success of societies while suppressing lethal violence has been undergoing growing historical and scientific scrutiny. The cumulative research indicates that even moderate or progressive theism is not reliably efficacious, and theism especially conservative often contributes to societal dysfunction and war over history and today. Religion cannot be part of the solution to societal ills because it is popular only when socioeconomic conditions are sufficiently defective to compel most to alleviate their chronic anxiety by petitioning supernatural forces for aid and protection. The most successful and pacific societies in history have been the most nontheistic modern democracies, in part because a high level of secure prosperity helps suppresses mass religion. So rather than being universal and integral to human psychology in the manner of language, technology and art, religious supernaturalism is comparatively superficial and elective, and it is poorly developed even in some hunter-gatherers. Deep inherent moral defects of theism including that the death of half the children born disproving the existence of a loving creator, unethical misogynist ancient scriptures that provide flawed societal guidance, and the immorality of worshipping a defective deity in search of rewards have and always will preclude the religious industry from being the foundation of successful societies. Recent claims that post reformations Christianity is more suited to lesser violence and modernity than is Islam is being challenged by the alliance of some Christian sects with autocratic regimes, most especially the Russian Orthodox church and its support for Putin and his virulent assault on Ukraine. Autocratic atheism has its own flaws. The best human option is humanistic atheosecular liberal democracy. The possibility of the last helping bring about a better world is in line with the rapid expansion of nontheism over recent decades. But reactionary authoritarian religion running on extreme conspiracy theories is mounting a major effort to return societies to retroactive, oppressive traditional values. Preventing that from happening requires greater exposure of the maladaptive beliefs and policies that afflict supernaturalistic theism by more directly confronting those who believe in the supernatural while explaining the advantages of rational democratic atheism, and especially by those on the American center-left voting at the same per capita rate as theoconservatives.

Key Words: atheism, secularism, nonreligion, nontheism, theism, religion, societal dysfunction, societal success, violence, war

“Christianity will go. It will vanish and shrink. I needn’t argue about that; I’m right and I’ll be proved right. We’re more popular than Jesus now; I don’t know which will go first – rock ‘n’ roll or Christianity.”  
–John Lennon, 1966

## Introduction

Of late supernaturalistic religion is experiencing a historically unprecedented contraction. This is most true in the most advanced prosperous democracies, dramatically reducing theism’s social impact in much of Europe,

North America, Australia, New Zealand, and Japan. But even in the second and third worlds theism is often not doing as well as is often presumed as documented by Inglehart (2021). That said, the speculative theory that is the opinion that at least one supernatural deity exists and plays a crucial role in human affairs continues to play an oversized role in much of the world at individual, community, national, and international levels. Including in civil and military strife and terrorism. Large numbers are inspired by – or at least exploit – supernaturalistic religion to engage in lethal violence. 9/11 was executed by hardline Muslims with a strong religious agenda; 1/6/21 was largely a Christian affair, currently the Russian dictatorship and its criminal assault of Ukraine is enthusiastically backed by the mainstream state church. But it is not just a matter of intense strife. It is widely thought that everyday living conditions around the world are impacted by the un/popularity of worship of deities. It is therefore necessary to on a scientific basis assess whether religion and nonreligion are positive or negative influences on humanity, a test that is made possible by the wide variation and popularity of religion and societal conditions in modern societies. Highly irreligious Swedes are living under very different circumstances than are much more pious Brazilians.

The need for such an examination is pressing because one of the most popular and long lasting opinions between differing peoples—the godly-religion socioeconomic hypothesis—contends that at best it is difficult if not impossible for societies to be successful and nonviolent internally and externally, unless the great majority of the population is supernaturalistically religious in that they believe that at least one moral deity exists and must be worshipped. At the same time, the presence of strong religious components in most of the strife that is afflicting the world, particularly the aggressive stance of harsh fundamentalist doctrines, is raising concerns about the corrosive influence of religion – to the degree that about half the global population thinks religion does more harm than good (Kaur-Ballagan et al., 2017).

So what is it?

And how is it that the growing popularity of ancient aliens pushed by the lucre seeking cable industry is part of why Christianity American style is taking it in the demographic chin?

Answering those and other questions as much as they can be requires extensive analysis based on a combination of history and statistics.

In modern times the Great War<sup>1</sup> of 1914–1918 played a pivotal role in the growing sociopolitical struggle between advocates of theism and nontheism because many theoconservatives interpreted the extreme death toll of the European war as exposing the perils of nations being insufficiently godly and under the undue influence of Darwinian thinking. The once progressive William Jennings Bryan became a creationist for this reason, leading to the notorious Scopes Monkey Trial and the ensuing battle between creationism and evolutionary science in the United States (Numbers, 2005) that has yet to cease. Others observed that the Great War was yet another in a long series of wars in which EuroChristians fought EuroChristians, empirically disproving the belief that the religion is pacific, and that the scale of the conflict was the result of technological advances exploited by strongly religious societies. Meanwhile the Bolshevik takeover of Russia put the first avowedly atheist government in power that promoted a hardline version of socialism with problematic results. World War II and the Jewish Holocaust have become an issue because many theoconservatives vehemently contend that the primary cause of the war and genocide, Hitlerian Nazism, was an expression of Darwinistic atheism and modern leftism (Brooks, 2006; Coulter, 2006; D’Souza, 2007, 2017; O’Reilly, 2006), while others have presented the compelling historical evidence that Nazism and other expressions of fascism were profoundly theistic in origins and nature – and/or received extensive and critical support from conservative churches and large majorities of their followers – and that the racism often associated with early social Darwinism was a pseudoscientific contamination inherited from Christian civilization (Bergen, 1996; Erickson, 2012; Hastings, 2010; Holocaust Museum 2023; Kertzer, 2001, 2014, 2022; Paul, 2003, 2004, 2012; Phayer, 2000, 2008; Scholder, 1988; Spicer, 2008; Steigman-Gall, 2003). In the latter view, World War II was a religious conflict in which godly fascists with the aid of major Christian elements attempted to extinguish irreligious communism, as well as the Jews who had killed Christ never mind that his life/death/life story is fundamental to the formation of Christianity.

How religion actually impacts daily lives in national societies had been insufficiently investigated (Bloom, 2007; Dennett, 2006; Paul, 2005), but it has seen a growing body of critical scientific – often peer reviewed – research intended to more objectively answer the important socioscientific question (Barber, 2011; Delamontagne, 2010; Gill & Lundsgaarde, 2004; Inglehart, 2021; Norris & Inglehart, 2004; Paul, 2005, 2009a,

2010a, 2010b, 2012; Pinker, 2011; Rees, 2009; Ruck et al., 2018; Ruiter & Tubergen, 2009; Verweij, Ester, & Nauta, 1997; Zuckerman, 2008, 2009, 2011, 2016, 2019).

An extensive referenced history of the support for the general godly-religion socioeconomic hypothesis is presented in Paul (2005, 2009a) and Zuckerman (2008, 2009, 2011, 2016, 2019). Many variants of the general prosocial theory are extant, so its complexity is high. The most widely held single subset is the moral-creator socioeconomic hypothesis that more specifically posits that mass worship of the one and only purposeful creator of the universe is necessary for properly prosocial societies to function properly and pacifically (Paul, 2009a, 2010b, 2012), and this is a vital tenant of the monotheistic Abrahamism that half the global population adheres to.

Contained within the moral-creator socioeconomic hypothesis are further important subvariants. Of course, many contend that a particular sect within the universalist wing of the Abrahamist cult produces the best results, the sect usually being the one that a given Christian or Muslim belongs to. Some conservative and all moderate and liberal theists deny that mass acceptance of bioevolution contributes to social ills even if they think the moral-creator socioeconomic hypothesis as a whole is operative. Conservative adherents to the moral-creator socioeconomic hypothesis often contend that popular approval of Darwinian science is societally disadvantageous for two proposed reasons. Mass acceptance of evolution tends to suppress levels of belief in a supernatural creator that is necessary for properly functional societies, and the process of biological evolution is a purposeless, amoral animalistic struggle for survival that leads to ungodly brutal social Darwinism and individual immorality.

Especially in the United States, the moral-creator socioeconomic hypothesis has been a core, driving belief among much of the political right, who propose some form of mix – the details vary – of laissez faire capitalism, minimal government, and low taxes of economic libertarianism combined with faith-based charity, rejection of Darwinian science in favor of divine creation, and traditional socioreligious mores is the godly version of socioeconomic best suited for producing a virtuous and beneficent “opportunity” society (Barr, 2019; Beck, 2016; Boyle, 2005; Coulter, 2006; Deneen, 2023; D’Souza, 2007, 2020; Foley, 2015; Harley, 2023; O’Neal, 2017; O’Reilly, 2006; Palin, 2010; Robertson, 2006; Stark, 2006, 2008, 2012; Warren, 2002), secular alternatives being the inevitable ungodly path to societal decay; these works are not scientific in that they fail to cite comprehensive technical studies that support their theses, the favorable evidence they do use being compartmentalized and cherry picked. A – shrinking – American majority agree that “God has granted America a special role in human history” (PRRI, 2021). In the theoconservative worldview, the true American Way is the best possible earthly arrangement, blessed by God. American Exceptionalism accordingly stands as the Reaganian “Shining City on the Hill” to the rest of the world. This amazingly contradictory belief – the unrestrained free markets the religious Right largely supports and promotes constitute the very same Spencerian/Randian socioeconomic survival of the fittest, the materialistic socioeconomic and secular “Social Darwinism,” that the religious right professes to oppose so strongly that they reject Darwinian evolution; and the Christian Bible favors socialism over capital —is most common among Protestant economic libertarians and is most extreme within Prosperity Christianity.

However, the hypercapitalistic version of the moral-creator socioeconomic hypothesis is rejected by some Protestant traditionalists who fear the secularization effect of the corporate consumer culture (including Warren, 2002 to a certain extent, and Ahmari, 2023 – this concern has gone overtly public with the attack on LGBTQ friendly Disney by DeSantis). It is also less accepted within the Catholic Right because church doctrine has always opposed free-wheeling capitalism even in the conservative wing (Benedict 16, 2009). Many moderate and liberal Christians similarly dismiss the muscular capitalist expression of the moral-creator socioeconomic hypothesis. The rejection of capitalism by some Christians is properly scriptural because the Christian Testaments do not detail the free markets or property rights that theoconservatives contend are Biblical, but instead describe the ideal Christian community as socialistic. The general view that religion is a vital prosocial positive has been so strongly held in America (PRRI 2021; Putman & Campbell, 2010; but see Brenan, 2018) that atheists are the victims of a degree of bigotry as “others” outside the consensus norm so high that they are largely excluded from politics and public discourse, (Paul & Zuckerman, 2011; Paul 2022b).

Liberal theists and even some who doubt the existence of deities have often accepted that supernaturalistic religion among the masses can be helpful to keeping those masses in societal line (as per Armstrong, 2009; Wright, 2008). And some denounce both fundamentalism and assertive atheism as opposing yet equivalent

extremes that each augment societal problems, unlike what they consider more benign mainline faiths and agnostics (Egginton, 2011; Hedges, 2009). However, there are dissenters to the godly-religion socioeconomic hypothesis. This includes some theists who deny that large-scale nonreligiosity is automatically dangerous to societies, but it has become more prominent in recent years as sometimes popular antireligious and/or proatheist works have appeared (Bloom, 2008; Boot, 2019; Dawkins, 2006; Dennett, 2006; Epstein, 2009; Harris, 2006, 2010; Hitchens, 2007; Paul, 2010c; Paul & Zuckerman, 2007, 2011; Pinker, 2018; Shermer, 2006, 2015; Zuckerman, 2008, 2011, 2016, 2019). It is also notable that the populations of some modern first-world countries express substantial skepticism about the beneficial effect of religion upon national societies (Brenan, 2018; ISSP, 2018; Kaur-Ballagan et al., 2017), and Euroatheists are accepted to the degree that they often openly participate in politics at the highest levels, while overtly religious figures are frequently viewed with skepticism. It has been proposed that highly religious nations are inherently unable to achieve the level of overall societal success, including low levels of lethal violence, enjoyed by the most secular democracies, leading to the secular-democratic socioeconomic hypothesis (Paul, 2009a, 2010b; 2012). The latter hypothesis generally presumes that a progressive mix of regulated capitalism and government assistance is associated with the best cumulative societal conditions in modern nations on an empirical and theoretical basis, although a minority of nontheists propose that libertarian policies can achieve the same results (Shermer, 2015). With the failure of irreligious communism, the noncapitalistic, nondemocratic version of the secular socioeconomic hypothesis no longer enjoys substantial support.

The question of whether religious faith and practice are good, bad, or neither for national societies has important implications for international violence. This is because the plausible hypothesis that well-run, pacific countries are less likely to engage in serious violence against one another than are more dysfunctional societies is empirically supported by the absence of major military conflict within and between the relatively well-run first-world democracies compared to the numerous wars ongoing in many second- and third-world countries. It follows that it is important for societies to better understand whether it is mass religion really is more likely to produce superior democratic societies. Until recently all sides of the grand debate on these issues and questions were relying largely on anecdote and theoretical opinion due to the scarcity of scientific analysis on the problem. Fortunately, this is changing as the technical research discovers how and why differing levels of organized supernaturalism and societal conditions interact with and influence one another. It is therefore becoming increasingly feasible for bodies politic to be sufficiently informed to make decisions concerning the future course of their societies based on sophisticated psychosociological analysis.

## Preliminary Discussion and Procedures

### The Reality and Connections Factors

The aim of this extensive essay and analysis is to figure out what is really going down regarding the actual earthly circumstances of humanity in relation to speculations on supernatural forces involving the species. If the empirical evidence that there is at least one god and it is a good deity were compelling, then there would not be wide dispute over the matter.<sup>2</sup> Much as there is no argument that the George Washington who owned a slave labor camp at Mount Vernon Virginia was a two term President of the United States. If any gods exist, and any are benign, then numerous lines of observable evidence could establish that fact. That there is instead broad controversy over the nature of creation, with a large and fast growing portion of the population atheist, and most questioning the societal efficacy of religion, renders supernaturalistic religious dogma as at best problematic and up for objective science based analysis and debate. Rather than the bias all too common to theists – and some procedurally errant atheists – to presume their beliefs are true unless proven otherwise, this work rests on the preponderance of evidence without an intrinsic presumption of what it true one way or another. That said, because the great bulk of data and results does strongly favor one side over the other, there is no hesitation to come to firm conclusions and strongly advocate the empirically founded outcomes. Those are sometimes complicated, revealing that both atheism and theism exhibit serious societal failings. The question is which is more likely to be true, and which produces better overall results. The goal is not to produce

an inspirational document that will unequivocally please a particular side, but to provide the research and results that can be used to assess and try to better the situation on the planet.

While examining the basic relationships between societal conditions and religiosity is intrinsically important as well as interesting, doing such does not occur in a vacuum. A productive scientific and educational side effect of the research is that the information is proving critical to finally answering a number of long-standing, major questions about the connections between the psychology, origin, and popularity of religious belief and its absence, and how these relate to socioeconomic conditions.

The questions incorporate the following. Is theism always sufficiently popular that it is essentially universal, as has been contended (Barrett, 2004, 2001; Bloom, 2007; Boyer 2001, 2008; Hamer, 2004; Norenzayan, 2010, 2013)? Is religious supernaturalism deeply set in the human psyche, perhaps through a “God gene” or programmed “God module,” like language skills and materialism? Or is it usually a superficial opinion, in which case it cannot be strongly genetically programmed in response to selective forces? Are any of a host of popular proposals centered on internal workings of the human mind—fear of death followed by the risk of eternal torment, fear of societal chaos, desires for ultimate post death retribution for earthly miscreants and heavenly rewards for the goodly, and/or for earthly social community and support, the euphoria of worship, memes, or the actual existence of the gods—primary causes of religion? Do higher levels of religious freedom and plurality create a Darwinian competition that boosts overall religiosity? Or is the quality of the human environment the most important factor driving the popularity of theism versus atheism? Specifically, the socioeconomic dysfunctionality hypothesis (a more specific version of the uncertainty hypothesis) states that religion is popular when societies are seriously dysfunctional (presuming that the government is not enforcing antitheist policies).

The complementary socioeconomic security hypothesis (a more specific version of the existential security hypothesis) states that the development of a stable middle-class majority that is sufficiently financially and socially secure due to progressive secular socioeconomic policies results in a serious and measurable decline in religiosity. Also necessary to know is the way the mechanisms, if they exist, by which the level of popular non/religiosity effect societal conditions and vice versa operate—if, for example, lower levels of religiosity are correlated with better societal circumstances, is it because religion contributes to societal ills, or because good conditions suppress the popularity of faith, or both? And how do these factors influence one another? Conversely, determining how and why belief and disbelief in gods effects societal success and vice versa in modern times requires examining the nature, beginnings, and popularity of religious opinion from its remote beginnings up to the present. This, in turn, entails assessing and comparing the popularity of religious opinion and practice over time. Also required is a comprehensive comparison of social and economic conditions in successful democracies. Comparing the popularity of religion to national conditions not only helps answer the question of whether secular or religious societies tend to be more successful, but it reveals whether it is possible for a faith-based or a strongly nontheistic nation to be successful.

### Defining and Grading Religiosity

A defect of a number of past analyses is to treat religion too simplistically and without sufficient definition. For example, claims that religion is as universal among humans as language (as per Bloom, 2007) are usually not testable because, while nonwritten language (including signing among the deaf) is well developed in all mentally healthy mature humans – and for that matter even children down to age two or three – religion can be extremely variable in characteristics and especially in intensity among individuals and societies. If all the world’s people were head over heels, God-believing Christians who prayed hourly to their personal God and spent most of each Sabbath in church while avoiding leisure activities, then the globe would be far more religious than if all the world’s people were equally convinced God-believing Deists who never prayed to the remote deity and never attended religious services. Actual differences in religious orientation and intensity have real effects. For example, Americans’ level of belief in nonreligious paranormalism (Eder et al., 2011; Gallup, 2005, Wilkinson, 2018), is comparable to that for Biblical creationism (Brenan[Gallup], 2018/9; Eder et al. 2011; Miller et al. 2022; Paul, 2018/9) but the former is not a major cultural ideology and activist movement that has the profound impact on national politics enjoyed by the creationist cause. Nor is the degree of belief in ghosts commonly cited as a potential causal factor in the level of national societal dysfunction

either in academic studies or best-selling popular books, and it is rarely raised in electoral contests. Likewise, Gallup (2005) observes that Americans' belief in paranormal phenomena is almost as high as is the level of belief in god(s), yet the latter has a much greater effect on the culture war. The sociopolitical influence of organized religion compared to other supernaturalistic belief systems is due in part to its organization, combined with the claim that the deity of worship is an all-important moral agent.

For particular research purposes, insufficient attention has, therefore, been paid to the important differences that distinguish the type, depth, and universality of spirituality and religious belief and activity. In my own research, a spiritual person who believes in and worships a god with moral attributes and regularly attends religious services is rated more religious than one who equally believes in a moral god but does not participate in organized worship, who in turn is more religious than a person who does not believe in or worship a god but does have a spiritual belief in amoral ghosts or astrology, and so forth. A set of measures of religious and nonreligious belief and practice are used to compare absolute and relative levels of opinion, as discussed later). In general, religion is defined for the purposes of this chapter and my research to include a supernaturalistic element. Because the emphasis is on popular trends, terms such as "religious" and "secular" are used to characterize and contrast the views of national populations, rather than the configuration of governments. For example, the United States is labeled as religious compared to secular Britain because the population of the latter is less theistic than that of the former, even though the British government is officially Anglican and the American Constitution is secular.

The terminology for disbelievers is often mishandled (see Paul 2018/9). All persons are either theists who believe in at least one god, or atheists who lack belief in a god, there is no gap between them. Agnosticism is a philosophical methodology rather than a conclusion that can apply to both theists and atheists, although much more frequently as a subset to the latter. Because agnostic is not, therefore, a demographic measure of a person's degree of nontheistic belief that sits between atheist and theist, the term cannot be used to describe survey respondents that supposedly lie outside of theism or atheism. Basic atheists are simply all who at least lack belief in a god, core atheists are the subcohort that also reject higher powers, universal spirits, etc.

## Two Competing Industries

Religion is an ancient global industry involving organizations, cash flows and infrastructures from small to enormous, sometimes rivaling that of small nations. Monies are both private, usually from individual contributors, and government sourced, the latter sometimes in the form of tax breaks. Religions and business often pick up techniques from one another.<sup>3</sup> The primary product is deeply nonobjective inspirational advocacy propaganda that makes little or no attempt to actually discover the real truth via solid evidence, while typically claiming to be absolutely true dogma. Adherents are consumers. Differing sects are brands. The typical incurious rigid ideological product is primarily designed to at least retain or expand the customer base and the cash flow they provide, actual truth is regularly ignored or dismissed with prejudice lest it prove contrary to the chief requirement of theism – rather similar to DNA – to sustain itself. That while claiming that the brand mythology is the absolute truth. Thus the common and normal deployment of often nonsensical scare tactics including fear of death, conspiracy theories, and sociopolitical weaponization of issues to try to push people to adhere to a given sect. The professionals who engage in this propaganda campaign are promoted as persons of extra moral status beyond normal criticism.

Science is a new global industry involving organizations, cash flows and infrastructures from small to enormous, sometimes rivaling that of small nations. Monies are both private often from major business concerns, and government sourced, often in a synergistic relationship between capital, government and academe. The ideal primary product is curious, objective analytical results concerning the nature of reality based on the principle of objective investigative data gathering and processing, with the intention at arriving as close to the truth as feasible at a given moment, potentially subject to change as necessary.<sup>4</sup> While it is hoped that most or all will accept this relatively flexible product, it is not designed to be manipulated to do so, that being a violation of the critical driver of revealing reality rather than pleasing an audience. Lacking the crucial priority of recruitment, science does not heavily engage in invented scare tactics. It can invoke large scale fears when the results indicate the existence or approach of serious real world problem that requires addressing, such

as natural adversities, and items science and its consort technology have or are contributing to such as environmental degradation and alternative intelligence.

Scientific methodology has the potential to verify the existence of paranormal supernatural deities and phenomena if they exist.<sup>5</sup> Had that happened then the industries of science and religion would be synergistic and collaborative. Instead science has found no sound evidence for the existence of any form of supernaturalism or paranormalism, and considerable data against such. Science has directly refuted many core religious claims, including all creation myths, the Exodus story and Conquest of the Promised Land, the geohistory of the Book of Mormon (Wade, 2018), and most importantly the existence of a benign moral creator whom it is moral to worship as further discussed below. As a result theism has been driven down to being at best speculative opinion no more or less plausible than ancient aliens playing critical roles in the existence of humanity and civilization.<sup>6</sup> In this science based context, what does worldly history and the data have to tell us about the whether or not the product of the opinion based religious industry has proven to be a reliable source for and means of achieving societal success.

## War, Homicide, Socioeconomic Conditions, and Non/Religion from Prehistory to the Present

### Hunter-Gatherers

Lacking scientific explanations of creation and the small plot of the world a given clan or tribe lived in and thus highly subject to supernaturalism, it is widely presumed that prehistoric hunter-gatherers were and are consistently highly religious in that they are shamanistic animists (Boyer, 2001, 2008; Barrett, 2004, 2011; Dennett, 2006; Norenzayan & Shariff, 2008, Norenzayan et al., 2016). This assumption is problematic because some extant hunter-gatherer peoples exhibit minimal religion. The Hadza of east Africa are among the last true hunter-gatherers extant, and their lineage extends back into the Pleistocene (Finkel, 2009; Marlowe, 2002, 2004, 2010; Paul, 2010a, 2012). Although they fear death, they do not believe in an afterlife. In Hadza cosmology, the sun is casually thought to be a supernatural entity, but they do not actively worship it or try to influence its actions in their favor. Pre- and post-hunting rituals are absent, and other rituals are limited in scope. Shamans are absent, and the tribe proved highly resistant to Christian recruitment. The Agta, Aka, Botocudo, Mbuti, Slave, and Siriono peoples share similarly minimalist theisms with little in the way of moral implications – Peoples et al. (2016) provide an exceptional large scale survey of the variable levels of non/religiosity in modern hunter-gatherers. Also unconvertible, Everett (2008) found the Amazonian Piraha to be markedly less religious than devout Christians, especially in their absence of god figures that provide moral guidance.

Although shamanism is widespread in most recent and extant low-technology cultures (Boyer, 2001, 2008; Dennett, 2006; Epton, 2009; Norenzayan & Shariff, 2008; Norenzayan et al. 2016; Purzycki et al., 2016; Peoples et al. 2016), the last analysis found that the great majority lack high gods. The minimal spirituality of some current examples creates a serious data problem because it cannot be automatically assumed that most prehistoric cultures were highly spiritual, much less religious with a corresponding moral ideology. Perhaps the Hadza are a rare or unique exception to the norm, but it is possible that they are a remnant of what was once a broader or even predominant pattern of low or absent theism. The possibility that basal *Homo* species with brains far smaller than ours buried their dead (Berger et al., 2023) may challenge the presumption that such indicates belief in an afterlife. An absence of serious spiritualism may help explain the scarcity of art in many Paleolithic cultures. The existence of prehistoric artifacts, including art and other preserved behaviors such as burials, may be of limited value in assessing ancient spirituality due to the difficulty of interpreting what was actually intended in a given case (Pfeiffer, 1985)—that may have varied between individuals as well as cultures—or of demonstrating that the messages being illustrated represented the majority or minority opinion at the time they were created. Assume that the modest majority of persons living circa 40,000 years before present were not highly spiritual, and as a result they had low rates of production of artifacts and preservable behaviors that might record their supernatural thinking. Also, some of their artifacts and behaviors are subject to incorrect interpretation as evidence of supernaturalism. Meanwhile, a large spiritual minority generates numerous artifacts and actions that record their supernaturalism. The paleoarchaeological record

could seem to support a much higher level of protoreligion than was actually present. Perhaps in a given region supernaturalism ranged from very high in some groups to low in others living at the same time and general location—perhaps the hill people were one and the valley folks the other, or perhaps some hill people were nonspiritual while others in the same highlands were believers. The data, especially via written tests, needed to properly assess the level of supernaturalism prior to 10,000 BP may be permanently lost, precluding acquiring the degree of knowledge needed to determine the relationship between the beginnings of religion and violence in prehistoric peoples. What we do know is that the popularity and depth of religiosity in low-technology, nonfarming peoples is highly variable and can be minimal.

Socioeconomic conditions among prehistoric, preagricultural humans included short average life spans of about two decades, with juvenile mortality rates of about a half that no benevolent creator alleviated (Paul, 2008, 2007/9, 2020 and refs. therein). Medical care was minimal and nonexpert (as it is among modern hunter-gatherers; Marlowe, 2004). Nutrition levels may have been good in many cases due to a varied diet, and prehistoric humans generally had larger brains and bodies than the more domesticated modern humans (Ruff, Trinkaus, & Holliday, 1997). Economic levels were severely impoverished by modern standards, but there were no examples of wealthier cultures, and any elites were not much better off than the rest, so envy levels were probably absent or modest. Lacking long-term food storage capacity, and vulnerable to severe periodic declines in food sources, early human clans may have been under substantial pressure to acquire and protect shallow resource bases with violent actions when necessary.

Levels of intraspecific violence vary widely among animals and can be quite high (Kruger & Fitzgerald, 2012; Sherrow, 2012). The two primates most closely related to human, bonobos and chimpanzees, exhibit large differences in intraspecific violence. The latter are often violent within a clan and practice what may qualify as low-grade wars between neighboring clans for meat and territory (Goodall, 1986). Direct affirmation of intraspecific violence in early *Homo* species is so far lacking, perhaps because population densities were too low and new territory too abundant for chronic interclan conflicts, while weaponry was limited. There is evidence for aggressive violence including cannibalism in the advanced species *H. neanderthalensis* (Longrich, 2020; Rosas et al., 2006; Sala et al. 2015; Sherrow, 2012; White, 2001). That only one species of what was once a diverse array of derived hominins is extant may be because *H. sapiens* wiped out the competition, but nonviolent forms of competition and evolutionary chance may have been more important. Evidence for low-grade warfare in prehistoric *H. sapiens* increases as population density rises and may have included cannibalism (Keeley, 1996; Kelly, 2000; Lambert, 2012; LeBlanc & Register, 2004; Otterbein, 2004; Pinker, 2011; Sherrow, 2012; White, 2001). That protohumans and prehistoric humans were well armed with stone, wood, and bone weapons at least in part for hunting purposes may have facilitated intraspecific aggression both within and between cohesive groups (Otterbein, 2004). It cannot be presumed that all nonagricultural groups practiced aggressive warfare, because some modern groups do not, including the Hadza and !Kung Bushmen (Keeley, 1996; Marlowe, 2010). What all hunter-gatherers do is hunt, and many dramatically alter landscapes with intentional fires. So even though the global population at a given time was probably only in the six figures, prehistoric humans liquidated the majority of what had been an amazingly diverse continental and islands megafauna, leaving the Americas with no animals over a tonne (Prates & Perez, 2021). Left alone was the still inaccessible marine habitat.

### Ancient Agriculture and Civilization

The evidence concerning popular religiosity and violence improves considerably with the advent of agriculture and civilization. Data sources include stone, brick, and concrete religious structures, and written records. That said, the inability to literally survey past civilizations with scientific polling et al. makes it somewhat difficult to quantify and compare their degree of religious supernaturalism, leading some to question the level of actual devotion of the masses (Stark & Finke, 2000) while others have emphasized how religion pervaded many societies (Norenzayan, 2013; Purzycki et al. 2016; Summerville, 2002); the level of intensity appears to have varied considerably. Continuing to lack the results of modern science citizens of early civilizations were prone to the paranormal thinking that is the basis of religious cults. Organized religion involving extensive priesthoods—generally but not always patriarchal—was often well developed in preindustrial civilizations, to the degree that they formed substantial industries and power structures. The



popularity of theism remained highly inconsistent, variation in popularity and depth of religion in given cultures being ample to the degree that some societies have had little in the way of theism. The oldest and largest civilization, the Chinese, never generated a major indigenous supernaturalistic industry—there has not been a great Chinese god figure comparable to Vishnu, Quetzalcoatl, Jesus, Allah, Zeus/Jupiter, Thor—or adopted a major foreign deity (Yang, 1970). The religions such as they were such as Taoism were largely limited to the elites, and regional. Although minor deity and ancestor worship was widespread among the masses, a powerful priesthood did not develop, and philosophy has been emphasized over organized supernaturalism in largely nontheistic Confucianism (Inglehart, 2021; Yang, 2020) being dominant over recent millennia. Even though China has not been strongly atheistic over most of its history, its level of paranormal faith appears to have been well below that of comparable civilizations more immersed in religion, such as neighboring Hindu India or old Christian Europe. Inglehart (2021) contends that the need to maintain high rates of reproduction had been a leading causal factor driving high rates of religiosity prior to modern medicine. This may be in accord with China not being strongly pious, its long standing large population having lessened the need for rapid procreation. Core Buddhism, Jainism, and Carvakism qualify as atheistic (Geertz & Markussan, 2010; Thrower, 1980), to the extent that the religious nature of the first is often debated. The absence of deep piety in some major ancient civilizations challenges the thesis that moralistic supernaturalism was critical to the development of the extensive prosociality critical to the socioeconomic success of large populations (Norenzayan, 2013; Purzycki et al. 2016).

Also highly inconsistent have been religious speculations concerning the nature of an afterlife. Relatively few religions have proposed the existence of a blissful paradise for the masses, Christianity and Islam being the major – and correspondingly popular – exceptions. Early religions were polytheistic and correspondingly usually tolerant of other sects, although often prone to claiming a degree of superiority as per the Aztecs and early Jews. Some polytheistic religions imposed forms of faith-based terror, the mass human sacrificing Aztecs perhaps being the best example. While none of the very first major religions have survived intact to today, some of those still in operation date back millennia. The first stab at monotheism, Atenism, was quickly aborted by a counterattack by the Egyptian polytheistic power structure. Starting out a small and nonmonotheistic cult,<sup>7</sup> Abrahamism was a harsh, anger driven desert religion with little initial impact beyond its small number of early adherents who were not enslaved enmass in Egypt, became increasingly monotheistic and intolerant of other forms of supernaturalism, gained substantial numbers during the later stages of the Roman Empire, and made up nearly half the global population by the industrial era. Some Greek philosophers began to question the evidentiary and intellectual viability of deity belief. That had little impact at the time, but laid foundations for the future nontheism many enjoy today.

The advent of agriculture and even civilization initially did notably little to improve some basic aspects of human lives (Milner, 2019; Paul, 2018). Natural juvenile and adult mortality rates did not improve dramatically, and nutrition quality may have declined somewhat due to overreliance on a few agricultural staples in a given society.<sup>8</sup> Famines resulted from large scale crop failures, while high population densities facilitated mass mortalities from disease. Expanding populations and the desire to seize and defend static resources combined to fuel violent conflict (Milner, 2019; Morris, 2014, Pinker, 2011). Most persons continued to live impoverished lives, but income disparity soared as a small elite acquired the extensive wealth made possible by mass organized societies and driven by the propensity of economics to arbitrarily favor permanent elites (Boghossian, 2019; Piketty, 2014), producing significant envy among the lower class majority. The cruelly deadly religious practice of ritual human sacrifice children helped boost the power of the top class and enforce social stratification according to the analysis of Watts et al. (2016). Elite status provided only minor advantages in regard to health and mortality because general medical knowledge remained primitive. Ancients often exhibited prejudice toward other peoples, and practiced primitive forms of eugenics, including extensive infanticide. Economics were feudalistic. Slavery was widespread (as per Harper, 2011) and was made yet more pernicious in that a slave society is automatically an internal terror state because the enslaved will leave unless they are kept in perpetual fear of the consequences of seeking their freedom. Enslaved persons are also vulnerable to routine physical abuse and sexual exploitation (Baptist, 2015; Foster, 2011; Feinstein, 2019; Hannah-Jones, 2021; Harper, 2011; Roberts, 2021; Muhammad, 2021; Sublette & Sublette, 2015) because of their lack of legal and social status. General sexual exploitation of youth common in societies was often carried

over into religions. The same was true concerning common corruption. From its beginning industrial scale religion has not proven to be particularly virtuous.

Frequent natural disasters have been both a cause of popular religiosity as a mental explanatory and coping mechanism, and a frequent contributor making the events worse than they have needed to be. Natural catastrophes are often worsened by vulnerable or ill placed housing. Under the oft self serving guidance of supernaturalism pushing clergies, disasters are often dismissed as unlikely to happen due to the protection of the fictional gods they are promoting as either benign, or that can be appeased by closely adhering to the will of the clerics. When the natural cataclysms occur the devastation is blamed on the populace failing to fully satisfy the said deities, the only way to deal with the problem in the future being the laity doing a better job of doing what the clergy tells them to do. This religious power play – sometimes still operative – has commonly aborted the pragmatic, real world steps needed to minimize the adverse blows of natural disruption. Thus contributing to the cycle of repeatedly failing after calamities to rebuild in a manner better able to resist the next event.

An practical opportunity was missed during the Roman era, perhaps due to the ready availability of slave labor: The printing presses needed for revolutionary advances were within the technological capacity of the time, and while water-driven industries were well developed (Wilson, 2002), steam power while known but not exploited, precluding the possible early development of modern economics and politics, albeit at considerable probable cost to the biosphere including global warming, and the risk of a mass nuclear conflict.<sup>9</sup> In comparison the actual historical adoption of the hypothetical Christian mystery cult did little to improve life circumstances, the ban on infanticide being an exception. As it was early civilizations absorbed large tracts of land for agriculture at the expense of the terrestrial fauna and flora – the forests of the Mediterranean basin were stripped in favor of scrublands – while hunter-gatherers continued to use fire to modify a substantial portion of the rest of the landscape. The planetary population was a few hundred million.

Globalization began with the development of geographically extensive empires such the Alexandrian and especially Roman, and the establishment of the land and sea Silk Road that allowed significant trade between Europe and the Far East.

The ability of even basal civilizations to assemble large armies and equip them with abundant lethal weaponry facilitated large-scale conflict that in turn may have been critical to help establish and boost said civilizations over history (Morris, 2014) – the modern jetliner for instance is direct product and Nazis military and Cold War aviation technologies, war needs produced the large funds needed to begin mass production of anti-biotics – and the global tally of wars since the advent of civilization numbers somewhere in the thousands. Over time it became possible for armies and navies to roam over great distances, bringing broad destruction in their wakes. Repressive autocracy – which is basically legalized organized criminal gangs running lawless governments often to the approval of much of the population (Applebaum, 2021) – was the norm. The pagan Greeks invented limited democracy and the Romans the republic for nonreligious purposes, but both experiments failed without either adopting nonaggressive military policies – the collapse of Athens was in part due to its egregious pursuit of the Peloponnesian War. The Roman empire was notable because although based on military conquest, Pax Romana worked for so long because the Romans provided prosperous peace to those under their rule as long as they were compliant – that succeeded because conquered peoples were already living under autocracies before coming under the sway of the Roman version so the difference was not that notable. Some old wars killed off people in numbers similar to those of the worst modern conflicts (Morris, 2014; Pinker 2011). Three Chinese rebellions probably dispatched about 30 million each; the Mongol conquests contributed to perhaps half that total as noted below. The advent of long range maritime and ultimately aviation technologies by increasingly capable European powers led to a series of world wars starting in the late 1600s to modern times that killed large masses of military personal and even more civilians as collateral damage.<sup>10</sup>

The Diaspora imposed by the Romans on the Jews – because the latter kept revolting against the empire, the generally religiously tolerant Roman pagans were not intolerant of the sect on general theistic grounds – has been disastrous in that allowing for normal population growth through reproduction, Jews should be dozens times more numerous than they are (Carroll, 2001). Christians began to appear in unclear circumstances – there are no dependable neutral historical accounts from the time, and scriptures are unreliable. It is therefore not known if the initial Christian communities were socialistic as the New Testament asserts, such is possible (Keddie, 2020). The decline and fall of Rome cannot be attributed to pagan decadence because the collapse

occurred well after Christians took over the empire and became an above board industry, whether the Christianization was a leading factor in the fall is difficult to assess. Any church socialism was abandoned in favor of the feudalistic norms of the time. Christians, focused on the fate of eternal souls, did little to improve earthly lives. What they did do in their fanatical power play to save speculative immortal entities was to establish a then aberrantly intolerant theocracy on the region and later beyond that often used terror and violence to enforce religious conformity for a millennium and a half. This eventually evolved into the Inquisitions that threatened and employed torture (Scott, 2004; Murphy, 2012) – including near drowning – and death by fire and other agonizing means against alleged and real dissidents, while practicing the often violent anti-Semitism that has suppressed their numbers, the prototype ethnoreligious weaponization first being devised by the Catholic Church (Carroll, 2001; Kertzer, 2001). This was established and normalized the Christoright tradition of using false scare tactics based on conspiracy theories that are as appealing as they are absurd to frighten the population into hysterical reactions against those targeted by influencers. The latter led to the “First Holocaust” associated with the beginning of the First Crusade in which large Jewish populations were exterminated, and soon after that Catholicism dispatched the entire Gnostic Cathar religion with another crusade, plus the first stage of the Inquisition. Murphy (2012) explains that the Catholic Inquisition was perversely ground breaking because it was a new, modern systematic institution for gathering intelligence including by violent means on civilians and dispensing often extreme punishments. It set the precedent for the modern form of bureaucratic state terror later adopted by more secular governments. As the church worked hard to expose what it portrayed as the grave societal threat of religious nonconformity that was actually a danger to the church, it covered up its extensive internal grooming of children for sex and other actual scandals (Damian, 1051; Eliot, 2020; Lewis, 2009). The culture of the warrior Christian Knight evolved among European elites (Paul, 2018), their propensity toward violence supposedly being moderated by virtuous chivalry. It did lay the foundations for women gaining greater control of their lives by being allowed more ability to select mates between males competing for her favors (Paul, 2018). Christian Europe was afflicted by a long series of wars between Christians of differing brands, as well as the effort to oust militaristic Muslim invaders from the continent and the Middle East. The latter effort revived the cannibalism that appears to have been fairly common among “less” civilized peoples (Rubenstein, 2008; White, 2001). The Crusades backfired in that they reintroduced Europe to a trove of intellectually stimulating preChristian writings that helped spark the cultural secularizing Renaissance and Enlightenment. Christianity has proven to have little ability to constrict war – a rare exception being the Christianizing of the Vikings leading them to abandon their raiding culture.

Targeted for death, largely by Protestants,<sup>11</sup> were tens of thousands of women accused of practicing witchcraft (Federici & Markham-Cantor, 2023). That particular terror was part of a successful effort to further boost patriarchy at the social, economic and reproductive choice and health expense of lower class women to the financial benefit of male elites while enforcing anti-pagan Christian domination.

Catholic and then Protestant Euronations deployed various forms of violence to defraud native peoples of their territory and/or resources as the new sailing technologies allowed Europeans to colonize large parts of the planet in the first wave of transoceanic globalization. These self-aggrandizing conquests of nonChristian lands were openly approved by the true church of Jesus Christ on earth. The American end of the effort that began at the end of the 1400s and is still underway, was bolstered by the ideology of Manifest Destiny, which proposed that the seemingly mysterious dying off of the great majority of Original Peoples (actually due to disease vectors, Paul 2009b, 2020) was God clearing the way for EuroAmerican conquests (Hahn, 2016), combined with the need to convert the heathens before most died off due the lack of caring intervention by a creator deity.<sup>12</sup> During and following the religious wars that racked Europe in the 1500s and 1600s the Spanish Armada being the most spectacular but not particularly costly in lives, zealous Protestants decamped from Anglican run England to native ethnic cleansing colonies in North America, in some cases in the hope of establishing godly theocratic utopias, and apparently priming the future United States for being more religious than the old countries, where the religious strife may have degraded mass interest in religion (Ruiter & Tubergen, 2009).

While conquering the Americas Christian Europeans continued mass enslavement, in part of increasingly scarce natives, and on a growing scale of Blacks innovatively imported enmass from Africa. Conditions for the enslaved were typically brutal and deadly. If not for the mass exploitation of enslaved people the economic

and correspondingly geographic growth of the EuroAmerican colonies would have been seriously impaired. Catholics initiated the transatlantic slave trade in the Caribbean (Maxwell, 1975; Wood, 2003). They had an awkward issue. Slavery had been theistically based in that Christians were not to be put into permanent bondage, but slaves soon learned conversion was a ticket to freedom. So the critical criterion was revised to race (Jones, 2023). As Protestants took over the majority of the African Middle passage they too found themselves in in a socioethical pickle. As the English developed a growing concept of personal liberty for Whites while enslaving very large numbers of people of color in accord with new Catholic dogma, they also needed to dramatically expand tacit Biblical bigotry into a deeply racist policy of enslaving only Blacks to which – although able to access heaven via Christian belief – earthly freedoms or even basic human rights need not be granted (Baptist, 2016; Eltis, 1999; Hannah-Jones, 2021; Maxwell, 1975; Roberts, 2021). To do that they elevated the theory that only lesser races were suitable for or even needing human bondage (as per Jefferson, 1783; Stephens, 1861).

Not that White Euro society was internally pacific, late medieval Christian Europe providing some early sociological data on societal violence. The people were well armed with blunt and edged weapons; brigands roamed about city, town, and country; disrespect of a man's honor required extreme retribution; and "murderous brawls were . . . everyday events" anticipated by ordinary folk as ready sporting events (Beeghley, 2003); one observer noted that "few self respecting gentlemen passed through the hot season of youth without having perpetrated a homicide or two." Yearly homicide rates were around 20 to 30 deaths per 100,000, comparable to America's most dangerous inner cities; in some cities, it was around 50. Beeghley (2003) characterizes the Europeans of the time as a "wild bunch." Legal punishments were increasingly draconian and often lethal for relatively minor offenses. When secularization associated with the Renaissance began to take hold, lethal crime began to decline. By Shakespeare's time the homicide rate was down to 15 per 100,000; it was 10 in the 1600s, 5 in the 1700s, and by the 1800s less than 2. There is some evidence that the United States was more religious than western Europe at that time (De Tocqueville, 1835), and that it also suffered from higher levels of homicide. American homicide was exacerbated by long-term, honor-driven clan feuds in the southern states, which were bitterly exposed by Twain (1884). The rise of Western secularism and democracy degraded the position of the churches sufficiently that the Catholic Inquisition had to be abandoned. The initial stages of Western secularization were not associated with a concomitant decline in warfare, which remained frequent, and reached a new height with the Seven Years' world war.<sup>13</sup>

Natural disasters in the 1300s and 1400s appear to have helped lay the foundations for the onset of western secular modernity. The onset of the Little Ice Age and the resulting Great Famine before Euroagriculture could adjust, and especially the Black Death liquidated about half the population of the most pious Christian region of the planet. Significant portions of the surviving population logically concluded that the existence of the benevolent Holy Trinity was at best problematic and of little practical utility, undermining the authority of the regional religious industry. The increase of per capita material prosperity that resulted from the rapid reduction of the population also undermined reliance on aid from supernatural powers. Mix in the body of exciting ancient literature brought to Europe by the Crusades. And the base corruption of the churches, which in turn led to the Protestant breakaway – if one brand of Christianity is not true, then might both be lies? The result of this confluence of events was a radical reformation of Euroculture via novel innovations in the arts and intellectual discourse of the Renaissance and ensuing Enlightenment, which began to elevate the status of actual living and thinking humans relative to unverified supernatural powers. The Great Lisbon Quake and tsunami in the 1700s was another catastrophe that unsettled EuroChristian conceits. A key feature of this upheaval was the practice of open, curiosity driven, critical self examination in which the aim is to arrive at actual truth to the degree possible, even when it does not cast favor on one's preferred views on a subject, or over the actions of one's own society and culture. On the technological front a key to progress was the advent of the printing press for mass producing easily handled codex books that allowed the wide distribution of church challenging ideas and other advances beyond the full control of an organized religion less able to control matters – it is very possible if not probable that the Enlightenment et al. would not have occurred if not for the printing press.<sup>14</sup> These secularizing developments occurred in the context of a Christian culture that despite the obvious threats the advances posed to ancient supernaturalistic opinions, the religion may have to an extent been favorable to the liberalization. Although powerful reactionary Christian forces often opposed the Enlightenment, they were by no means able to fully contain the movements, and were in turn influenced by it.

Whether other religious cultures would have been able to undergo a comparable transformation is not knowable – while Islam was sometimes intellectually oriented, it did not make a comparably dramatic shift, nor did Asian spiritualism, or paganism.

### Early Modernity

Enlightened early Euroscientists assumed that their research would support Christotheism, as per Paley (1802). They were naïve, science quickly began to do otherwise regardless of the intentions of those practicing it. That because the data overwhelmingly discovered that natural causes and forces rather than divine will and scripture better fit with the characteristics of the universe and Earth. As per the gravitational theory revealed by the superiority of heliocentric theory, which is why geocentric flat earth theory has reemerged among some hyperreactionary theocons.<sup>15</sup> The first geologists expected to affirm Genesis and its flood, but speedily found that the strata and the organisms it contains showed that the planet was very ancient and organisms evolved over that time sans a global super flood.

The first notable sociopolitical influences of Deism and then atheism began to be felt in the later 1700s. Deists were instrumental to the first Enlightened effort to swim against the norm of godly autocracy. The American Revolution rejected the divine authority of the Christian British crown in favor of a limited White male democracy on the model of the pagan Greeks.<sup>16</sup> Deists were also an important factor in the French Revolution that directly overturned, and liquidated much of, the Catholic crown, utilizing The Terror – Robespierre being an ardent Deist. Atheists were also involved in the revolt against French royalty. Matching the death toll of The Terror, the later suppression of the Paris Commune was a battle between war crimes committing reactionary Catholics against progressive secularists (Merriam, 2016). In the mid-1800s, the advent of the evolutionary science (Darwin, 1859) that critically undermined the need to invoke a creator deity posed the most direct threat to traditional religion yet seen,<sup>17</sup> and some began to carelessly theorize on how the amoral biological system should be applied to human affairs (Spencer, 1884).<sup>18</sup> Among hardcore defenders of creator belief it was explained that if the Biblical creation story is not true, then it is logical to conclude that the entire tract is unreliable, and therefore adopted the fundamental view that if the Bible really is the word of the perfect God then it must be perfectly true.<sup>19</sup>

Critical to this analysis, a looming disaster for religion was sparked by the need of deep coal mines along the English coast to extract ground water which horse powered pumps<sup>20</sup> were hard pressed to manage, leading to the development and improvement of steam engines in the 1700s. In a couple of centuries popular religion would implode as England achieved the best living conditions ever seen. That is not a coincidence.

In accord with the mercantile friendly American variants of center-right Protestantism, most Americans prefer to imagine that the nation and its exceptionalism has been built upon the hard and efficient boots strap work of individuals rather than lazy and sloppy government largess. Such is misleading (Hahn, 2016). The formation of the American empire was a large scale government project based on taxes that produced a sufficient professional military force to achieve the goal of independence, little private funding was involved. A desire by AngloAmericans to expand westwards into native territories supported by post French and Indian War treaties with the British government were an important driving factor behind the divorce from the Crown. Slavery too contributed to the American revolution in that many southern rebels were with reason becoming deeply concerned by an incipient abolitionist movement in England (Hannah-Jones, 2021; Kelly, 2009; Taylor, 2013), even as other Amerocolonial rebels saw the institution as hypocritically incompatible with their own desires for democratic liberty. The Declaration of Independence is doubly exploitative bigoted in that it denounces the Crown both for preventing expansion of the colonies west of the Appalachians in recognition of treaties to that effect with Amerindians, and for offering freedom to enslaved Blacks that opposed the revolution.<sup>21</sup> The same applies to the Constitution that offers no protections for natives or Blacks. It was the US military that was instrumental to the cleansing of the natives from territories, and the enormous Louisiana Purchase was entirely via government funds, Texas was seized by southern American residents after the central Mexican government banned enslavement, with the subsequent seizure of a large portion of northern Mexico being another US large government military project rather than private enterprise (Hahn, 2016). Because mass slavery is incompatible with industrial, corporate-consumer capitalism (Smith, 1776) – slaves do not cash flush consumers make – the millennia’s long scheme disappeared with historical rapidity after the appearance

of modern economics, with the British empire peacefully banning it in the early 1800s, although other oppressive forms of coerced labor were often utilized. The primary opposition to ending slavery came from southern American Protestants, who rejected modern consumer driven capitalism (Catton, 1960; Freehling, 2007) in favor of a speculative loan roll over debt scheme based on the lucrative cotton trade that continued to concentrate wealth in the hands of slave exploiting elites to the detriment of free labor and the overall regional economy (Baptist, 2016). The result was the most massive slave labor complex ever seen, with 40% of the population in bondage (Catton, 1960, compared to half that in Roman times according to Harper, 2011), and the economy overly dependent on cotton produced largely in big slave labor camps (aka plantations). The need by typically debt laden slave labor camp owners desperate to avoid bankruptcy to squeeze as much labor and valuable enslaved children as possible out of field slaves powered an extreme terroristic system involving breeding slaves sometimes by force in the Chesapeake region, moving the resulting human livestock by forced marches in coffles to the deep south slave markets, and then compelling millions of Black women, men and children to achieve extreme levels of productivity under inadequate living and brutal work conditions by whippings and other forms of torture (Baptist, 2016; Muhammand, 2021; Roberts, 2021). Enslaved lifespans were well below those of southern Whites. The majority of Whites unable to own slaves were often able to rent them. And despicable sexual exploitation of slaves by Whites – casual rape, sex workers, breeding stock – was the common norm it being entirely legal (Baptist, 2016; Block, 2006; Bryc, 2020; Foster, 2011; Feinstein, 2019; Roberts, 2021; Muhammad, 2021; Sublette & Sublette, 2015; White, 1999). Christians and Jews readily theologically justified this hellish order on solid Biblical grounds, the Southern Baptists forming in 1845 to do so, southern churches offered no opposition and churches often owned and to their financial benefit callously sold slaves where it was legal (Swarns, 2023). Efforts by northern Christians, and a few churches Quakers and Mennonites especially, to theologically oppose slavery were correspondingly weak, and controversial among the Christian populace.

Claims of states' rights in defense of slavery and the actual cause of secession were and are hypocritically false in that southern states aborted other states' rights when convenient, most egregiously via the Slave Fugitive Act that applied across the country regardless of local views. Being dependent of constant expansion to avoid the banks calling in their loans (Baptist, 2016), the plantation owners could not withstand the cotton industry being banned by the new Republican dominated federal government, and therefore attempted to form a new Confederacy explicitly founded on the premise of an expanding slave empire that risked a series of mass wars in the Americas (Baptist, 2016; Levine 2014; Stephens, 1861; Turtledove, 1997-2007). An action boosted by the Cavalier culture of violent retribution created in part by the necessity to keep the enslaved in line (Baptist, 2016; Ellison et al., 2003; Nisbett & Cohen, 1999; Wyatt-Brown, 1986). The result was the first mass industrial war (Catton, 1960) – in other words, the first modern war pitted modern secular consumer industrial capitalism against one of the last expressions of slave-exploiting theism and capital. That rebel soldiers and sailors were fighting for their right to own, rent and regularly rape slaves helps explain their willingness risk death and maiming while killing and maiming multitudes of loyal Americans, who initially were not fighting to free Blacks. In the end embittered American whites were willing to mistreat Confederate Whites much the same as the two had been misusing aboriginal peoples – Sherman marched through the Georgia that had shortly before dispatched the Cherokee on the far more deadly Trail of Tears in order to seize their lands for conversion to cotton slave labor camps. The reunification of the US, the elimination of slavery, and the attempt at Reconstruction were massive government programs. Because the Confederate experiment failed, the United States remained large enough to become a future superpower. The transcontinental railroads instrumental to the construction of that continent spanning nation could not have been laid down without extensive federal subsidies. The Homestead Act was an enormous government giveaway to White Americans that contributed to the exclusion of others, especially tribal peoples, and similarly generous federal concessions were given to mining and forestry interests (Hahn, 2016). The US military remained the primary force for the territorial cleansing of the Original Peoples which came to a successful end circa 1890 – in association with the near extinction of the once vast bison herds – followed by a long term project of cultural genocide often aided by religious institutions (Child, 2022; Child & Klotek, 2014; Pember, 2019). The subsequent development of a toxic neoconfederate apartheid terror state in much of the nation featured the lynching culture that was so out of control – due to a near total absence of preventive law enforcement and murder prosecutions – that most of the killings were public spectacles attended by large crowds of Christians most but not all Protestant, held

every few weeks, in which thousands of victims were brutalized to death, often in an obscene manner (Dray, 2003; EJI, 2017). Many southern Whites went west, dragging along Jim Crow, especially into the southwest.<sup>22,23,24</sup> The immense Jim Crow scheme for financially suppressing Blacks – in part with the destruction via state government supported White race riots of many dozens of often prosperous Black sections of towns (Collins, 2016; Dray, 2003; Jaspin 2019; Madigan, 2003) – as well as slavery via problematic imprisonment, plus redlining, discriminatory zoning and renewal, etc.( Alexander, 2020; Kruse, 2021; Rothstein, 2017). Segregationist Christians typically self justified this amazing violation of liberty, freedom and democratic Constitutional law and order by pretending that Black males posed a dire sexual threat to virtuous White women (Dray, 2003), when it was actually Jesus following Whites who continued to regularly sexually assault Blacks which while now illegal was rarely enforced (McGuire, 2011; Thompson-Miller & Picca 2016). After a brief, intense period of post-war Reconstruction in support of Blacks, northern Christian Whites largely declined to seriously challenge Jim Crow and White Redemption. White churches, especially in the Bible Belt, did little if anything to oppose this mass bigotry.<sup>25</sup> Thus was built the neoconfederate Lost Cause which still runs to the is day (Serwer, 2017), although it has experienced a long term decline from mainstream prominence.<sup>26</sup> The never ending discrimination against American peoples of color continues to have dramatically adverse financial, legal, sexual and health impact upon them, even concerning contaminated AI systems (Alexander, 2020; Caraballo, 2023; Chung, 2021; Kendi, 2021; Kruse, 2021; LaVeist et al., 2023; McGuire, 2011; Obermeyer et al., 2019; Rothstein, 2017; Thompson-Miller & Picca 2016; USCCR, 2020).

Meanwhile the Vatican endorsed the continuation of slavery itself in Latin America (Holy See, 1866; Maxwell, 1975) and did little to oppose Jim Crow. The Papal States continued severe regulations on Jews, even as the Rothchilds provided critical funds (Pollard, 2005). This when treatment of Jews in most of Europe was more relaxed but not ideal. Infuriated by the loss of the Papal States to a secular democratic Italian republic, and by the unprecedented rise of secular democracy and free speech in various locations, the Pope condemned political and personal freedoms in favor of rule by authoritarian divine right (Pious 9, 1864). That contributed to anti-Catholic attitudes in America who often saw Catholics as Papists, but AmeroCatholics generally paid Vatican politics little mind even as they kept the Church of Rome financially afloat with massive contributions (Pollard, 2005). In Protestant majority Germany the Kulturkampf under Bismarck targeted Catholics. In general racism in comparatively secular Europe was well below ChristoAmerican standards as American Blacks traveling to the continent one way or another would discover, but by no means absent. In the US a new and highly heretical spin off of Christianity was invented by Smith (1830).<sup>27</sup> Oppressive to actual local Christians, counterattacks pushed Mormons west to establish a polygamous colony in then northern Mexico, beginning their domination of the low population region.<sup>28</sup> The American west was not as wild as often thought because of widespread application of common sense local gun regulations that led to the shootout at the OK Corral (Atlas, 2022). The arrival of masses of Chinese as cheap labor that greatly facilitated the construction of the infrastructure critical to ChristoWhite prosperity on the west coast immediately spawned yet a new brand of shameless racism by the benefiting ChristoWhites.

In late 1800s Germany, extreme wings of Catholicism and Protestantism developed ideologies that combined eugenics, a view of Germans as uber-Aryans, eliminationist anti-Semitism, and extreme nationalism (Hastings, 2010). In some German colonies' genocidal acts against African populations presaged those of the later 1900s.

The development of coal fired steam power initially for pumping the water out of mines rapidly expanded in the late 1700s going through the 1800s into the hyper mass industry and the corporate-consumer complex that requires a large middle class to acquire more products than they strictly need to live on. For the first time since the species evolved a large minority of the population, especially in European heritage nations, enjoyed materially comfortable, increasingly hedonistic lifestyles that in some regards exceeded those of the wealthy elites just a few decades before (Pinker. 2011). This scheme was based in part on imperialistic colonialism that drew resources for industrial middle classes from larger impoverished populaces around the planet. The boost in prosperity combined with modern scientific germ theory that began to rapidly drive down youth mortality initiated an unmatched population boom that dramatically expanded resource depletion, especially of forests and croplands, while much of the megafauna took further losses. Including in the marine realm as whales became the target of industrial scale harvesting conducted by Yankee Quakers who expressed no care for the ocean giants they were slaughtering for God given Earthly profit (Dolin, 2007).

In his presidency Lincoln expressed prolabor opinions, how they would have impacted the post war Republican Party was aborted by his successful murder. In accord with the laissez faire economics and nonregulation of business at least accommodated by most Christian populations of the west the corporate dominated GOP included, combined with libertarian social Darwinism, and sheer inexperience in dealing with the novel circumstances of the young industrial revolution, the economic explosion was severely marred by the evolution of giant monopolies, extreme economic disparities and impoverishment of much of the working class, and dangerous employee and consumer conditions and products (Sinclair, 1906; Mark, 2006; Wilson, 2008). By the early 1900s the situation had become so bad that extensive government effort began to be mounted to bust the trusts and regulate working conditions and products safety with an emphasis on food. This early Progressive movement featured secular and religious participants.

As radical political and economic changes swept the western nations, their cultures underwent a cultural repression – perhaps reactionary – that was even deeper than in previous centuries with the adoption of strict sexual Victorian mores in England and the US. In the latter this would lead to the imposition of the remarkably oppressive Comstock laws. This Christosharia law and culture was similar in many respects to Islamic sharia. Oppression of woman in particular ramped up with draconian forced birth laws that overturned relatively liberal Biblical and historical cultural norms (Paul, 2022a). The antiabortion project was a part of the theoconservative eugenics campaign to compel reproduction by White Anglo-Saxon Protestants in the face of massive immigration by other Europeans and Asians.

Thus in 1900 a domineering religious right – that is most closely currently replicated by the MAGA movement – owned the American culture, with women especially compelled by custom and law to lead constrained lives that few proved able to break out of. This represented a majority consensus in that the great majority of Americans were White Christoconservatives, although only males of that ilk enjoyed full voting rights. This strait-laced, uptight culture was predominantly WASP in that Black culture was despite Jim Crow often more hip and freewheeling (Morris, 2021). And even in White America forces of liberalization were coming onto the scene. For example, the advent of the easy to ride safety bike – a technological marvel of the 1890s still in wide use today – began to spur the lightening of heavy female clothing. So did, ironically, the eugenics movement which wanted White women to become more physically active in order to further improve their reproductive rate (O'Connor, 2008).

American atheism was, interestingly, not considered entirely out of societal bounds in the late 1800s due to the 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment – Roger Ingersoll, The Great Agnostic, gave speeches to large audiences across the country under the aegis of the First Amendment, while hobnobbing with top Republican politicians.<sup>29</sup> But the 1800s were a Golden Age for Christianity, with globalization on over drive due to major improvements in travel and communications via EuroAmerican steam power and the telegraph including ocean spanning cables, the spread of British, French, Belgian, Dutch and American Empires, and rising literacy the Jesus religion enjoyed unprecedented growth to about an unprecedented third of the global population by 1900, becoming the largest among the competing religious industries. A wide Christians presumption that further improvements in technologies into the new century would further spread the true religion inspired the Watchword movement (Barrett et al. 2001). A contrary prediction based on the appearance of the science-based atheism in the 1800s postulated that religion would suffer serious losses in a scientific age of realistic rationalism.

Over in France the atrocity laced victory of the Roman church over the Commune proved transitory as the secular progressive forces rapidly began to win the sociopolitical wars in subsequent decades, and much of western Europe became increasingly progressive and democratic. In the 20th century, the Great War was triggered by Catholic versus Orthodox strife in the Balkans. With Europe still a significantly religious continent, the war was Christian versus Christian, with the monarchs of most of the combatants each claiming divine justification. The beginning of the war was greeted with enthusiasm by large portions of the Christian religious citizenry (although this should not be exaggerated as detailed by Hastings, 2013). With a few pacifist exceptions, the churches largely and vigorously promoted the war from their national perspectives (Jenkins, 2015). The Lutheran and Catholic churches of Germany did not object to their nation's novel practice of long range targeting of civilians by artillery, zeppelins and bombers, nor the novel deployment of gas warfare.<sup>30</sup> In the Ottoman Empire Muslim action against Christians was another major genocide early in the century. The German version of lebensraum did not begin with the Nazis. Calculating that world revolution was nigh and/or the central Powers would be defeated, the new Soviet government fulfilled its promise to get Russia out of the



war via the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk that gave Germany and its allies vast tracts. The great land grab backfired – the number of troops needed to garrison so much Slavic Orthodox territory hindered victory by the Central Powers on the western fronts in early 1918 before fresh Americans arrived in large numbers to make democracy safe around the world. Having been instructed to be true to Christian virtues by just saying no to sexual activities with French women and not having been issued protection American troops suffered such high rates of STIs that the war effort was significantly impaired.

Toward the end of the war, extremist antidemocratic communists seized control of the Russian empire after moderate secular democratic elements had already overturned the inept Orthodox Czarist autocracy. The set of atheists then recklessly tried to apply an untested academic historico-economic theory no more practical than the social Darwinistic libertarianism it vehemently opposes to an actual guinea pig nation with unsurprisingly bad results.<sup>31</sup> Not that the Soviet government invented internal terror techniques, they cynically copied and developed those utilized by religious powers in their effort to establish an earthly workers' paradise, in the brutal process knocking off tens of millions while preventing the empire from becoming a capital driven power player on the global stage – to the benefit of the rising and still theistic United States. An effort to geographically laterally speed up the red revolution after the end of the Great War into Poland failed so miserably that the USSR only conducted minor direct unprovoked invasions when it thought the circumstances were strongly to its favor. Because of the outstanding incompetence of its incredibly repressive regime the USSR was a major setback to democratic socialism and atheism. This was most true in the US where up the time open socialists had enjoyed modest electoral success including the once significantly progressive heartland (Frank, 2004), the perceived threat to the American Way posed by the USSR resulted in periodic Red Scares while it equated godliness with the divinely inspired liberty loving nation.

### Modern Modernity

A major yet overlooked factor behind the development of the 20<sup>th</sup> century American Religious Right was the onset of a giant oil industry, compelled by the mass production of gasoline propelled automobiles by the anti-Semitic nonobservant Protestant Ford, displacing coal fired steam engines and hay fed horses as the dominant movers of modern industry. The primary producers of oil were White, hard-nosed entrepreneurs of Texas and Oklahoma who as arch conservative Protestant neoconfederate racist capitalists loathed socialism and its common consort atheism (Burrough, 2009). Among them born-again bad boy H. L. Hunt.<sup>32</sup> Flush with black gold cash they would proceed to put large sums into the promotion of an expanding Christoconservative industry including print, radio and TV, megachurches, colleges and think tanks, a process that continues today – and helps explain the theoconservative adoration for fossil fuels that they see as God's miraculous gift to America that blessed the country with its unprecedented and unmatched or so they think middle and upper class prosperity. This was in association with the evolution of the dour Puritanical Calvinist Christianity that was OK with wealth but did not revel in it, into the riches celebrating cult of materialistic hedonist Prosperity Christianity – often but not always Pentecostal - that nearly all current American Christians adhere to today in some manner.<sup>33</sup> The scheme of Americans of wealth putting big money into the Christoright has expanded well beyond oil tycoons (Brown and Jamison 2023; Dalleck, 2023; Frank, 2004; Gabbatt, 2022; Martin, 2013). That Europe lacks oil deposits and corresponding hardline capitalist/Christian tycoons to lavish monies on theoconservative sects may be a reason for its being a more secular moderate-liberal continent.

The great migration of largely Christian Blacks away from the vicious oppression of Jim Crow in the Evangelical south saw millions move into more secular, economically vibrant northern industrial cities that offered much more in the way of opportunities despite by no means insignificant racism. Also underway was a similar scale movement of theoconservative southern whites away from a south economically retarded by their own apartheid policies into the midwestern and western heartland (Bazzi et al., 2023). This diaspora spread theoright, neoconfederate, white power doctrine across a broad swath of the nation, both by direct infiltration, and cultural osmosis. The result of the dispersal of so many right wing Whites across such a large area of low population density overrepresented in the Senate and Electoral College, would be the persistent elections advantage still enjoyed by the WASP neoconfederate religious right – and these days the traitorous Bars and Stars battle flag displayed in Oregon and Indiana<sup>34</sup> – fueled by the largesse of the oilmen.

Outraging the theortight at the same time was the beginning of the never before seen radical modernity that posed a dire threat to the former's dominance in western nations, the US included. The mass produced automobiles devised by the social conservative free marketeer Ford and that helped fuel the rise of reactionary 1900s theoconservatism, also gave youth the ability to get away from watchful parents, and provided backseats for some nonBible approved sexual fun. The mass influx of woman into the work force in allied nations during the Great War began to erode the patriarchy in part by compelling the US and British governments to give women the vote, and by killing off impractical for work heavy dress for women – by 1920 women were going to the beach wearing body conforming suits that exposed entire arms and legs, such would have been scandalizing before the war. In one of the greatest examples of unintended results, the Prohibition pushed in part by theoconservatives including a then mainstreamed neoconfederate largely Protestant KKK backfired big time. It is well known that banning booze boosted organized crime to new heights that it still retains, leading to the first wave of federal gun regulations. It also helped modernize society. Prior drinking establishments excluded females, and white audiences were rarely exposed to exciting Black entertainers. The mob run speakeasies began the modern dating scene combining men, women and alcohol, and Black jazz performers (Morris, 2021; Paul, 2018) thrilled White customers to the growing fear and fury of White theoconservatives. The hardline ban on those not in holy matrimony having sex lest women ruin their marriage prospects was undercut. In part because the Great War undermined the confidence in the churches that had failed to stem the disaster, or the mass death of the Great Flu Pandemic, religiosity was losing its dominance. Thus the historically unprecedented first sociosexual revolution of fun based hedonism and personal liberty that infuriated an appalled Christian industry that with shocking suddenness saw its long near total dismal command unraveling, a devastating defeat that continues to today. In righteous reaction the likes of the once progressive William Jennings Bryan led the effort to ban the teaching of anti-Biblical evolution in public schools,<sup>35</sup> which backfired as it produced a public relations disaster in the Scopes Monkey Trial where Bryan was intellectually trounced by the atheist Clarence Darrow (Numbers, 2005), the proceedings covered by the writer who was as popular as he was a known atheist, H. L. Mencken. Having been revived by the neoconfederate film *Birth of a Nation*<sup>36</sup> endorsed by the progressive segregationist Democrat president Wilson, a politically mainstreamed KKK – spread in part by the ongoing White Diaspora – enjoyed wide support of nativist heartlanders and southerners including Protestant churches (Egan, 2023), until it swiftly imploded in part due to internal scandals exposed in part by the new FBI under director Hoover. Before doing so the Protestant right imposed draconian ethnoracist immigration restrictions that would not be lifted until Johnson's Great Society.

While Bolshevism was exploited by the fear mongering theortight to scare Americans away from atheism despite it posing no actual threat to the American Way, the USSR was more of a problem for Europe where a long-term effort to remove the regime was mounted, led by Eurofascism. A Vatican panel commissioned to assess the relative dangers of Communism and Nazism recognized that the latter was indeed theistic and concluded that it posed the greater threat due to its aggressive racism (Phayer, 2008). But the Papacy saw atheistic Bolshevism as the bigger spiritual danger and threw its keen support behind the hardline right. In the process Rome decried communist atrocities while playing down those by conservative elements. The most extreme expression of fascism, Nazism, was established by hard-right Bavarian Catholics as a direct outgrowth of the prewar developments (Hastings, 2010), with a pagan/occult element thrown into the incoherent heretical theistic mix. Violently attacking atheist reds as Germany teetered on revolution, the new organization was initially heavily buttressed by the Catholic Church to the point of major rallies led by Hitler being held on church property to the dismay of critics of the clearly reckless alliance (Hastings, 2010). The party was later predominantly Protestant as per the German population, temporarily causing the Roman Church to drop its support (Hastings, 2010; Paul, 2003, 2004).

The Holy See collaborated with Italian fascism, receiving the Vatican as a sovereign nation and large monies in a political deal with Mussolini (Pollard, 2005; Kertzer, 2014; Williams, 2003) who was probably a nontheist. The later revival of anti-Semitic laws in Italy could not be opposed by the church whose publications often bashed Jews, because they were patterned after those previously in force in the Papal States. The anti-democratic Vatican backed the ascent of Catholic autocracies peacefully in Austria and violently in Spain. With the Weimer democracy on its last legs the Mother Church, afraid of a Protestant strongman who might strip the church of state tax revenues, conveniently switched back to supporting Hitler's anti-communist party and maneuvered in parliament with the Protestant majority to place the nominally albeit heretical Catholic in power

(Paul, 2003, 2004, 2012; Williams, 2003). The entire Catholic Centre Party voted to make Hitler first chancellor and then dictator before dissolving itself in praise of the new Reich.<sup>37</sup> It cannot be overstressed that the obviously morally demented Hitler could never have taken control of one of the most powerful nations if not for the critical aid of the church he belonged to – that that basic historical fact is not well known is a scandal of slack modern history that is prone to protect powerful religious interests.<sup>38</sup> Making the situation worse, German Catholics then went to Rome to negotiate an extraordinarily corrupt conflict of interest stratagem a Concordat with their church that ensured the continuation of the lucrative tax stream while requiring Catholic bishops to swear loyalty to the new Reich. That they did. Including the Cardinal Galen who later denounced the Nazis disabled persons eugenics project while allowing SS attendance at his ascension, never opposed the legitimacy of the regime, was prowar, and blamed the Jews for their troubles for rejecting Christ (Griech-Poelle, 2002). The money obsessed Vatican proceeded to gain from the disastrous situation it had done so much to create via lucrative investments in war related industries (Pollard, 2005; Williams, 2003). In the US much of American conservatism was fascist friendly, led by the notoriously racist and anti-Semitic spiritualist Aryan Charles Lindbergh (1939; Gehr, 2021) who promoted aviation as a means of maintaining minority White supremacy in a world of majority color.<sup>39</sup>

In the wake of the notorious Night of the Long Knives that liquidated the most radical and LGBTQ Nazis in 1933, there was not a hint of protest from the Catholic and Protestant churches hoping to curry favor with and fearing Hitler, and largely satisfied with the results. The Catholic Church became increasingly disillusioned with their man as the party increasingly violated the Concordat, but never too much so in part because the tax inflow was never stopped.<sup>40</sup> Some moral Christians bravely opposed the regime to often deadly personal consequences, but they were very few and entirely ineffectual as the mainline Lutheran churches did not waver in supporting the regime.<sup>41</sup> Chaplains loyally served the military throughout the Nazis war of criminal conquest and genocide.

Careful scholarly analysis based in part on Vatican archives has shown that the conflicted Papacy failed to come close to sufficiently denouncing the Holocaust that the Roman Church with its extensive intelligence system was well aware of, and other fascist atrocities (Kertzer, 2022). In the Balkans Catholic fascists committed exceptionally appalling genocide against Orthodox Christians, Jews and Muslims (Phayer, 2000, 2008; Williams, 2003) with no challenge from the Vatican from across the narrow Adriatic that Holy See wanted to see become a Catholic lake. Claims that the Pope did not speak out more forcefully for fear of Nazi retribution against German Catholics are absurd because the group made up a third of the population and were correspondingly vital to church member Hitler's dream of an Aryan Utopia and his war to achieve that, and risked his overthrow which almost happened in any case. Had the Pope who readily excommunicated communists instructed Catholics that such would happen to them if they engaged in Nazi atrocities and aggressions the disasters could have been stopped in their tracks. As it was not a single Catholic Nazi Hitler included was excommunicated. After the war the Catholic Church helped a large number of fascists escape justice via the infamous Ratline (Williams, 2003).

Hitler's regime had pulled off one of the greatest con jobs in history by producing the illusion still widely believed that the disciplined rule of the party created an economic miracle. In reality the Fuhrer and his cronies were economically incompetent gangsters. The German economy was a Potemkin village kept running by selling off the national gold reserves and taking out massive hidden loans from international sources that could never have been paid back. The core idea was that Germany would maintain prosperity by capturing other nations wealth and funneling their resources, including via mass slavery, to the Deutsch Aryans at the top of the economic pyramid (Aly, 2006; Evans, 2005; Gellately, R. 2001; Gross et al. 2018; Tooze, 2006). Nazism was socialist in that all German citizens would be assured prosperity by the state, failure to maintain such would have resulted in the overthrow of the Nazis. This archaic ruthless criminal scheme meant that Hitler and company had no choice but to attack neighboring nations in series. Thus the acquisition of Austria and Czechoslovakia. Poland has to be seized in 1939 to avoid collapse of the German economy, resulting to Hitler's surprise a war with the British Empire he did not have a certain means to conclude because the Anglican navy and air force could not be defeated (Robinson, 2005). The ultimate need was to conquer Soviet territories that would result in a gigantic Germanic empire with Germans at the top of the financial pile, and to do so before the massive Soviet military buildup precluded the all vital conquest of the slaves. The colossal and genocidal

Operation Barbarossa was an unprovoked attack by assorted theists backed by major Christian powers on an atheistic regime that had shown no practical signs of spontaneously invading into east-central Europe.<sup>42</sup>

Whether the Nazis or Soviets killed more civilians in eastern Europe remains unsettled (Snyder, 2010). During the world wars, both sides targeted civilians via artillery and especially bombing. Germany initiated these attacks in Europe during the Great, the Spanish Civil and early World wars on a modest scale. The superior industrial capacity of the British Empire and the United States allowed them to upscale mass terror bombing to kill about a million civilians; area bombing of cities continued even after this did not force Germany to surrender before an invasion became necessary (Dower, 2010; Friedrich, 2006).<sup>43</sup> The initial justification for the mass urban bombing was to push German citizens to overturn the Nazis regime and render a costly invasion unnecessary America's unique scientific and industrial abilities allowed it to target a couple of cities with nuclear weapons just before the war ended, although the numbers killed were considerably less than those from conventional attacks, and their role in ending the war correspondingly dubious. The atheist Soviet attack on the empire of the divine Emperor who wished to save his position and life being a, if not the, leading cause of the Japanese surrender.<sup>44</sup> The subsequent admission forced by Christian MacArthur by Hirohito that he was not divine severely damaged theism on the island. Note if the characteristics of creation are divine in origin, that the divinity ensured that the physics of the space allow for the production of weapons of mass destruction is neither evidence of its possessing high morality, or offering the practical means to prevent large scale violence. Many on the Christoright take the provision of the means of mass destruction as affirming that the end times are fast approaching. That when the wide possession of nuclear arsenals may be suppressing very large scale conventional wars.<sup>45</sup>

When the Nazi war of conquest for the Aryans favored by Providence proved as impractical as it was – in part because the seizure of booty and slave labor from conquered territories proved less lucrative than had been hoped – and the right wing attempt to extinguish communism by mass war failed, Soviet Communism took advantage of the gaping power vacuum and occupied eastern Europe—albeit without the large-scale genocide practiced by the Nazis and Croat Catholics.<sup>46</sup> Left by far the greatest economic and global power, America's relatively benign post war treatment of defeated nations contributed to a postwar boom of west-central Europe that would contribute to crippling popular theism. Although the nuclear arms race got out of hand to the extent that the existence of much or all of civilization was threatened, the uber-weapons made further mass war impractical, so it was replaced by the lower grade Cold War containment strategy. The result was a series of mini-wars, including Korea and Vietnam. The Cold War was theologically intriguing in that both sides experienced significant secularization, complicating attempts to characterize it as a simple atheist versus theist confrontation. The British Empire began to rapidly disassemble with the detachments of the Indian Jewel in the Crown.<sup>47</sup> Instead of jointly celebrating their throwing off the shackles of their relatively benign Anglican overlords, Hindus and Muslims proceeded to slaughter one another by hundreds of thousands if not worse. In the 1950s the not so benign Anglicans sharply repressed independence movements in Africa for no logical purpose.

Until 1900, the number of basic atheists worldwide may have numbered only in the low millions; the new century saw an explosion of this cohort to a billion by 2000 (Figure 1; Barrett et al., 2001; Paul, 2010b, 2012; Paul & Zuckerman, 2007; Inglehart, 2021). In the Communist bloc, antitheist policies and indoctrination were operative. In the Western Bloc, the aftereffects of the two most lethal wars of history may have contributed to the greatest spontaneous secularizing of societies in history as the dozen and a half democracies enjoyed unprecedented prosperity from the 1950s to the present (Bruce, 2002, 2013; Inglehart, 2021; Norris & Inglehart, 2004; Paul, 2009a, 2010b, 2012; Paul & Zuckerman, 2007; Zuckerman, 2011).<sup>48</sup> In the only western nation to retain a strongly religious position the concept of American Exceptionalism via the American Way, boasted that the combination of popular Christianity and libertarian capitalism is the best possible socioeconomic arrangement. Soviet suppressions of anticommunist movements in neighboring countries occurred until the last and most violent in Afghanistan contributed to the collapse of the economically nonviable Soviet empire – with the blowback that some of the Muslim elements aided by the US would cynically turn their attentions to the other superpower. To the furious distress of the American right who had hoped to see enormous China become a haven for American capital and Christian conversion, the fanatical communist and atheist Mao reunited China – the historically low religiosity of the Han propels helps explain the lack of intense resistance to the ensuing suppression of theism. But his obtuse policies liquidated tens of

millions as they held back economic development by 30 years, preventing the colossal country from becoming the largest economy by the end of the 1900s—Mao’s Sinofailure enormously boosted the fortunes of the United States from the 1940s to today. Meanwhile, the formation of Israel would, in addition to causing decades of strife between the new country and the west with Islam, cause many Christoconservatives to see the fulfillment of Biblical prophecy as solid evidence that the return of Christ that Jesus has said would occur in the lifetime of those who witnessed him was at long last about to occur.

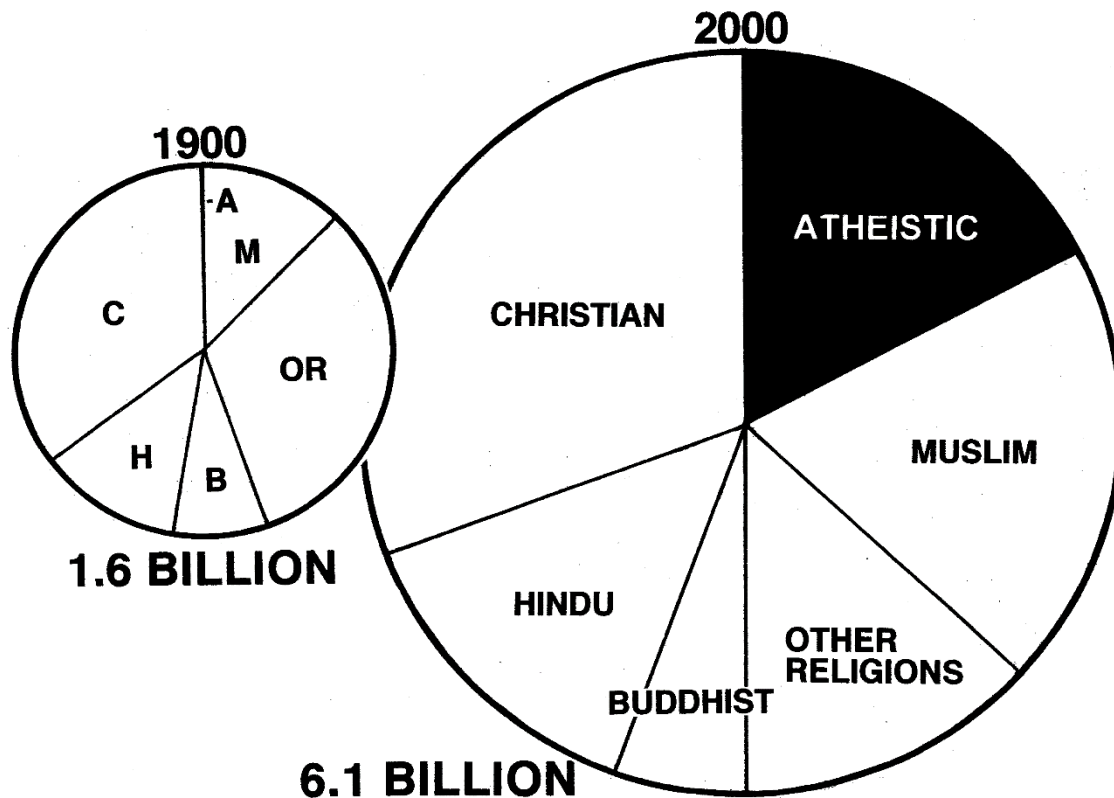


Figure 1. Changing distribution of religions and irreligion within the global population during the 1900s. Data from Barrett et al. (2001)

The Great Depression had resulted in a wave of progressive New Deal economics that angered the until then little fettered libertarian capitalists, the Protestant oil tycoons included, as violating their God given freedom to make as much cash as they could however they could, even as the mild policies did them little actual damage. One counter right wing effort was conveniently forgotten Business Plot to overthrow the Roosevelt administration (Katz, 2022) – more ingenious and over the long term effective have been the *Little House on the Prairie* tales they being libertarian tracts.<sup>49</sup> Organized crime violence facilitated by automatic small arms led to the first Federal gun regulations to the discontent of some traditionalists. The giddy First Sexual Revolution had tamped down some in the face of grim times and vigorous theoconservative counter efforts, aided by retention of the Comstock laws and the new Hays Code that kept Hollywood in check. That said social mores in an age of consumerism did not return to pre Great War Christosharia standards, the two-piece bathing suit for women came onto the scene in the 30s, and men were allowed to go topless in public, and the World War cultures of American and England were – to a degree that has been forgotten – remarkably sexualized. It was the age of the pin-up culture with USAAF aircraft nose art often featuring soft porn that would be seen as sociopolitically incorrect today, and movies often full of code evading sexual innuendo<sup>50</sup> – the big band hit “In the Mood” was not about going on a picnic. American troops were issued condoms on practical grounds. As observed in McKinstry (2007) the second great influx of women into a wartime workforce was an agent of growing sexual liberation for women. The bikini was introduced in 1946.

Shortly after the war, inspired by its aerial technical marvels of mass air forces bombing whole cities into rubble, and early jets nearing and penetrating the sound barrier at a time Orville Wright was still alive, the flying saucer craze began. The spark was incompetent, tabloid reporting as a readers seeking press covered vague, unverified claims of sightings and crashes of alien craft. This was quickly normalized in the population by a theater goers seeking film industry distributing a series of movies featuring aliens spacefarers wandering about the planet. The ominous implications for religion of this particular expression of pseudoscientific paranormalism – which is not compatible with Abrahamism – have not been appreciated. Certainly Billy Graham at the time had no clue.

As American underwent a post-war consumerism boom for the White middle class increasingly wedded to their cars as they moved to the burbs, it was turning out that the Holy Trinity did not seem to have provided its favorite nation with enough oil to keep the pistons of the American version of the Industrial Revolution running, leading to a surge of interest in solar power – also widespread had been wind power in rural areas. That did not last long as the gulf states began to save the energy day as it showed that a creator if one exists had blessed the Muslim gulf lands with vast deposits of oil with which to more easily and cheaply power the post-war American Suburban Dream. That as globalization got another boost with the invention of cargo containers and super freighters to haul them, and with the population soaring well into the billions – often but not always encouraged by religious powers<sup>51</sup> – resource exploitation and pollution were gravely degrading a biosphere already severely damaged by tens of thousands of years of human activity, with some whale species driven nearly to extinction.

By the middle of the 1900s it was becoming apparent that the Watchword expectation of a great expansion of global Christianity was not coming to pass as the supernaturalistic cult remained stuck at a third of the planetary population. That to the dismay of the most popular Christian of the latter half of the century, Billy Graham who began his worldwide crusade of evangelical mass rallies designed to rejuvenate the confession – although a White elitist, Graham broke racial ground by welcoming peoples of color. The Graham revival project via spiritual persuasion would fail. At the same time a capitalist entrepreneur disenchanted by a partial post war retrenchment of the sexualized culture of the war, the atheist Hufe Hefner, started a new magazine designed to break down the weakening Comstock Laws and mainstream soft pin-up style porn, with the greater intents of radically sexualizing western society. That worked.<sup>52</sup> While *Playboy* and its increasingly explicit descendants have been behind the counter adult fare, the plastics revolution of the 1950s made possible by Godly oil led to the sexy Barbie children's doll in 1959. The Kinsey Reports exposed that Americans were not as sexually prudish as cultural suppression had made it seem. The Hays Code began to lose its grip on Hollywood as the American audience tired of being treated like children. Led by the Los Angeles/Las Vegas centered, often Mob paid Rat Pack, and the wildly popular Ed Sullivan Show, pop entertainment further mainstreamed interracial performances, and increasingly audiences. The civil rights movement got into gear as it mounted the first large scale effort to defeat legal Jim Crow with increasing but still not full success – while center-left theists King among them were prominent, atheists were involved including Michael Schwerner and Mark Goodman (Schwarz, 2006) who also scarified their lives. Still favoring segregation was the rising Cathoconservative Buckley (1957).

The seemingly strait laced 1950s was a simmering, complicated cultural amalgam priming the growing baby boomers for radicalization.<sup>53</sup> On one hand it was a churchly decade with religious house membership – mainly moderate mainline – being at three quarters of the US population (Gallup, 2021). Not being a Judeo-Christian of some moderate-conservatism was widely considered unpatriotic in the context of the struggle against the godless evil red empire as the Republican Party began its still ongoing association with anti-secular/liberal conspiracy theories (Dickey, 2023). The supposed moderate Republican Eisenhower did not denounce McCarthy. Hobnobbing with Christoright oilmen he inserted God into the Pledge and national motto while resisting further socialism, universal health care included – in other words American retention of popular traditionalist Christianity was a critical factor in the nation not going more socialist like the other post war western nations. Meanwhile Ike allowed the dourly Protestant Dulles brothers as heads of the State Department and the new secretive CIA to run rampant as they in brazen violation of democratic principles overturned popular governments that did not sufficiently conform to US government demands in their overzealous struggle against ungodly socialism, severely damaging the international reputation of America (Kizner, 2014).

Only a few percent of Americans were willing to tell Gallup they did not believe in God (Figure 3) – although a good deal more may have thought such. Gays were targeted as security risks<sup>54</sup> and largely, but by no means entirely, in the closet.<sup>55</sup> For a male to wear hair covering ears or forehead was seen as too effeminate to be tolerated. The small – yet prominent because it was funded by persons of wealth John Birch Society set the standards for hardline, over the top conspiracy myths concocting – while actually being conspiratorial itself – racist, anti-Semitic, anti-government, pro free market neoconfederate strategies and tactics that now tower over a major portion of the American population (Dalleck, 2023; Dickey, 2023). Television was dominated by vapid White Flight family sitcoms featuring the then new wave of middle class suburban nuclear families. The latter development has had ironic effects. The modern radical right embraces the nuclear family as the American ideal despite its actually overturning the true tradition of the extended family, and even though the separation of younger folks from their elders facilitates divorces the former from the traditional mores the latter, facilitating the adoption of nontraditional modern attitudes.

On the other hand, with laws banning teaching evolution still on some state’s books, the religious right still smarting from the Scopes Trial remained fairly quiescent. Only to be revived, ironically enough, by the initiation of the Space Race. Shocked by Sputnik, American educators began to push science curricula including evolutionary theory to the anger of fundamentalists, who began to repopularize creationism (Numbers, 2005; Whitcomb & Morris, 1961). The first of widely influential *Bell Science Series* broadcast films extolled the connections between science and religion.<sup>56</sup> At the same time corporate-consumer technology delivered the most revolutionary musical instrument of all time, Les Paul’s and Leo Fender’s solid body electric guitar, the basis of the radical, initially Black (Morris, 2021) genre of sexualized Rock and Roll – Elvis was the pelvis, and Little Richard’s “Tutti Frutti”<sup>57</sup> and Jerry Lee’s “Whole Lot of Shaking Goin On” and “Great Balls of Fire” were explicit enough – that became wildly popular among White youth to the angry distress of neoconfederate Whites who were proving unable to persuade most White youth to remain sufficiently true to prim and proper traditional ChristoWhite values. The Beat Culture spit in the face of establishment norms as the US government conducted unethical Cold War psychedelic drug experiments that laid the foundations for their widespread use. Hip comedy became edgy and vulgar as per Lenny Bruce, Richard Pryor and George Carlin. As natural juvenile mortality fell to a small fraction of historical norms – the greatest achievement of humanity which neither theism nor any gods had anything to do with – strides began to be made in easy to use contraceptives.

The defeat of the Christotraditionalism as a preponderant cultural power in the west came to a head in the 1960s and 70s with the large scale adoption by the enormous Baby Boomer generation fed up with the stifling side of the button down culture of their parents went for the super radical Counterculture announced by the arrival of the Beatles with their feminine hairstyles in New York in 1964,<sup>58</sup> and the summer roadtrip of the drug fueled Merry Pranksters protohippies. and its associated Second Sexual Revolution, quickly followed by modern feminism and gays coming out of the closet, that stomped millennia of traditionalism into the cultural dirt while being tremendously popular. The earnest ground breaking cultural battles of the 60s was succeeded by the casual hedonistic 70s featuring gay powered Disco topped by Christian bad girl Donna Summer’s orgasmic *Love to Love You Baby* – a tune that could not have been heard in 1909, 1929, 1949, or 1969 – leaving no doubt that modernist forces had gained tremendous ground that the Christoright was not able to recover, did not improve the mood of the infuriated latter. Adding salt to the theoconservative wounds was the appearance in the Reaganite 80s of Black Rap which took vulgarity and sexuality to yet new levels, to be followed by the explosion of the porn industry made possible by the combination of digital technologies and free speech. The secular hip counterculture remains the predominant western lifestyle, also adopted to varying degrees in other regions.

On the legal level, court decisions seriously degraded theoconservative government power by banning official public school prayer – the work of the most prominent American atheist of the time, Madalyn O’Hair who was often seen as so boorish that she adversely impacted the image of the opinion to the discontent of many atheists – overturning bans on teaching evolution along with preventions on teaching creationism and bans on interracial marriage, topped by removal of forced birth laws. The civil rights project put an end to legal segregation and greatly reduced but by no means entirely eliminated traditional societal bigotry. In just a century science had crashed the juvenile mortality rates that ineffectual divine worship and prayer (Paul, 2008) had failed to do anything about for millennia to a few percent (Paul 2009, 2020). Rising street firearms violence

including a host of assassinations encouraged a new wave of gun regulations that began to perturb the gun industry and some of its customers, while general consumers demanded tighter regulations of products and advertisements. Yet further offending many conservatives was the liberal-socialistic Great Society attempt to eliminate poverty and health care for the elderly and some impoverished – but not universal medical coverage in the US that being socialism if not communism – as well as the swiftly expanding environmental movement that began to receive extensive government support, and ended mass whaling while protecting endangered terrestrial species, and dramatically cut down on the most egregious pollution of the skies and waters, as increasing concerns about galloping population growth were raised.<sup>59</sup>

The continuing popular success of the flying saucer craze – by then abetted on mainstream broadcast television via science fiction dramas – contributed to a counter reaction by a developing rationalist skeptic movement to that and other assorted varieties of popular paranormalism, including the first major modern work of hard nosed skepticism (Klass, 1968). That did not, however, stop the ramping up to the scale of a novel, naturalist full blown creation myth directly antagonistic to every supernaturalistic creation tale including Abrahamic, the contrivance that it was extraterrestrial beings rather than deities that played the key role in the formation of humanity and our civilization (Von Daniken, 1968). That has posed a cryptic competition that religious institutions immersed in their own versions of irrationalism, while remaining focused on the demographic threat from atheism, have naively paid little direct attention to. Not that the atheosecular community, itself perturbed by the pseudoscience, has caught on to how the aliens are here and now – and then – industry is damaging the nonscientific churches et al.

Remaining a serious security threat to the fun Western Way was the ungodly communist world with its vast nuclear arsenal that many on the theoright took to be convincing evidence that the end times truly were nigh. Meanwhile Islam asserted its new found fossil fuel power by cutting off oil supplies to a west that was supporting what Arabs perceived as a colonial Jewish state in their midst, damaging the American Dream that remained highly dependent on divine oil that there did not seem to be enough of in God Blessed America – until the 21<sup>st</sup> century miracle of modern fracking. During this time, the promise of power sources alternative to fossil were not panning out as hoped. Although easy to get up and running fission was turning out to be risky and expensive. While potentially able to power the planet without danger or pollution, the fusion that may have solved many global problems was not and still is not working.

It is very probable that the comparatively limited socialism of post war America contributed to its increase of prosperity expressions of Christianity not seen in the rest of the west. Aside from the US, the increasingly prosperous democracies adopted moderately progressive hybrid economies combining private enterprise with extensive government social spending. This was a long term development conducted for pragmatic secular purposes intended to produce the best practical results via trying out policies and seeing what worked, the relatively sociopolitically indifferent and weak Eurochurches had little to do with it, but the compromise scheme is in accord with Vatican doctrine and moderate-liberal Protestant clergies. In the wake of its infamous support for fascism and the face of the popularity of democracy the Catholic Church adopted the more liberty and Jewish friendly Vatican 2, which retained reactionary elements including against modern contraception. After the death of the Mao autocratic China began to transform via a hybrid state/private capitalism into a fast-growing economic power, as did to a lesser extent democratic and very theistic India after also abandoning overly socialistic policies. Cambodian Communism proved to be genocidal; the North Korean variant—which includes considerable supernaturalism—is incompetent to the point of being incidentally lethal on a mass basis. The Marxist Tamil Tiger rebels initiated suicide bombing as an anticivilian terror tactic on a regional basis, although this may have involved some level of theism.<sup>60</sup> The Tamil revolt was harshly suppressed by the Buddhist government.

With the socioeconomic failure of classic anticapital communism, the theism versus atheism Cold War of seven decades suddenly terminated without the expected, potentially Armageddon level, strife, dramatically reducing but not eliminating the possibility of a nuclear ignited end times. The demise of the Soviet Bloc was largely a secular affair driven by grindingly dreary living conditions far behind those of the west,<sup>61</sup> and the suppression of cultural freedom vis-à-vis hip modernity. The leading Soviet dissident, the intellectual physicist Andrei Sakharov, was an atheist. It is very unlikely that the Poles would have revolted had their living conditions been comparable to those in Finland. The effort by John Paul 2 to turn the demise of godless Marxism into a revival of EuroChristendom starting in Catholic Poland – funded by organized crime monies



that lead to a notorious international scandal (Pollard, 2004; Raw, 1992; Williams, 2003) – failed. East Germany was and is one of the most atheistic regions on the planet. A notable but rare Christian figure was Vaclav Havel. The Russian Orthodox Church was comatose during the events, too compromised by its collaboration with the Czarist regimes and, to a lesser extent, the Communists, and did not have a large membership. The end of the Cold War would with time disprove both Reagan’s naïve contention that the ungodly Communist bloc was the focus of evil in the world, or that its elimination would result in a Fukuyama (1992) end of history in favor of liberal democracy and capitalist globalism. Instead, the decline of de facto empires, and the rise of India and especially China which then lacked a grand global mission, facilitated global unrest (Kaplan, 2010), most of it in the form of religious conflicts. An early bout was the vicious Balkans Catholic versus Orthodox and Muslim conflict of the 1990s. The 21st-century War on Terror involved Western Christians, Jews, and seculars along with moderate Muslims against militant Islam, which developed suicide terrorism into a global institution, while parts of Africa have been wracked by a regional conflict between Christians, Muslims, and animists. The Aum Shinrikyo end time terrorists who tried to deploy anthrax were religious, via an amalgam of Christianity and Buddhism (Kaplan & Marshall, 1996).

Turning to the a/theodemographic statistics of the later 20th and now the 21st centuries, from a psychosociological perspective the post WW2 decades are data goldmines in terms of examining levels of religiosity and their relationship to socioeconomic conditions. That because of the unprecedented survey and statistical information that is being gathered and recorded in ever increasing abundance, especially in the more developed nations. This began in the 1940s when Gallup, established by a devout Christian with the explicit intent of promoting the religion industry via the survey industry, began to ask American whether or not they believe in God, a query that is producing dramatically different results today than it did then. There is how digital Google statistics show that the frequency of the use of the word “God” in books declined precipitously after the early 1800s and has held steady at a small fraction of the peak in recent decades (Jean-Baptiste et al., 2010). After 1900 Barrett et al. (2001) observe that “massive defections from Christianity . . . subsequently took place in Western Europe due to secularism . . . , & in the Americas due to materialism . . . The number of nonreligionists . . . throughout the 20th century has skyrocketed from 3.2 million in 1900, to 697 million in 1970, and on to 918 million in ad 2000 . . . Equally startling has been the meteoritic growth of secularism . . . . Two immense quasi-religious systems have emerged at the expense of the world’s religions: agnosticism . . . ., & atheism . . . . From a miniscule presence in 1900, a mere 0.2% of the globe, these systems . . . are today expanding at the extraordinary rate of 8.5 million new converts each year, and are likely to reach one billion adherents soon. A large percentage of their members are the children, grandchildren or the great-great-grandchildren of persons who in their lifetimes were practicing Christians” (Figure 1).

No religious philosophy enjoyed similar expansion. Buddhism suffered serious losses, as have a host of traditional polytheistic sects. Despite the rapid population growth of India, Hinduism has barely edged up and remains largely limited to the subcontinent. Assorted New Age movements are enjoying only limited success. Christianity has been fixed at a third of the global population since 1900. The Islamic cult has made some major gains and now stands at nearly a quarter of the world, but the growth has mainly been via rapid reproduction, and despite significant migration it is predominantly a belief of an eastern hemisphere zone lying above the equator.

Although 21<sup>st</sup> century data from less industrialized nations are of somewhat lesser quality than for most prosperous democracies, what is available is very informative (Inglehart, 2021; Ipsos, 2011, 2023; ISSP, 2018; Paul & Zuckerman, 2007; Pew 2018; 2020; Putman & Campbell 2010; redc, 2012, WVS, 2022). The most religious nations are Islamic – although there are examples of losses of piety (Kenyon, 2019; redc, 2012) – with some Christian nations and Hindu also scoring as highly religious. Some Catholic countries of the Americas have seen serious losses in religiosity, including acceptance of contraception to the degree that fertility rates have lowered dramatically, as well as increases in abortion rights. Claims of major gains in religiosity in formerly or less Communist nations are usually exaggerated, and in some cases interest in the gods remains low or has declined. Despite some gains of late Christians are only a few percent of the Chinese population, animists have not exploded in numbers, and atheists are numerous While Russians profess a large increase in belief since the end of the Cold War, church attendance remains low, suggesting the surge is more about religious nationalism than actually thinking Jesus is a savior. East Asia in general is not particularly religious, as per its historical pattern. Youth is the most irreligious, with the prospects that they will become as

pious as their elders as they age very low. One area in which religion has made recent important gains is in the area of reactionary fundamentalism (Kaufmann, 2010; Longman, 2006; Pew, 2014a; Shah & Toft, 2006). This is seen among all three primary brands of Abrahamism, as well as Hinduism. It is especially true in a number of underdeveloped regions, and in Israel.

Irreligion alone has proven able to make big gains of late by spontaneous conversion, which is all the more outstanding because it is happening at often rapid rates despite the low fecundity of nontheists. That means that the rise on nontheism is largely because of conversion by persuasion and/or of lack of interest in theism, rather than the rapid reproduction religions are usually forced to count upon. Calculations that theism can be expected to make major future gains via rapid breeding (as per Pew, 2011, 2015a, 2018) in the face of the more rapid conversion towards de-theism are at best very unlikely to come to pass (Inglehart, 2021; Paul & Zuckerman, 2007; Zuckerman, 2011) – Pew (2022a) appears to have learned this lesson. Youth are especially prone to being nonpious, but losses in piety are also occurring among older generations under the demographics of the Great Secularization.

This is another reality that helps expose the remarkable demographic weakness of theism compared to disbelief in the modern world. Religion enjoys what should be the immense advantage of being a multi-trillion dollar (Grim & Grim, 2016) planetary organized non/profit industry involving temples, churches, mosques, synagogues, explicitly religious colleges and universities, private grade schools, think tanks, broadcasting cable and satellite channels, a news service,<sup>62</sup> publishing houses and magazines, book stores and chains,<sup>63</sup> medical complexes, charities, et al. that produces enormous amounts of the entirely biased propaganda carefully crafted to retain and recruit members while paying little attention to the truth. Organized atheosecularism such as it is a fraction of a percent of that scope, with monthly atheist meetups in a given city normally garnering a dozen or less attendees, and the organized groups globally sporting a collective yearly budget of tens of millions, little in the way of infrastructure, no major educational institutions or broadcasting systems, a few magazines with circulations in the tens of thousands, and so forth – although the advent of social media has helped fill in the communications gap. Yet disreligion is kicking theism's fragile sociocultural behind without putting much structured effort into it.

And without receiving much assistance from the news and opinion media, which gives disbelievers very little regular voice despite the cohort's news worthy swift expansion to a fifth or more of the global and US populations (Paul, 2022b; Figures 2 & 3), while lavishing attention to the actions and opinions of deity worshipping supernaturalists – consider how every announcement of the Pope is global news while his death and replacement are treated like the Olympics. Yet the over covered churches are hard pressed to hold their numbers.

The countries in which religion has lost the greatest ground due to grass roots conversion are first-world democracies. Starting in a Europe again disillusioned by the stunning failure of the Eurochurches to prevent or mollify the epic catastrophe. In quantitative terms, the extent of the losses has been well documented (Brenan[Gallup], 2021, 2022, 2023; Bruce, 2002, 2013; Bullivant, 2018; Gallup 2022; Inglehart 2021[and extensive refs. therein]; Ipsos, 2011, 2023; ISSP, 2018; Newport[Gallup], 2022; Jones[Gallup], 2021, 2022; Norris & Inglehart, 2004; Paul, 2009a, 2010b, 2012, 2018/9[and extensive refs. therein]; Paul & Zuckerman, 2007; PEW, 2011, 2018, 2020; 2022; PRRI, 2021; redc, 2012; Zuckerman, 2008, 2009, 2011; WVS, 2022; contra critically flawed claims otherwise by Stark, 2008; 2012, 2015; Stark & Finke, 2000); basic atheists constitute large minorities to strong majorities, and core atheists range up to a third of the population, while levels of religious practice are very low in the same countries (Figure 5). In some Western nations, active Christians are now small minorities, and the religious Right a fringe faction. The failure of alternative forms of supernaturalism New Age among them to replace more than a fraction of the losses in Christian devotion in Europe and elsewhere, and the reduction in popular religion in Japan, show that the first-world religious decline is general rather than specific to Christianity. The loss of supernaturalistic belief, including the existence of an afterlife, and activity has often proceeded swiftly (see Fig. 4.3 in Norris & Inglehart, 2004). Spain was still a Catholic-dominated Fascistic state the same year that the then-new *Saturday Night Live* parodied the death of Franco. Spain is now a secularized democracy so low in religiosity that most churches are centuries old and have reduced levels of attendance, and homosexuals can marry and divorce. Ireland saw a similarly dramatic shift from Catholic dominance to considerable secularization over the same period. Christians are in danger of becoming smaller minorities than Muslims in a few western European countries, that even though Muslims

make up only a few percent of the population of the region. Substantial majorities, up to 8 in 10, support evolutionary science in all but one first-world country. It is sociologically significant that the rapid loss of western European, Canadian, and Australian piety occurred without a major culture war in which atheistic and theistic organizations contended with one another for the adherence of the population – secularization occurred with remarkably little sociopolitical fuss. Meanwhile the most American of religions has not done nearly as well as its founder had hoped, the Latter Day Saints still make up only a fraction of a percent of the global population despite an extensive worldwide yet very inefficient missionary program.

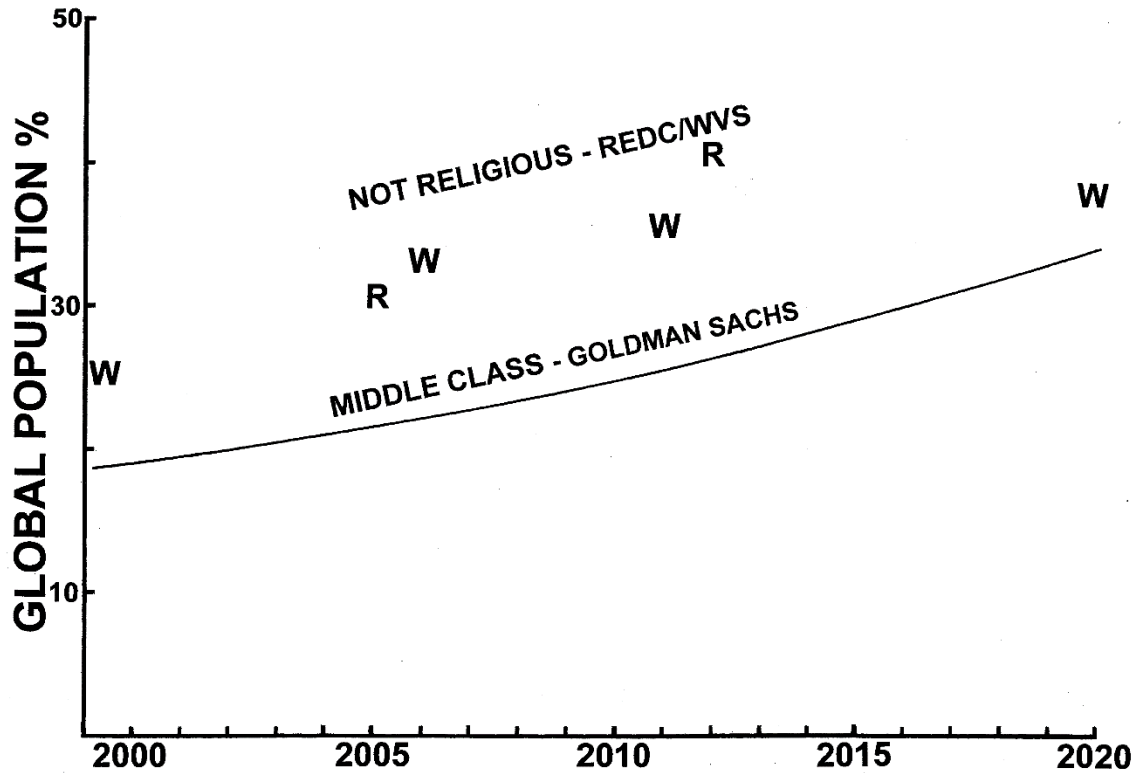


Figure 2. 21<sup>st</sup> century cumulative international growth in nonreligion, and its relationship to rising prosperity. Religiosity data from World Values Survey and redc (2012).

Post WW 2 the United States had long been a laggard in in deChristianizing – with the religious right remaining a major force symbolized by the expansion of megachurches that actually never have accommodated more than one percent of Americans on a given Sunday – but that is no longer true as over the last three decades it has been fast catching up (Figures 3 & 4), ruining long claims even by many atheists that God’s Country was ordained to always be so (see Paul, 2018/9 and refs. therein for an extensive discussion, as well as Brenan (Gallup), 2023; Byler, 2023; Gallup, 2022; Gervais et al. 2021; Jones[Gallup], 2021, 2022; Marcotte, 2021; Miller et al. 2022; Newport[Gallup], 2022; PRR1, 2021, 2023 Downey, 2017). To the extent that it may no longer be the most religious first world country (Inglehart, 2021). The nonreligious have expanded by a mind boggling tenth of the total population per decade, the Protestant majority is gone as church as the theoconservative sects join the mainliners in in contracting – the Southern Baptists have lost 4 million since 2000 – church membership that was still around 70% in 2000 in now below half and sinking fast along with attendance<sup>64</sup> as creationism<sup>65</sup> and the Bible literalism<sup>66</sup> it rests upon slide in favor of acceptance of evolutionary science. Even the once vaunted expansion of the Mormons is stalling out here and abroad (Noyce and Kemsley, 2023) as their never efficient missionary complex sputters in the face of societal secularization, rates of reproduction taper off, the nonoptional 10% of income tithes severely limits recruitment and retention as it always has, and rising scandals centering around the resulting massive church coffers led to disillusionment (Boorstein, 2023). The common notion that the rise of the nones, the nons, and the unaffiliated merely reflect decreases in religious activity and membership but not in deity belief is disproven by in synch big rapid

increases in disbelief in God/s and other Judeo-Christianity entities and realms by Gallup and other organizations, tripling or quadrupling since 2000 to around a fifth of the nation, or very possibly a quarter as the growing survey data supports the to some seemingly radical calculation by Gervais & Najle (2018) – it is possible that some of America’s rise in deity disbelief is due to decrease in reluctance to acknowledge such. And confirmed is the continuing reluctance of discriminated against atheists to explicitly admit that they are that, those who do so being about a fourth or less (Lipka[Pew], 2019) of those who tell pollsters that do not believe in deities.<sup>67</sup> In absolute numbers that is 60 to 80 million American atheists, comparable to the major sects and dwarfing the lesser yet prominent ones.

This trend is occurring even as theists especially theoconservative outreproduce nontheists, and most immigrants are religious. In part this is because an expanding cohort of nontheists in the population encourages theists to abandon their beliefs, while increasing numbers of nonbelieving parents raise atheistic children. While the young are the most atheistic, older generations are shedding Christians as well. Such demographics are causing even Pew (2022) to calculate that the nonreligious will outnumber Christians, if they do not already do so (Pew 2014c, p. 45 top left). Commiserate with the rise on individual and cultural liberty favoring irreligion that rejects archaic Abrahamic mores there had been a strong upslope in acceptance for nontraditional lifestyles, from the broad acceptance of sexual activity outside of marriage aside from cheating (Finer, 2007) to dramatic improvement in the social status of LGBTQ persons, with gay marriage now nationally legal. In the area of minority rights and sensibilities substantial progress has been made in removing memorials and place names that long honored the traitorous Confederacy and other forms of racism and parallel oppression. Meanwhile public displays and projects that commend and instruct about progressive people and efforts have expanded. At the same time, the Republican White working class has seen significant declines in religious membership even as they often hold onto theoconservative opinions (Byler, 2023; Paul, 2018/9; Putman & Campbell, 2010).

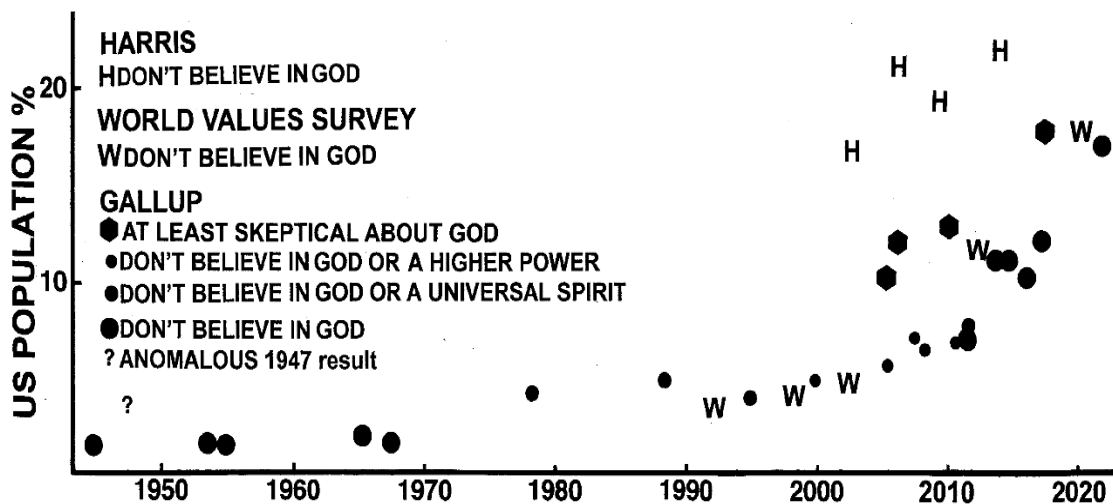


Figure 3. Post World War rise of American atheism. Gallup asked a simple yes or no regarding belief in God in the 1940s to 1960s, dropped the query, then resumed it circa 2010 providing the only long decadal tracking. The very strong and rapid rise in Ameroatheism of late is confirmed by two lines of Gallup questioning, and by similar WVS and Harris results. Data from Gallup (2022), Harris (2013), World Values Surveys.

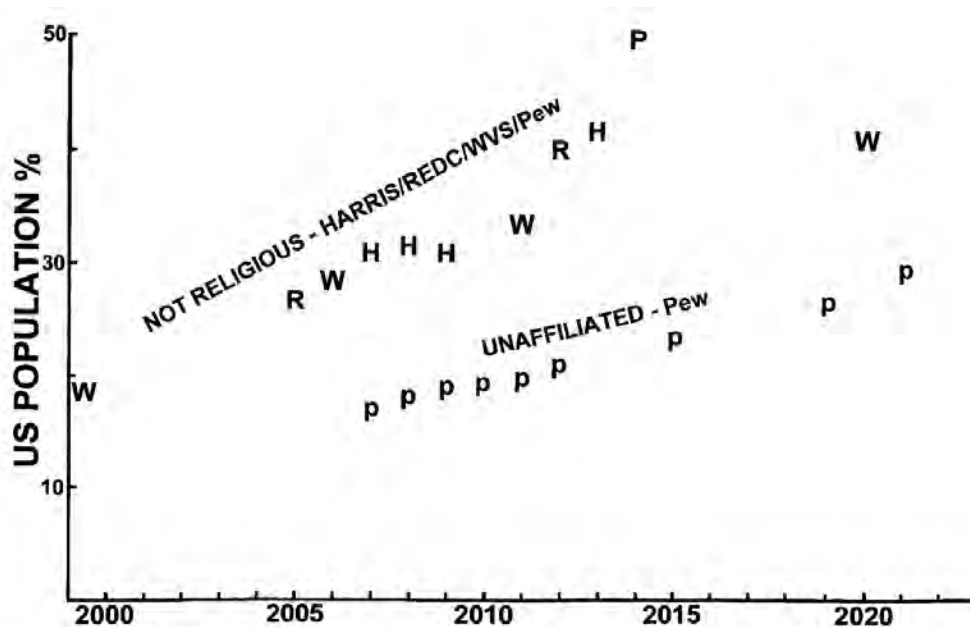


Figure 4. 21<sup>st</sup> century growth in American not religious and unaffiliated. Data from Harris (2013); redc (2012). World Values Survey and Pew.

Unlike the rest of the west, American secularization since the world wars has been occurring in the national milieu of an intense culture war in which the irate neoconfederate theoconservative minority – aghast and vexed at its reduction to permanent minority status<sup>68</sup> in the wake of its abject and to them perplexing inability to recapture the cultural and demographic majority status it once enjoyed, and being the ideal Godly truth deserves – has mounted an intense theopolitical countercampaign in reaction to mass secularization and the Me Culture that they see as contrary to their virtuous altruistic lives of honor, devotion and grace. In order to maximize forces against the enormous forces that constitute irreligious modernity fundamentalist evangelicals and a lesser number of right wing Catholics have been forced to lay aside centuries of vehement disagreements to form an alliance of convenience that is the modern American religious right.<sup>69</sup> To further boost their sociopolitically potency Christoconservatives had sustained a hypocritical and as will be explained later not entirely beneficial alliance of political convenience with corporate interests (Frank, 2004; Paul 2009a, 2010b, 2012) which is a leading source of the cultural modernity that the religious right needs to defeat, as well as atheistic economic libertarians; thus proudly conservative Catholic House Speaker Paul Ryan admiring Vatican despising atheist Ayn Rand’s libertarian tracts despite his clergy’s condemnation of libertarianism. Even in the 1960s there were signs that a large portion of Baby Boomers would in the long term be reactionaries against portions of the counterculture that they conveniently pick and choose from.<sup>70</sup>

A primary ignitor was not abortion rights which many on the theoright including Graham were OK with,<sup>71</sup> it was the effort by the born-again evangelical Baptist Carter to strip theoconservative colleges with racist policies of federal funding (Balmer, 2014, 2021).<sup>72</sup> A major inspiration was the reconquest of the Promised Land by Jews that had foretold the long awaited onset of Revelation, combined for a while with the atheoSoviet Empire that provided the actual nuclear means for Armageddon (Lindsey, 1970) – until it provided to be not much of an anti-Christ as it merely fizzled out of existence. Also a factor was a revival of Biblical creationism which has since sputtered at least for the time being. As part of the effort to reeducate the populace religious education in private and home schools is favored over public K-12 (Brown and Jamison, 2023; Jamison, 2023) which is to be reformed in favor of Christoconservative doctrine. A big energizer was and remains the enragingly popular continuation of the irreligious hip counterculture that theocons often attribute to the Warren court’s gutting of government enforced theoconservative powers, and antIBiblical divorce began to flourish among the maturing and largely ChristoWhite WW2 generation – not first in the still in teens and early twenties baby boomers. Thus the largely White neoconfederate Christian nationalist movement got into high gear as a divine righteous counterrevolution of embittered grievance. Their retrograde goal is to rescue and restore

America to the dreary, sanitized paternalistic cultural hierarchical norms circa 1950<sup>73</sup> when churches and their coffers were full, with those in their early teens allowed to marry, nonmarital sex an absolute no-no enforced by limited access to contraceptives and none to optional abortion, women being reproductively fecund slaves to their husbands and the government, LGBTQ are driven back in the closet, driven from red states, or in prison, the court negated Comstock Laws that are still on the books are reactivated, while the history of Ameroracism is gaslightingly whitewashed. In this Orwellian anti-Enlightenment plot such items as full liberty, freedom and voting rights are to be reserved for Christoconservatives who are increasingly armed to the teeth with rapid fire small arms (Paul, 2023)<sup>74</sup> – note that the conservative claim of being heavily armed to prevent tyranny is aimed against a leftist autocracy, while perhaps aiding any they wish to impose on the secularized majority. Progressive economics from the New Deal on were to be liquidated. Immigration by nonProtestant Whites is to be tightly constrained.

A long standing standard tool (as per the Red Scares) is to groom citizens for a return of Christotraditionalism by drumming up exaggerated or false mass intense fear of the latest modernist threat of the day<sup>75</sup> (liberal socioeconomics, sharia law, divorce, LGBTQ lifestyles, immigration from the south, political correctness, climate change, black racism.....) via false conspiracy theories depending on high rates of slack misinformation and deliberate disinformation as being a vital threat to decent or successful societies (Dickey, 2023). While offering seemingly sensible, simple (aka simplistic) All-American heartland Christian solutions even when abundant data and analysis has proven them to be suboptimal. This works because being trained to not pay attention to contrary data when it comes to theism, theists are primed to do the same regarding the secular matters. Driven by ideological opinions in which secular government is the enemy to be defeated and minimized over practical governance based on well tested policies, the Christosharia power play project is to gain dominion over the population by compromising as little as possible regarding practical policy to assert theoideological power. Thereby imposing an unpopular socially traditional theocracy in which others will be second class citizens at best, in league with similarly unpopular and impractical economically libertarian economics. The right has been force multiplying their minority with their system of rich wealthy conservative elites putting massive monies into fertilizing what appear to be, and are often covered by the mainstream news media as, spontaneous grass roots movements (Brown and Jamison, 2023; Burrough, 2009; Dalleck, 2023; Frank, 2004; Gabbatt, 2022; Martin, 2013; Mayer, 2010, 2021<sup>76</sup> The process requires persistent ratcheting up of extremist positions in an intraconservative sociopolitical arms race to ever new outrageous levels. Thus the once hardcore right wing Buckley, Goldwater, Reagan, Robertson, Falwell, Gingrich, Limbaugh, Schlafly, Coors, Kochs, Ryan, Cheney, Coulter, O'Reilly, Christie, Scalia, Palin, have of late been topped by the ultra-conservative Carlson, Jones, Greene, Boebert, Hawley, Mastriano, Alito, Blackburn, Cruz, Little, Gaetz, Jordon, Flake, Lake, DeSantis, Trump.

In their effort to leverage their minority status into national dominance,

theoconservative populist nativism enjoys structural electoral advantages in the electoral college and Senate that rests on the geodemographics of their neoconfederate rural heartland. It cannot be overemphasized that a large portion of the success of the right can be laid at the feet of secular center-left voters, especially those of youth, who have a long history of voting at substantially lower per capita rates – especially in midterms – than theoconservatives who are to their credit about ~10% more likely to do their duty as citizens and vote.<sup>77</sup> Neoconfederates are also more prone to vote strategically, following the principle of perfection is the enemy of good enough as they often vote for candidates that may not meet their highest righteous standards if it looks like they will get the greater job of redemption done. Ergo the process of imposing virtue does not require virtue by those who work to implement it – one of the architects of the ends justifies the means take no prisoner neoconfederate strategy was serial adulterer wife dumping Newt Gingrich, followed by the even more notorious in such regards Trump who has been indicted involving payments to a sex worker while remaining popular among the Christoconservative component of his base.<sup>78</sup>

Even as the more upright Graham's Born Again crusades were clearly not getting the job of American redemption done, and other efforts at mass persuasion by private means were proving insufficient to recover the nation were, a cohort of the right realized that it would require an intense political campaign with the intent of allowing what even they could see had become a permanent right wing minority to regain control of the government. In order to do so all opponents were and now are to be treated as unAmerican enemies in league with disreputable if not Satanic forces, as was and is the federal government. Hardline confrontation has

become the norm when it comes to wedge issues, compromise is only done when unavoidable. Central to the Great Mission is the forced birth project which is not really about saving preborn lives. Their claim that abortion is murder of the innocents against the dictates of the creator is false because the great majority of pregnancies fail due to the poor performance of the human reproductive system it supposedly intelligently designed, leaving abortion more normal and natural than birth. The true reason for forced birth, combined with relimiting contraceptives, is to use it as a government operated lever to try to compel women to resume their virtuous ways of piety and prudence that must occur to restore cultural traditionalism (Paul, 2022a). Their leading operative goal, to reestablish the Supreme Court as the neoconfederate bastion of theoconservatism it has usually been, as a key to establishing a White dominated Christonationalist minority run autocratic Republic.<sup>79</sup>

It needs to be noted that contemporary neoconfederate racism is with important exceptions not the old fashioned, George Wallace style deep Christoracism of Jim Crow. In that hardcore bigotry the specific goal was to directly suppress people of color in terms of daily segregation, interracial marriage and voting. If a Black person voted Republican or Democratic was usually not the issue, keeping them from voting for anyone was. Currently most White theoconservatives are well accommodated to having nonWhites be coworkers, customers in their places of business, spouses of Whites including perhaps themselves, and are fine with them voting - as long as vote for Republicans. A Black president would be acceptable – as long as they were a Republican. Same for a female president. This abandonment of hardline racism by all but a small White supremacist right that is only a small portion of the modern neoconfederacy is a reason why many of that cohort object to and resent being tagged racist. Where they are such is in being willing to suppress the nonRepublican vote by means that are considered likely to mainly disenfranchise minorities, and in continuing economic and law enforcement policies that continue to result in markedly inferior circumstances for people of color – law and order is conservative code for enforcing laws against minorities and leftists, not so much upon conservative Whites – while instituting education policies designed to pretend that systemic racism has not been and remains integral to the American scene. In the main modern Christoconservative neoconfederate Whites are neoracists.

The modern neoconfederate movement enjoyed considerable success with the election of the first divorcee – note hypocritical irony – president Reagan followed by Bush1. But the effort did not hold with the election of the liberal southern Christian Clinton. In part this was because the religious right minority did not in fact experience much if any demographic growth in the period, Bible literalism was actually sliding, and the nones were beginning their great expansion as the GOP began its tradition of being not able to win the popular presidential vote post 1988 aside from the 9/11 after effects aberration of 2004. Inept handling of Ruby Ridge and Waco by the federal government incited neoconfederates, the massive counter attack against a federal building degraded opinions against the far right. The continuation of the generally popular Clinton-Gore administration would have continued into the new century had the first of the pair not engaged in a sexual scandal, or after being exposed had resigned in favor of the latter, and if center-left voters had voted in their numbers and/or strategically, Gore barely losing the electoral college. The ensuing election of Bush 2 allowed the right to make significant gains in tax cuts, deregulation, and most importantly court appointments. The 9/11 attack on America by hardline Muslims caused many theoconservatives to predict a revival of their hardline Christianity as the long sliding church attendance suddenly picked up. But that quickly sank back into its long decline, a trend very possibly accelerated by the revelations of massive long running pedophile scandals first in the international Mother Church. More recently the same has applied to the bastion of American theoconservative righteous values the Southern Baptists which have since been suffering a demographic crisis. Evidence is piling up of a century of massive abuse in the Boy Scouts which have been dominated by Catholic and until recently LDS troops, and exclude atheists.<sup>80</sup> In already secularized and progressive Europe sociopolitics were more stable, although church improprieties in Ireland swiftly reduced the cultural and legal status of Rome, including the legalization of abortion.

Another reason 9/11 was not the big boost Christoconservatives hoped for is how it inspired the first – albeit brief – rise to cultural prominence of American “new” atheism in the form of unprecedented and never again matched atheist bestsellers (Dawkins, 2006; Dennett, 2006; Harris, 2006; Hitchens, 2007) as the fast rise of the irreligious continued apace. A flurry of procreationist activity inspired by Behe’s (1996, 2007) intelligent design theory – the Wedge Strategy (Johnson, 1999) – fizzled out when it failed to gain scientific and academic traction as it was slapped down by courts, while other right wing obsessions became more urgent. Predictions

of a coming semi-permanent Democratic majority (Judis and Teixeira, 2002) that would bring a new wave of secular progressive policies seemed to be supported by the celebrated election of a moderate-liberal Black as president in 2008. And is in line with the inability of the GOP to win national popular votes. The Obama win allowed the institution of some pragmatic secular policies for the common good, Obamacare most of all. The White Christian nationalist project did not, however, roll over and die. The Obama win was swiftly followed by the neoconfederate Tea Party, funded in part by wealthy conservative elements devout to atheist, the libertarian atheist Koch brothers among the latter. A historical opportunity to reinforce the accession of the secular center was tossed aside in 2010 as such voters, disappointed by the Obama administration not delivering even more, yet gain allowed seething neoconfederates to sweep the midterms that allowed them to gerrymander much the nation to their immense electoral advantage. Had the center-left made the not burdensome effort to put into the White House Gore and Clinton<sup>2</sup> who also barely lost the electoral college, we would live in a dramatically different nation today, with SCOTUS in liberal hands and the Voting Rights Act and Roe v Wade still the law of the land.<sup>81</sup>

As it is, after decades of effort to impose their version on an illiberal quasidemocracy, the barely achieved election of possibly atheist – certainly not churchgoing – Trump with about 80% of the Born Again evangelical vote has proven to be the critical factor in enabling what had been a relatively quiescent amalgam of neoracists, nativists and sexual prudes, to come out of their big minority closet on a large scale. That in order to vent their oppressive views – driven in part by the human psychological propensity towards bullying – and initiate their repressive Christosharia neofascist and neoconfederate policies on a vast political and cultural war across about half the nation. This Great New Repression is the perverse result of long ideological dysfunction on the right made all the worse by decades of the conservative need to perpetually ramp up extremism to ever more radical levels in order to maintain high position in the right wing power milieu. A sudden event so astonishing to so many because the retroactive and callously cruel MAGA and related cliques compose an unexpected potent return to archaic tribalistic opinions and laws that were popular less than a century ago. Particular targets of the far right have been the freedoms of LGBTQ persons and their parents, and the mass cleansing and sanitizing of factual history, education, arguments and policies – Woke, CRT, Me Too, BLM<sup>82</sup>, 1619 Project among them – that discomfort neoracists and threaten White privilege and the male dominance that is under dire threat (Harley, 2023). The creation of mass culture hysteria is, as the norm, designed to divert attention of the masses from the poor socioeconomic performance of the Godly American Way.

This mission is being achieved by an enormous theocon cancel culture via government power – at the level of red states, and nationally when POTUS is Republican – that dwarfs the private progressive cancel culture that conservatives have disingenuously complained about. For some the intent is to drive LGBTQ et al. from red states. In some states librarians and publishers face fines or jail time if they expose children to “harmful” material, while doctors risk the same or at least delicensing if they perform an abortion to save the mother’s life too soon. Intimidation and violence are commonly directed towards ground level government workers to try to force them to abandon their positions. The intent is to eliminate as much as possible broad civil society in favor of right wing influencers, especially religions, and thereby reseize the mass culture. As part of this, the mass attack on LGBTQ is an initial grooming wedge tactic that if sufficiently effective will– in concert with anti-abortion and contraception policies – be extended to all nonconservative expressions of personal lifestyles. As us standard procedure in authoritarian schemes, the term freedom is twisted to have to do with the natural right of cultural conservatives to live in the properly ordered autocratic rigid right wing societal order that is the genuine human condition without having to be seriously disconcerted, or worse tempted, by discordant liberal worldviews and lifestyles.<sup>83</sup> Thus the brazen move to limit education of youth to only what the theoright is comfortable with. It cannot be overemphasized that a large portion of the right despises the freedom and liberty they proclaim they promote, as per Parents for Freedom striving to deny center-left parents an similar level of their parental rights.<sup>84</sup> In order to better justify their draconian cultural retroproject much of the right – and aided by social media designed to maximize income by egging on addictive overuse – has resorted to reality free and slanderous conspiracy theories of maximal inane extremes such as a LGTBQ grooming culture, QAnon, and mass Democratic voter fraud (Dickey, 2023).

The over-the-top extremism has become so severe that even the hardest right persons of the GOP are engaging in a cut throat war with themselves, threatening to impair the once party of Lincoln’s electoral performance. The Christoconservative capture of the Supreme Court (Biskupic, 2023, Waldman, 2023) that



when ruling for religious liberty does so mainly in favor of Christoconservatives – which is a reflection of how when social conservatives boast that they are for freedom and liberty they mean primarily for themselves at the expense of others – promises to trap the nation in reactionary neoconfederate policies for decades even if they are opposed by the majority. This was deliberately illustrated by the anachronistic language and logic of the Dobbs decision designed to take the nation back to the mid 1800s regarding reproductive health (Alito et al., 2022).

On the other demographic hand, it has long been predicted that remaking abortion illegal would hand an electoral gift to the Democrats, and that appears to be coming to pass – an irony is that if not for the overturning of nationally legal abortion the Republicans may have seized full control of Congress in 2020. The balloting backlash has been so sharp that Republicans are falling back to less extreme forced birth regulations that will not bar most optional abortions in some red states. Even so, the nation in which the White Christian Right and the White working class that supports it that are major but shrinking minorities, is at significant risk of reverting America to a White Christonationalist illiberal autocratic sharia style republic, and/or undergoing some level of civil war fueled by a population saturated with rapid fire guns.<sup>85</sup> In the United States the greatest militant threat stems from right-wing theists, most of Christian influence – but not all as the GOP White working class loses some of its religiosity (Byler, 2023; Paul, 2018/9).<sup>86</sup>

The general global sociopolitical situation too has been deteriorating (Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018; Bardhan, 2022). Even in generally progressive Europe the right, often the the right, has made perturbing gains, with Hungary and Catholic Poland under the thumb of neofascistic quasiautocracies and right wing parties making gains elsewhere. The Arab Spring abjectly failed, and the Islamic world that remains far behind the Christosecular west in socioeconomic measures shows little or no current signs of becoming more democratic, while some regions have become toxically oppressive. The Hindu colossus of India appears to be slipping into the nationalistic theocracy. Buddhism is anti-Muslim in Burma. Nor is atheism performing positively in China which has been executing cultural genocide against Muslims as it cracks down on its own people, and threatens to absorb Taiwan into the dictatorship while seizing an entire sea most of which does not belong to it. Most serious has been the rise of a neoczarist fascistic autocracy, backed by a revived Russian Orthodox Church with considerable (but perhaps somewhat exaggerated) popular support by a Russian population that has bucked the general global trend towards less theism via increasing Christian nationalism. The result has been an often violent reexpansionist policy culminating in the large scale invasion of a western modernity leaning Ukraine that is being vigorously resisted by that country backed by NATO.

In summary, the demographic statistics tell us that while the most optimistic predictions of either side have not come to pass, that popular theosupernaturalism – instead of enjoying prayed for divinely inspired gains or even holding its overall own – is suffering a historically unprecedented large scale demographic degradation over much of the planet in general tune with secularization theory powered by the worldly forces of modernity. And that persuasion by theocron argument and advocacy is proving unable to stop that. Rather than considering that their losses are the result of the defects of their archaic supernaturalism based ideologies, it cannot be overemphasized how seethingly angry the Christoright of the largest first world democracy is at how the American majority has for decades proven persistently unwilling to realize their sinfully foolish and decadent secular cultural and economic ways as they petulantly reject the pleas of the righteous right to fall into line with their divine demands. The result is the right engaging in a hardline culture war with autocratic potential. In some other parts of the world the religious right is also mounting reactionary movements, in a number of cases intensely violent via terror to full blown war.

So how are the wide variations in theism now seen across the globe relating – if they are – to varying degrees of societal and economic success or failure? Such could not have been tested a couple of hundred years ago when both a/theism and economics were much less variable across the globe. Today the wide differences in beliefs, politics and economies act as a gigantic epidemiological experiment that has the potential to provide firm answers to these compelling questions.

The data for societal and economic conditions in first-world nations range from excellent to good; for less developed countries these data vary from excellent to not available (see Paul 2005, 2009a for details). The most comprehensive comparison to date of socioeconomic conditions in the most successful prosperous democracies is the Successful Societies Scale (Figure 5) presented by Paul (2009a, 2010b, 2012 which include an extended justification and sourcing of dozens factors used to construct the SSS, data tables and plots, plus

a description of the method of scoring the results; Wilkinson and Picket [2011] presented the second most comprehensive comparison). The socioeconomic results have been compared to levels of non/religiosity, as well as immigration and ethnic diversity.

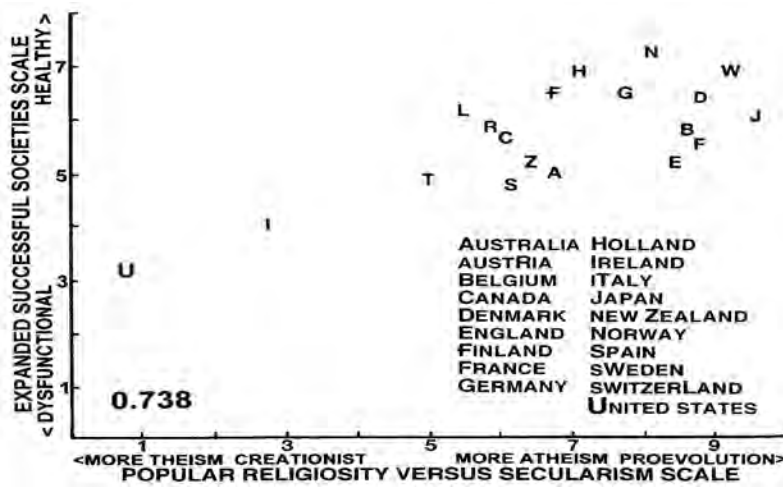


Figure 5. First world relationship between cumulative socioeconomic success with overall religiosity. Value in lower left is Pearson correlation, higher value from 0 (no correlation) to 1 (perfect correlation) show greater correlation, for a sociological analysis this result is strong in favor of nontheism including for acceptance of for evolution. Updated from Paul (2009a, 2010b, 2012).

Homicide rates remain far lower in the more secular prosperous democracies than the United States, which has long been a far outlier in this regard, despite a significant decline in the last two decades that has been followed by a recent uptick (Paul, 2023). Although only a small fraction of the death toll, mass shootings have become an American norm occurring on a subweekly basis, leaving no one safe in any public context and traumatizing the country. With only 1 in 500 deaths attributable to murder, the lowest homicides rates seen in the secular democracies may represent the minimal levels achievable in human societies (Paul, 2009a, 2012, 2023). Non-gun homicides are broadly similar in the peer nations, it is gun murders that elevate America above the first world standard (Paul, 2023; Zimring & Hawkins, 1999), the available data indicate that nonlethal crime is often common in the nations examined, with America being a high crime nation. Zuckerman (2008) notes that the modest crime rates in some secular democracies are achieved with minimal police presence, and the recent declines in American murder appear to be more dependent upon the application of effective secular methods of addressing the problem (Kennedy, 2011; Pinker, 2011; Paul, 2023) than upon the popularity of theism it being in decline. The outrageously high rate of American murder can be entirely attributed to correspondingly extreme levels of private gun possession, which are pushed by a gun industry that is avoiding financial ruin only as long as rates of murder remain high (Paul, 2023), supported by the Christoright. The American gun problem is spilling over into Canada and especially Latin American, the later being narcostates with the primary market being America. Contrary to claims by the latter, low and/or declining levels of theism are not correlated with more murder here and abroad, nor are mental illness, entertainment violence, socialist policies, or lesser law enforcement. Instead, incarceration has soared in the United States to the degree that no other country, even China, has more prisoners in absolute terms, and America is about a dozen times higher than the Western norm in proportional rates. The US prisoner population is strongly skewed toward minorities, to the degree that the Black male population of inner cities has been seriously impacted.

Although all first-world countries have very low juvenile mortality compared to historical norms, a two-fold variation remains, with higher rates correlating strongly with greater popular religiosity, the lowest losses being in the most secular nations sampled, while they are the highest in the most religious sections of the United States. The US is the only developed democracy in which firearms are the leading cause of death for children (KFF, 2022). Also exceptionally high in the US is prenatal mortality. While all advanced nations enjoy long cumulative life spans, America has the shortest within the group. The correlation between lower religiosity

and longer life span is significant but not tight. The United States is losing ground in regard to this factor, and life spans are actually decreasing, particularly in regions of the Bible Belt, where lives are already on the short side. The covid pandemic does not entirely account for this pattern, created in part by the opioid epidemic, America have atypically high levels of illicit drug use, and no other advanced nation is experiencing reductions in life span. America also performs poorly in time lived in good health (Muenning & Glied, 2010). Americans used to be exceptionally tall, but they have lost substantial ground relative to other prosperous democracies and are now below the secular maximum as health levels slip relative to the other countries (Komlos & Lauderdale, 2007). Suicide rates are disturbingly high in all nations examined; correlations with religiosity are not highly significant, and Scandinavian countries are not atypical. The United States used to exhibit typical suicide rates, but is now number one in this category in the first world, possibly because of the growth of gun possession.

Regarding alcohol consumption, marriages, fertility, life satisfaction, and employment, large correlations between lesser religiosity and better conditions do not exist, and/or the United States performs typically or well. The United States used to score typically in corruption, but revelations of the massive financial manipulations that are primarily responsible for the Great Recession have lowered its ranking to near the bottom of Western nations, and the nation is mediocre when it comes to trust. Moderate to large correlations between lesser religiosity and better conditions do exist regarding abortion, sexually transmitted disease infections, teen pregnancy outside of marriage, and resource exploitation. The United States performs poorly in the just-listed factors, often being the worst off, sometimes by very large degrees. America is also seriously dysfunctional in high work hours, child well-being, and gender equality. The last is an important failing because more gender equality tends to favor greater personal and socioeconomic health (Paul, 2018; Pinho-Gomes et al., 2023; WBG, 2022).

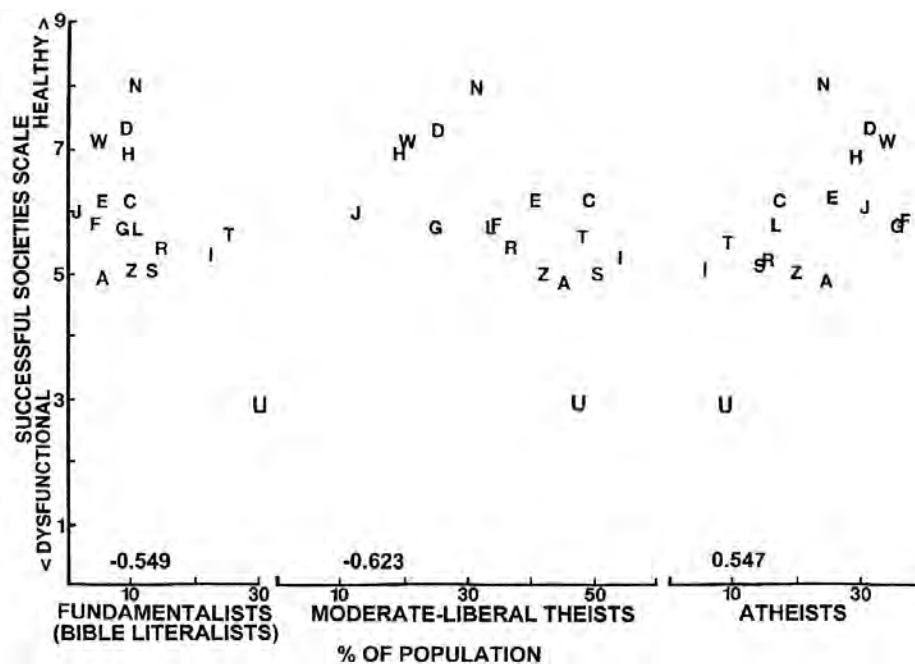


Figure 6. First world relationships of fundamentalism (as measured by Bible literalism, moderate-liberal theism (as measured by belief in god less Bible literalism), and atheism with the cumulative socioeconomic success. For nation identification see Fig. 5 or 7. Pearson correlations in favor of atheism and disfavor of differing theisms are similarly significant. Data from Paul (2009a, 2010b; 2012).

The highest scoring countries on the Successful Societies Scale are all among the most secular and socialistic; the United States has the lowest overall score of about 3 (Figure 5). Fundamentalist (including creationist), moderate and liberal theism all correlate similarly with inferior circumstances, atheism (including acceptance of evolution) with better environments (Figure 6; Paul, 2009a, 2010b; 2012). All other broad based

cross-national comparisons—including the Happy Planet Index and Human Development Report—have produced broadly similar rankings of socioeconomic dysfunction, with the theistic and comparatively economically Darwinian libertarian US not scoring well (Barber, 2011; Geoghegan, 2010; Gill & Lundsgaarde 2004; Inglehart, 2021; Marks et al., 2006; Norris & Inglehart, 2004; Rees, 2009; Ruck et al., 2018; UN, 2008, Stiglitz et al., 2019; Verweij et al., 1997; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2011; Zuckerman, 2008, 2009, 2011, 2016, 2019) – no scientific examination matching the scope of the SSS has refuted its and similar conclusions because such is not possible to achieve such in view of the overwhelming nature of the combined statistics. The United States is the most second worldlike nation of the first world countries socioeconomically and religiously, to the degree that its first world status is marginal in many regards and is at risk.<sup>87</sup> Making these social failings yet more perturbing is that the US remains an economic power house in a number of regards (Anonymous, 2023), indicating that the nation is chronically atypically inefficient in translating its vast wealth into societal health. America is no longer the leading “opportunity society” because it is below average in upward income mobility especially from the lower class to the middle (WEF, 2020). That the unusually high income disparity that is apparently resulting from the Godly American Way of libertarian finances is a major factor in this inefficiency (Stiglitz, 2012; Stiglitz et al., 2019) is in line with how lower income disparity and poverty and better upward mobility correlate strongly with both lesser religiosity and with superior societal conditions, including deadly malfeasance (Figure 7). Levels of media violence are not a critical dynamic behind unusually high levels the latter because the American model has spread across the prosperous democracies (Tomlinson, 1991; Paul, 2023). Muenning and Glied (2010) found that higher rates of homicide, accidents, obesity, and smoking do not adequately account for the inferior health outcomes of Americans. The relatively poor health of Americans is yet more disconcerting since the nation has long spent much more per person on health care while obtaining inferior results (Gunja, et al. 2023; Kawachi & Kennedy, 2002; Muenning & Gleid, 2010; Paul, 2009c; Reid, 2009; Scott et al. 2022’ Wilkinson & Pickett, 2011; Winkleby et al., 2006). The American Christoright is a leading element in the movement to prevent the US from adopting the universal health care that has proven so effective in keeping costs down while delivering markedly better results than is the American Way. That is a part of the theoright advocacy of voluntary charitable operations including religious in lieu of secular socialistic government programs, although the former are less efficient and efficacious (whether they be secular or theistic – Figure 8; Johnson et al., 2002; Lupton, 2016), in part because they lack the enormous financial resources and infrastructure needed to provide the comprehensive assistance that the government can offer (contra Brooks, 2006).

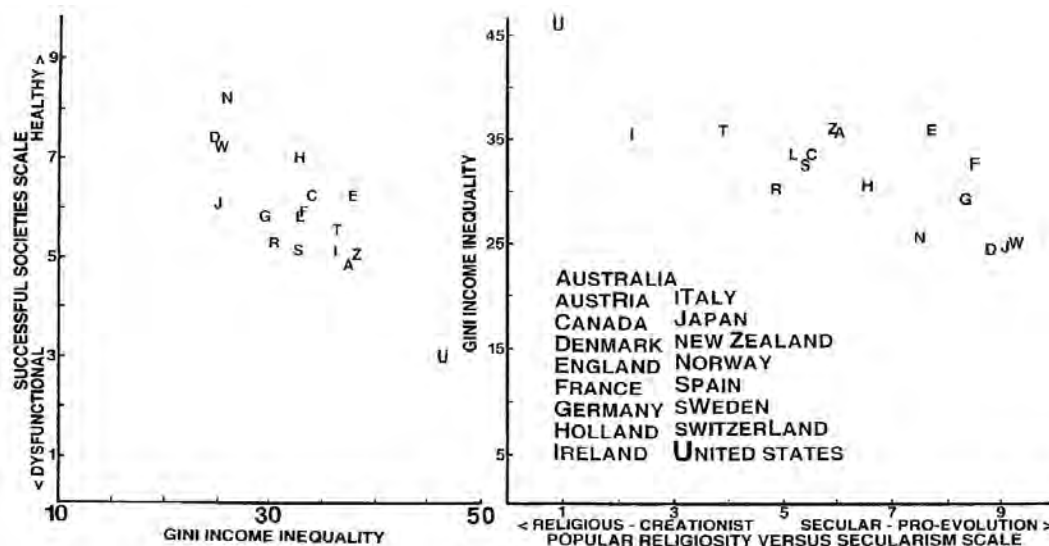


Figure 7. First world relationships between cumulative societal success and overall religiosity with income equality. High income disparity in US and some other nations is related both to more dysfunction and religiosity. From Paul (2012).

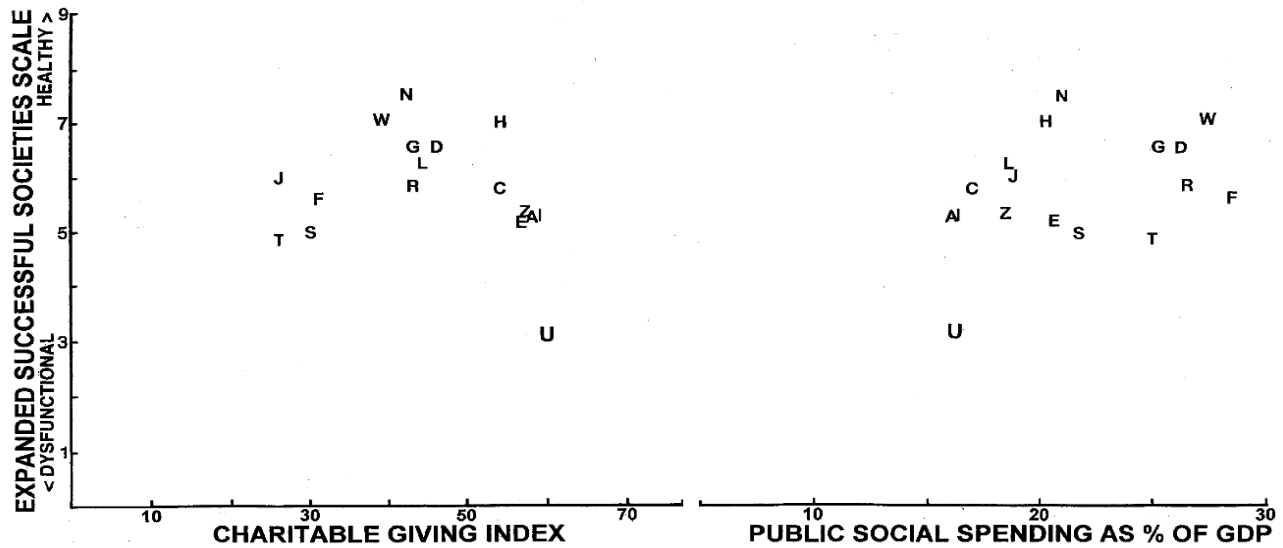


Figure 8. First world relationships between cumulative societal success with charitable versus government aid. For nation identification see Fig. 5 or 7. Highly charitable and low government assistance US is not performing as well as others.

Immigration levels and population diversity are not to blame for America’s troubles because they do not correlate significantly with levels of socioeconomic dysfunction, including lethal crime, in part because the United States is no longer exceptional regarding these factors (Fearon, 2003; Geoghegan, 2010; Paul, 2009a, 2012, 2023). Nor is the United States atypical in having a frontier past that compelled “cowboy” individualism to the detriment of the greater society, because Canada and Australia also have had expansive low population frontiers without similar effects.

The first-world pattern generally applies within the United States (Figure 7). Social pathologies such as lethal crime, STIs, out of wedlock teen pregnancy, divorce, poverty, and premature mortality tend to be elevated to a lesser or greater degree within those regions and subpopulations – such as the Bible Belt and inner cities – of the United States that exhibit higher levels of theism compared to the most European and Canadian like portions of the country, the northeast and the west coast where circumstances are often similar to those seen in secular democracies (Barna, 2004; Beeghley, 2003; Bennett, 2007; Brown & Osterman, 2012; Delamontagne, 2010; Edelman, 2009; Ellison et al. 2003; Glass & Levchak, 2014; Kennedy, 2011; Messner & Zevenbergen, 2005; Nisbett & Cohen, 1999; Paul, 2023; Perry & Whithead, 2020; Woodard, 2023a,b; WPR, 2023; Wyatt-Brown, 1986; Zuckerman, 2008, 2011, 2016).

The only theistic states doing well are those with low populations and exceptional fossil fuel resources that raise per capita incomes – which is another reason Christoconservatives favor the use of energy sources formed over hundreds of millions of years even if they do not believe in geological deep time. Shifting from the early 21<sup>st</sup> century socioeconomics snapshot to decadal trends in the same, levels of lethal and nonlethal crime, STIs, youth pregnancy, and abortion rates have generally improved as the United States secularized towards first world norms over the last few decades.

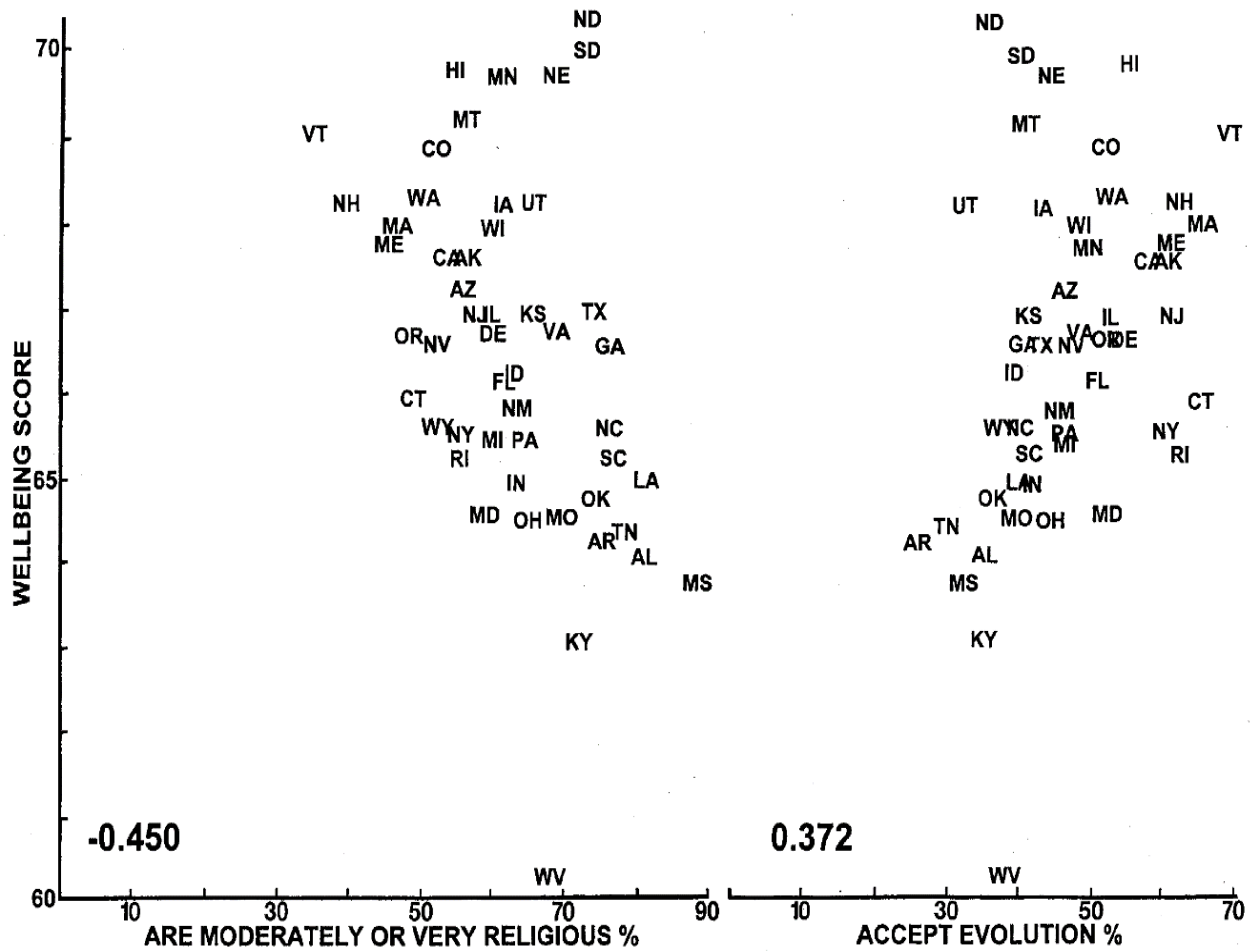


Figure 9. Interstate relationships between Gallup Wellbeing scores and and Gallup measure of religiosity and science of creation (Pew, 2014d). Pearson correlations are modest.

On the global scale more atheism and less theism agsin tends to correlate with better living circumstances (Figure 9). China is notable for being a partial outlier that combines little theism and creationism with mediocre socioeconomics; this is partly the result of China recovering from the depths Mao left it in, and the fast improving country has considerably outperformed the more religious India, despite the latter having been a fairly stable democracy, at least until recently in regards to both trends. In the latter the less Hindu nationalist southern portion of the country is socioeconomically outperforming the more politically focused north (Paul & Sridhar, 2015). The economy of Turkey is currently suffering under the leadership of the increasingly autocratic Islamic nationalist Erdogan.

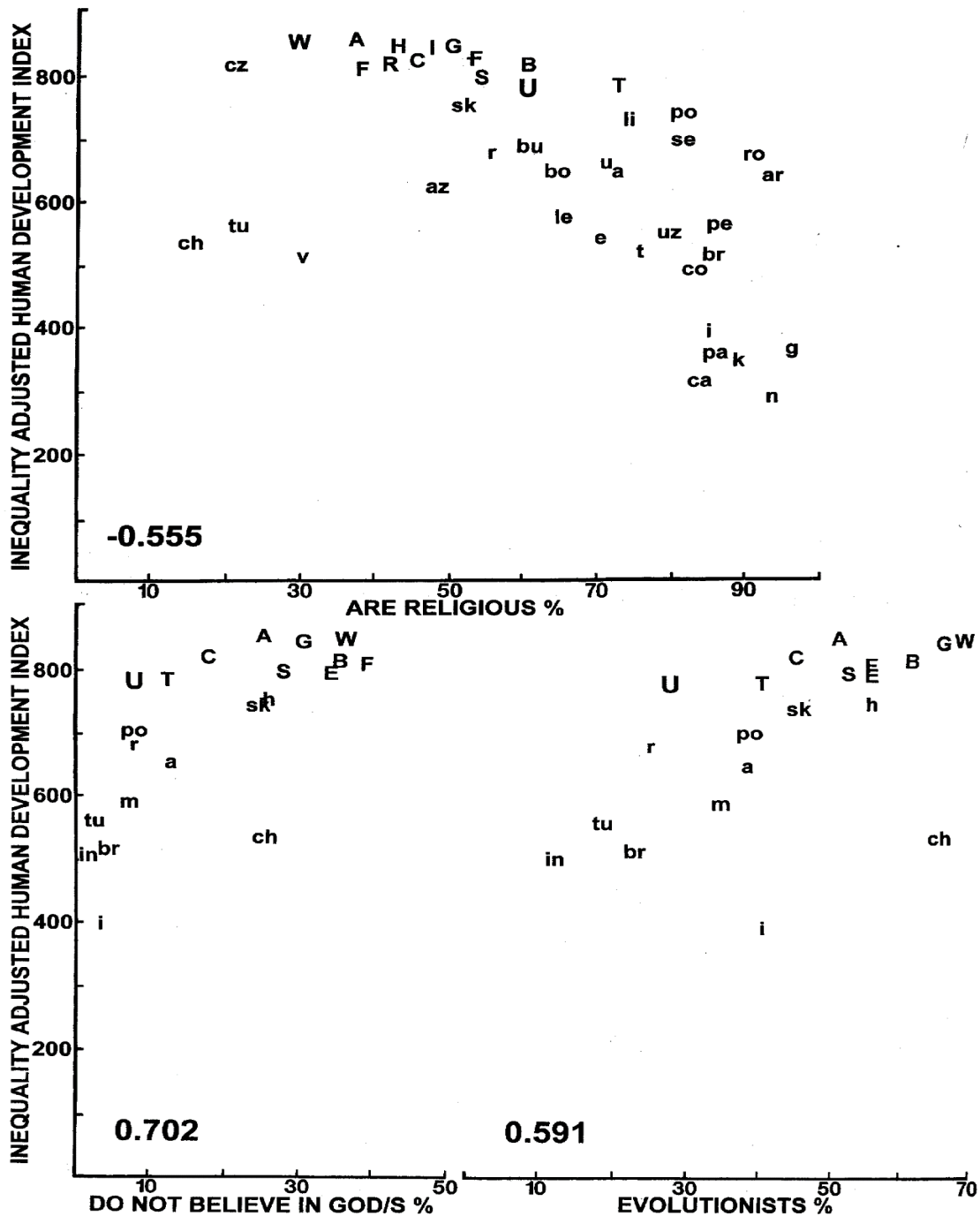


Figure 10. International relationships between United Nations Inequality Adjusted Human Development Index and measures of religiosity and science of creation. Pearsons correlations are significant to high. Religion data from World Values Survey and Ipsos (2011).

At the level of individuals, it is a widespread hypothesis that a given person benefits themselves from, and others by, participating in religious worship and/or activities that further facilitate prosociality (as per Powell, Shahabi, & Thoresen, 2003; Brooks, 2006; Inzlicht, McGregor, Hirsh, & Nash, 2009; Miller, 2021; Norenzayan & Shariff, 2008; Norenzayan et al., 2016; Pasek et al., 2023; Norris & Inglehart, 2004). Yet populations living in atheosecular democracies are apparently doing about as well or better than those in more pious countries, leading to an apparent sociological paradox (Bloom, 2008; Shermer, 2006). But a body of

research indicates the paradox is not be real, individual nontheists not being consistently less prosocial than their supernaturalistic peers, and exhibiting superior outgroup tolerance (Blumenthal et al., 2007; Chida, Steptoe, & Powell, 2009; Galen, 2012; 2015, 2016, 2017; Galen and Kloet, 2011; Galen et al., 2021, 2022; Gore et al. 2019; Keister, 2008; Powell et al., 2003; Putman & Campbell, 2010). The last researchers show that the higher level of charitable giving reported among religious Americans is attributable to their greater social networking relative to the less organized nonreligious. That nontheists are not doing less well than theosupernaturalists is compatible with the former tending to enjoy higher financial status. Berkessei et al. (2021) present evidence and analysis that religion is a psychological salve for low income persons living in wealthy nations.

The collective statistics show the US is an exceptional land, but far from the the Godly American Way producing that Shining City on a Hill, America is exceptional in being so multifunctional relative to peer nations, and is no longer the global beacon of inspiration it once was. As per the challenge by Paul (2005, 2009a, 2012), those who continue to defend the godly-religion socioeconomic hypothesis must produce comprehensive data sets showing that deity worship actually does produce superior results on national scales. Considering the overwhelming nature of the data, and the absence of such attempts over a long period, such happening is very improbable. In that case theists need to abandon their advocacy. Ergo, while religion does have its social positives, the mass of data from the international level on down strongly supports the pragmatism based secular-democratic socioeconomic hypothesis at the expense of the dogmatic, supernaturalism based godly-religion socioeconomic hypothesis.

#### The Total Toll – and Who is to Blame for Most of It

As detailed below, the total human population has amounted to some 100 billion, with about about half of those born dying s infants and children, the vast majority due to the war on the immature waged by nature. Domestic infanticide may have resulted in the culling of about one tenth of the population (Pinker, 2011), in which case it is by far the most widespread form of human death via human action. Post infant homicide is responsible for perhaps half a percent of all deaths, or some half a billion over history. The basic death toll from wars and genocides over human existence is in the area of half a billion as tabulated below, this includes all soldier-civilian losses stemming from direct military action to atrocities to indirect impacts of war such as disease (except by new contact between peoples) and famine. Therefore around half a percent of human deaths are attributable to war and genocide. Acts of terror have not killed enough to be statistically notable. Of the historical total, at least half, perhaps 150 million (at least two-thirds in the two super wars) occurred in the 1900s, a century in which 10 billion lived, resulting in a war-induced mortality rate of about 1.5%. Losses due to famines resulting from political repression or ideology probably exceed 50 million, and deaths attributable to colonization are perhaps 100 million. The total number of deaths due to war and especially homicide is therefore in the area of 1 billion, almost all of that figure being newborns. Older humans lost to human action are about 1 billion, or 1 in 100. The figures, especially the latter, are too low to seriously impact the global population over time – war is therefore not a major form of population control – although the wastage can effect more local populations. To dramatically increase the percentage of deaths stemming from deliberate human action requires a large-scale nuclear war or the intentional release of an easily transmitted pathogen with a high mortality level and no ready means of medical defense. Pinker (2011) details how relative rates of lethal violence have tended to decline over history.

So who is to blame for the toll of wars and atrocities? Theists especially conservative are prone to claim that atheism is exceptionally dangerous because of the tens of millions who communists have liquidated, particularly over a short period in the 1900s. Is this correct? A portion of war dead have been slaughtered in ways that did not have a major religious causal or exacerbating component, as per the intraCatholic Hundred Years War, as well as most of the conquests by the religiously broadminded Romans. Although the Jewish revolt against the Romans involved Jews versus pagans, the Romans conquered everyone on the Mediterranean rim without much care about their religions, and the Judaic revolt against their rule was legitimate on secular grounds. The Russian Civil War is difficult to classify because one side involved atheistic communists, but the other was equally heinous Czarist Orthodox. The Vietnam conflict was primarily anti-colonial. Yet it can be argued that most mass slaughters did involve religion because of the near universal religiosity of the



participants, as per the Great War. A tabulation of wars and atrocities with a significant religious component is as follows – all below figures are approximate (in millions of persons) even when just one value is given.

Yellow Turban Rebellion and Three Kingdoms Wars (Taoists v spiritualists), 7-11  
Gothic Wars (Christian v pagan), 5  
Conquests of Khan (a pious pagan), 10-40  
Mesoamerican sacrifices and related warfare, 2-4  
Muslim conquests (attacking pagans, Christians, Jews, Hindus), 60-90  
Crusades (Catholics attacking Cathars, Muslims, Jews, Orthodox), 2  
Reconquista (Catholics v Muslims), 7  
Conquest of the Americas (Christians attacking pagans), 30  
French Wars of Religion (Catholic v Protestant), 2-4  
Eighty Years War (Catholic v Protestant), 0.5-2  
Thirty Years War (Calvinist v Lutherans v Catholics), 5-12  
Atlantic Slave Trade (Christian exploitation of pagans & Muslims), 5  
Taiping Rebellion (extremist Christians v spiritualist government), 20  
Panthay Rebellion (spiritualist Chinese v Muslims), 1  
American Civil War (conservative Protestants defending slavery), 0.75  
Dungan revolt (Muslims v spiritualist Chinese), 8-12  
Belgian Congo (Catholic king exploits natives), 5-12  
The Great War (WW I), 15-20  
Armenian Genocide (Muslims attacking Christians), 1.5  
Conquest of Ethiopia (Fascists & Catholics attacking Coptics), 0.2  
Spanish Civil War (Catholics attacking secular republic), 0.6  
World War II incl. Holocaust (Fascist theists supported by Christians + Shinto militarists attacking spiritualist Chinese, atheistic communists, Jews, Slavs, Roma, homosexuals, Orthodox, Muslims & Christosecular western powers), 60-85  
India-Pakistan partition & wars (Muslim v Hindu), 1.5  
Indonesian slaughter (Muslims attacking secular leftists), 0.5  
East Timor (Muslims attacking Christians), 0.1-0.2  
Nigerian Civil War (Christian v Muslim), 1-3  
Afghan Civil War (extremist v moderate Muslims), 0.4  
Post Cold War religious strife (see below), 6.5

Totals: a low of 250 million - (median of 300 million) - a high of 370 million

Totals for the years 1900-2023: 100-(115)-130 million

by Muslims: 65-95 million  
by Christians: 65-85 million  
by Nazis: 40-50 million

Large scale wars and atrocities attributable to a major atheist or secular component are as follows.

Soviet regimes (incl. revolution, Stalinism incl. purges, famines, etc.), 20-60  
Mao regime (incl. revolution, purges, famines, etc.), 40-70  
Pol Pot regime, 1-2.5  
Korean War, 1.2-1.5  
Afghanistan invasion, 1-1.6  
Other, ~2

Totals: 65-(100)-140 million

Other wars (including Chinese Rebellions), 100 million

Total of all wars: 450 million to 550 million

Both theists and atheists are responsible for wreaking mass havoc. But even the fairly conservative minimum estimate of those killed by those thinking they were doing the work of a god far exceeds the maximum dispatched by atheists, the averages suggest that theists have been almost three times as deadly over history – if it is assumed that all wars not driven by atheists are between godly combatants, then the ratio is over three to one. During the last century the competition, such as it was, was rather close, but theists probably but not certainly have a larger tally to their credit. A few million have died in intra-atheist conflicts largely in ideological disputes concerning communism, but losses over differing views of the “correct” nature of atheism itself are essentially absent. And the serious atheist problem seems to have been a phenomenon of limited to about seventy years in the 1900s when enormous populations and technologies facilitated huge casualties, and because of the aberration of totalitarian communism that would not have occurred if not for the incompetence of the Czarist Orthodox regime.

Since the Cold War whimpered out of existence with little violence, who on the non/theism spectrum is most responsible for deaths from war and atrocities? On the atheism side communist rebellions are barely simmering in a few nations.

Peru, 70,000  
Nepal, 18,000  
India, 10,000  
Philippines, 5,000

Total ~100,000

Pew (2014b) found that social hostilities involving religion have been rising and achieved new highs of a third of the nearly two hundred extant countries. The great proportion of these troubles in five dozen countries are religious versus religious, with some religious against secular and atheist victims. Casualties attributable to recent and ongoing conflicts involving at least a significant religious component, ranging from exacerbating ethnic tensions and disputes over territory and resources, to being the primary cause of the conflict.

Balkans (Orthodox v Catholic & Muslim) 250,000  
Chechnya (Muslim v Orthodox) 200,000  
Tajikistan (extremist v moderate Muslims) 50,000  
Israel v Palestinians (Jew v Muslim) 3,500  
India v Pakistan (Hindu v Muslim) 60,000  
Algeria (extremist v moderate Muslim) 150,000  
Somalia (extremist v moderate Muslim) 550,000  
Afghanistan (Taliban v moderate Muslim) 400,000  
Islamic terrorism 60,000  
Post 9/11-Afghanistan (extremist Sunni v Christians and seculars) 40,000  
Iraq (initiated by conservative Christian Americans, later Sunni v Shiite) 250,000  
Pakistan (Taliban v moderate Sunnis) 40,000  
Yemen (Shiite v Sunni) 5,000  
Syria (Alawite v Sunni) 130,000  
Thailand (Buddhists v Muslims) 4,000  
Congo, Zaire, Uganda, Rwanda, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Central African Republic (extremist Christians v extremist Muslims v animists & shamanists) 4,500,000  
Russo-Ukraine 50,000

Total 6,500,000 million+

The contemporary casualty contest between theism and atheism is far from being close, theism having contributed to up to sixty times as many war deaths as has atheism over the three plus decades. With the theostrife lead growing fast – it certainly is not dropping dramatically and may be getting worse – theism is clearly the much greater danger than atheism in the new century. Most international terror is Islamic, 21<sup>st</sup> century Islam is engaged in an antiquated full blown civil war (largely but by no means entirely Sunni versus Shia), and a case can be made that in the most explicitly theistic struggles extremist Muslims have been the primary initiators. But the bulk of the overall losses have occurred in the west-central African zone where Christian elements have been playing a major role in the mayhem and sociopathy. In these theopatriarchal conflicts the death tolls tell only part of the tale – violence and terror against women including assault and chronic rape is a matter of course, and children are widely exploited as warriors. Also devastated is wildlife and the environment. In Europe Christianity – mainly eastern Orthodox – has been and is the most lethal agent.

The last third of a century has seen an under heralded modern holocaust of religious enabling of ethnic cleansing, genocides and atrocities, mainly caused by Christian-Islamic Abrahamists. By narcissistic men who believe they are in tune with their speculative deity. Observe that the vast majority of victims of theistic violence are other theists. However, physical maltreatment of atheists is serious in many theistic autocracies. Atheism is no longer a major contributor to violence and death by war, certainly no atheistic democracy is engaged in social hostilities against theists. With the Chinese regime making threats against Taiwan future atheistic violence cannot be ruled out, although the toll resulting from an invasion is not likely to change the a/theist death ratio much. Reagan's prediction that the end of the godless Soviet Empire would remove the main source of evil in the world has proven deeply naïve, it being theists who are the main and rising source of modern strife and dysfunction, being many dozens of times more dangerous than atheists on a per capita basis.

There is no evidence that religion in general is pacific, or more peaceful than atheism, instead it has been posing a serious danger for millennia. Non-Jewish Abrahamists have been responsible for the greatest toll of any single cohort, 130-180 million, with Christians and Muslims closely matching one another, although the latter may have the lethal edge. The devastation by the virulently racist and aggressive Christo-pagan Nazis was especially remarkable for doing so much in just a few years.

A notable and analytically important feature of the largely secular prosperous democracies is their friendly relations and corresponding lack of tendency to engage in war among themselves.<sup>88</sup> Of these countries, the relatively religious United States is the most prone to go to war with less industrialized nations, including when not immediately threatened. However, even the advanced democracies have not been able to eliminate organized crime, which is expanding in much of the underdeveloped world.

Regarding gender, physical violence has been predominantly a male activity (Kruger & Fitzgerald, 2012; Hudson & Boer, 2012; Paul, 2023; Vugt, 2012), and noncombatant victims of violence have often been women, including via rape – although women make a contribution especially in domestic situations (Campbell & Cross, 2012). Whether this strong trend is largely cultural or genetic-hormonal in nature remains a matter of controversy, and some matriarchal societies, including Polynesian and Amerindian, have been militaristic (Buss, 2005; Coie & Stucky, 1997; Goldstein, 2001). The major exception to the male violence trend is infanticide, which often involves the actions of the mother, albeit in some but not all cases under the pressure of males.

### American Conservatism is a Radical, Impractical, Fringe Ideology

It remains common in the now hyper polarized US for even liberals to reminisce with nostalgia about how American conservatism used to be more reasonable, advocating discussible ideas such as small government and social traditionalism, as per Eisenhower, and the Reagan and Buckley who were then seen by the left as deep reactionaries. Although Ameroconservatism has become much worse, the view that it was once reasonable is not true. Conservatism American style has been extremist since the early 1900s. No country has since run its economics on the wild and reckless speculation that is full blown libertarian ideology, a parody of discourse no more real world practical than the communism it loathes, concocted by theorists who had limited

or no actual business experience Ayn Rand among them.<sup>89</sup> To cut such people some slack they lived in an era before sufficient data was on hand to measure the success of the competing concepts, but that data is now in and the results are conclusive. Only one advanced democracy that being the US retains a major right wing conservative movement that advocates libertarian economics and small government, forcing early term births under government compulsion, mass gun possession, et al. No conservative party in another first world nation is so rash as to push to eliminate universal health coverage, allow loose gun laws, severely limit abortions, etc. That is because decades of experience have shown that the pragmatic, secular policies that are the modern norm are – while not delivering utopias which are impossible – producing the best collective results. The relatively conservative US has become something of a first world embarrassment, which is a reason few migrate here from the other developed democracies.

American conservatism has always been offering an untested, theoretical ideology whose practicality has no substantiation, and has been contradicted by the western experiment since WW2. Theism is a similarly theoretical ideology that lacks any substantiation. It is not surprising that the two often accompany one another. It is very unlikely that the US would have retained its brand of dysfunctional socioeconomic conservatism if not for its being the industrial democracy that suffered from having the largest the right – funded in good part by God fearing capitalist oil tycoons – in the wake of world war. That the fossil fuel industry is still a major dynamic in the American right is a dysfunctional historical legacy.

## Analysis

### The Godly American Way: Not All It's Often Cracked Up To Be

The evidence establishes that at the first-world level, mixed economies that modulate capitalist markets with progressive socialistic policies are producing superior overall national circumstances compared to the more laissez faire capitalism and private charity favored in the United States (Geoghegan, 2010; Harris, 2006, 2010; Kawachi & Kennedy, 2002; Marmot, 2004; Reid, 2004, 2009; Sapolsky, 2005; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2011; Zuckerman, 2008, 2009, 2011, 2016, 2019). America is performing so poorly in many regards despite its immense wealth that it should be a matter of grave national concern—rather than the over glorification of the American way by its commonly theoconservative promoters.

Because highly secular democracies are significantly and regularly outperforming the more theistic ones, all versions of the godly-religion socioeconomic hypothesis are refuted, while the secular-democratic socioeconomic hypothesis is strongly supported. These conclusions are in general accord with the large body of research showing the superior conditions in the less pious nations (Barber, 2011; Gill & Lundsgaarde, 2004; Norris & Inglehart, 2004; Paul, 2005, 2009a, 2010b, 2012; Rees, 2009; Ruiter & Tubergen, 2009; Verweij et al., 1997; Zuckerman, 2008, 2009, 2011, 2016, 2019). The examinations of a broad range of first-, second-, and third-world nations in some of the aforementioned studies generally falsify the godly-religion socioeconomic hypothesis, and will continue to do unless a study to the contrary that utilizes a broad range of socioeconomic factors emerges, which has so far not happened despite the widespread promulgation of the godly-religion socioeconomic hypothesis. Ergo, popular religion is in total maladaptive, not the prosocial positive many continue to claim it is despite the statistical proof otherwise. The next task is to uncover the factors that are producing the real world results.

### The Nonuniversality and Noninternal Nature of Popular Religiosity

A remarkable facet of investigating the origins and evolution of human violence and religion is that critical data are, it turns out, found among the least supernaturalistic of both the least and most advanced current societies. The absence of strong supernaturalism among some hunter-gatherers and preindustrial civilizations, and the broad and rapid loss of popular religiosity among a number of modern societies in the absence of a major coordinated antitheist campaign, disproves the popular thesis that religion is universal among humans. So does the significant variation of religious intensity in preindustrial civilizations. Far more universal is basic materialism in terms of the interest in material goods and services. While materialism is not consistently

developed among individuals and groups, it is always significant. Even among many who deny its extreme modern expression, Mennonites are proud of their properties and the goods they produce. True rejection of material items, as among some individual and small community religious ascetics, is very rare. The specialized opposable thumbs of humans, dedication of large areas of the brain to manipulating the environment, and the inability of humans to survive and thrive without tools indicate that materialism is strongly genetically programmed and inherent to humans (Paul, 2009a, 2010b, 2012).<sup>90</sup> Language too is truly universal in that all mentally capable adults have excellent, complex speaking or signing skills, the language of all peoples being roughly comparable in sophistication. The uniquely configured human vocal tract, dedication of large areas of an expanded brain to language, the rapid ease with which it is learned by children, and the inability to run any level of human society without well-developed language abilities indicate that language is strongly genetically programmed and correspondingly integral to the human brain and condition (Deacon, 1998; Pinker, 1994; although Prinze [2010] disagrees). Writing, in contrast, is nonuniversal, being totally absent until a few millennia ago and still lacking among a significant number of individuals and groups. Nor is art entirely universal, being absent in some individuals and variable in its presence across societies. The ability of societies to exist without art or especially writing indicates they are not genetically programmed but instead that they are secondary effects of the presence of opposable thumbs and high-level mental capacity, including imagination.

Because religion is highly variable, in the manner of art and writing, and is not necessary for the existence of human societies, religiosity is correspondingly optional, like writing and art. Because supernaturalism is variable and elective rather than universal, there cannot be a “God gene” in that religiosity cannot be strongly genetically programmed—religion is therefore no more genetically programmed than writing and art. So there cannot be a specialized “God module” in the brain, and religion is not inherent to the human psyche. The lack of a strong genetic component means that selective pressures could not have been a primary force behind the appearance and development of religion—in other words, religiosity did not evolve in order to improve social cohesion in a manner that imparted a reproductive advantage to group members (contra the position taken in Volland and Schiefenhovel, 2009). This conclusion is reinforced by the absence of strong spirituality in the Hadza and similar tribes, who have survived for a tremendous stretch of time without social cohesion via religion, and whose low religiosity may have been more widespread among Paleolithic peoples. Much the same for the very long lived and successful Chinese civilization with its minimal religious industry. It follows that religious devotion is a by-product of the imaginative human mind, broadly similar to writing and art.

The nonuniversality of religion also rules out other factors as primary causes. Fear of death and hell in preference for a pleasant afterlife is not a critical motivator in most persons (contra Becker, 1998) in view of the lack of belief in an afterlife among some hunter-gatherers, a number of religions, and hundreds of millions of first worlders (Paul, 2009a, 2010b, 2012; Zuckerman, 2008).<sup>91</sup> The same principle applies to a desire for social community and support, a fear of societal chaos sans a godly population, a means to acquire greater power, childhood gullibility continuing into adulthood, memes that spread religious ideas like viruses, and so forth. At most these can be secondary causes of religiosity, or play roles in the Darwinian societal competition between theobranders to recruit and retain those who are already religious largely for other reasons. The perfect afterlife promised to all adherents by Christianity and Islam may help explain their massive displacement of other faiths. Nor is the theistic speculation that people believe in the transcendent because the latter is real and it is therefore normal to connect with the transcendent supported by the nonuniversality of religion, so religion is natural in origin (as per Bloom, 2007) rather than supernatural. An additional implication of the nonuniversality, and frequently easy loss, of religiosity is that in most persons it is not a deeply set worldview, but rather a more superficial opinion subject to rapid change. This does not mean that all persons whose religiosity is superficial will admit it; they may ardently defend their faith-based opinions. But humans are prone to over defending their commitment to a given opinion even if it is fundamentally superficial; consider how a sports fan can be fanatical about a local team until the fan relocates and supports another with equal ardor. So although religious opinion is frequently obstinate, it is also often fragile in the same persons.

Why Western Religion Is on Life Support, and Theism is not Doing so Hot in the Rest of the World

Having shown that religion is undergoing historically unprecedented withering and has lost much – but by no means most – its millennia long grip on the planetary culture, a question is why. A related question is whether theism is a causal factor behind the inferior socioeconomics it is commonly associated with, or is being damaged by superior conditions, or both. The absence of a fundamental internal mental root of serious religious supernaturalism indicates that the essential cause must be environmental. The relatively low religiosity present in some hunter-gatherers and some preindustrial civilizations establishes that poor socioeconomic conditions do not necessarily result in high levels of divine supernaturalism (Paul, 2010a,b, 2012; contra Paul, 2009a). However, a growing body of research is supporting the uncertainty hypothesis (Malinowski, 1954) that the insecurity that stems from a seriously defective social and especially economic environment is necessary for religion to be highly popular on empirical and theoretical grounds (Barber, 2011; Gill & Lundsgaarde, 2004; Inglehart, 2021; Norris & Inglehart, 2004; Paul, 2009a, 2010b, 2012; Rees, 2009; Verweij et al., 1997; Zuckerman, 2008, 2009, 2011, 2016, 2019). Higher levels of prosperity tend to be associated with lower levels of religiosity on both an individual and national basis (Inglehart, 2021; Norris & Inglehart, 2004; Pew, 2016, 2020), but matters cannot be so simple since the United States has been a partial outlier due to its unusual combination of wealth and religiosity. The strong correlation between religiosity on the one hand and income disparity and the cumulative societal conditions measured by the SSS (Figures 5 & 7; Paul 2009a) indicates these factors are influencing one another. All the more so since the most religious and dysfunctional first-world country has the most socioeconomically Darwinistic arrangement, including the unique absence of universal health care. At the cumulative global scale the general rise in irreligiosity is occurring in tune with the rise of the middle class (Figure 2), this is not likely to be coincidental.

The socioeconomic security hypothesis explains that national scale societies that provide a prosperous middle-class majority with a high level of social and especially economic security encourage the propensity of increasing numbers of individuals to lose interest in the gods with increasing personal security and wealth. In all but one first-world country, the great majority of a population enjoys the modern comforts and advantages of life typical of advanced democracies, their middle class status being strongly protected by government policies that minimize the possibility that a given person or family will suffer financial ruin and physical endangerment. The latter threat is also alleviated by anticorporal punishment policies, antibullying policies, serious firearms control policies, and rehabilitative incarceration on a modest scale. Workers' leisure and family time are protected, and child care support is extensive – at the same time that low juvenile mortality rates contribute to low fertility that reduces the demand for child care. Removing the requirement for high fertility rates for societal survival directly reduces the urgent need for religious powers to enforce rapid reproduction (Inglehart, 2021). Universal health care ensures all given citizen that they and their loved ones will receive sufficient modern medical care to maximize health and lifespans regardless of their personal finances, while protecting the latter. As a result of the high level of earthly comfort and security, a large portion or majority of the population no longer has sufficient interest in seeking the aid and protection of supernatural deities in their daily lives to continue to worship or believe in them. The reduction in interest in religion reduces attendance at religious ceremonies, further reducing the influence of the religious industry upon individuals, resulting in additional decreases in religious activity and opinion. The partial replacement of faith-based charitable institutions with government agencies further reduces the outreach of religious organizations into the general public, which is a reason why Amerotheoconservatives wish to counter displace government aid with theocharities despite the latter's less effectiveness (Figure 8).

Ruck et al. (2018) assayed that secularization has proceeded economic success. If this holds up then religion is in the main actively dysfunctional on a national scale. This does not preclude that once detheism sparks the trend of improving societal circumstances that the latter then does damage to theism, creating a classic feedback effect. In that socioeconomic stew, when socially active moderate-liberal churches do the right thing and support or at least tolerate the adoption of progressive policies that make earthly life better for the population, they at best are not doing themselves demographic good, and without intending to are undermining the religiosity of the society. Center-left religion has been shooting itself in its population dynamics feet without realizing it.

Because religious opinion is usually casual rather than deeply set in most minds, the consistent outcome is a downward spiral, often rapid, of theism. This superficiality of opinion means that the loss and absence of religious opinion is in itself typically superficial, in that most do not drop supernaturalistic thinking because they have carefully considered and weighed the options, but because the circumstances of their daily lives have improved to the degree that they no longer have much interest in theism. The process therefore does not require significant promotion by evangelically antitheist organizations that have remained very small—much smaller than organized religion—even in the most atheistic democracies. Organic mass atheism is a grass roots demographic largely self-conversion phenomenon, not a top down activist movement. That there are no major first-world exceptions to this pattern, that the process is often rapid, and that a significant long term religious revival has yet to occur in a secular democracy indicates that the socioeconomic security process of democratic secularization is a highly effective side effect of progressive economic policies. The universality of the effect is further supported by pagan Japan experiencing the same basic secularization process as the EuroChristian secular democracies.

The United States is the most religiously aberrant prosperous nation because it is the most socioeconomically troubled member of the group, the country standing as an example of the socioeconomic dysfunctionality hypothesis that predicts that insecure life circumstances favor religiosity. Provided with comparatively low levels of government support and protection in favor of less restrained Wild West capitalism, members of the middle class are at serious risk of financial and personal ruin if they lose their job or private health insurance; around a million go bankrupt in a year, about half due in part to often overwhelming medical bills which never happens in other nations. The need to acquire wealth as a protective buffer encourages an intense competitive race to the top, made worse by the Darwinian “Reaganomics” that have made the nation’s economy the most efficient at transferring large funds from the middle class to the small wealthy elite through a number of devices. The corporate effort to move into debt people in the middle and bottom (see following discussion) results in the latter paying massive interest to the top. Lower wages and benefits, including retirement funds associated with deunionization, reduce costs for capital while increasing worker debt and interest loads. Poorly regulated high finance regularly devolves into legal but unsustainable pyramid schemes that defraud middle-class investors of enormous sums before the ploys collapse. Lowering taxes on all classes serves the upper tier most by increasing the amount of lower and middle level money that can be shifted up the class scale, and then allowing the upper class to keep more of their gains.

The result of this Darwinian economy has been growing income inequality that leaves a large cohort mired in poverty while stagnating the financial growth of the middle class, forcing a large portion into debt, reducing or eliminating medical and retirement security, and raising habitual anxiety levels (see Stiglitz, 2012; also Boghosian, 2019; Piketty, 2014). Gun control policies are weak at best, and incarceration is retributive and abusive on a mass scale that discriminates against minorities, especially urban. Not surprisingly, levels of societal pathology, including lethal crime, are high. The majority of Americans have been left feeling sufficiently economically and physically insecure that they think they must seek the aid and protection of a supernatural creator, delaying secularization relative to more functional national societies. The nation’s high ratings in life satisfaction and happiness are compatible with a large segment of the population using religion to psychologically compensate for high levels of apprehension and hope (Berkessei et al. 2021). The ultimate expression of this phenomenon is the large minority who adhere to the evangelical Prosperity Christianity (Osteen, 2020; 2022; Peale, 1952; Robertson, 2006; Warren, 2002) and Rapture cultures (which are highly Pentecostal), whose Bible-based worldview favors belief in the Genesis creation story, as well as Mormonism, which is not doctrinally young earth creationist.

The Fun Factor – The *Materialistic Self-Indulgence Threat to Theosupernaturalism* that Corporate-Consumerism has Delivered

In view of the absence of the hybrid capitalist-socialist economy that drives secularization in the rest of the West, why is religion fast losing ground even in the United States—including the religious Right, which, despite being well organized, is persistently unable to break out of the parallel minority culture it has been driven into as ardent theism dives off a cliff? An important, if not the leading, factor driving American secularization is the corporate-consumer culture that was in the end made possible by the steam engines

initially invented to get coal out of mines into early industrial furnaces. It is in the interest of profit-focused Darwinian capitalism to exploit the strong natural genetic propensity toward self-indulgent materialism of the human animal that is far more powerful than the comparatively weak inclination towards the other self-absorption that is worship of mythical, favors dispensing deities in order to radically alter society by converting pious, dowdy traditionalist citizens who contribute time and money to religious organizations into materialistic, individualist “hip” consumers who center their lives and resources around goods and entertainment to the point that they go into interest-generating debt. Consider how gambling once largely limited to mob dominated Nevada<sup>92</sup> and often resisted by social traditionalists has now spread across the nation – in part because of decisions by theoconservative corporate friendly judges. The Materialistic Self-Indulgent Threat accommodates the Individual-Choice Norms hypothesis (Inglehart, 2021). To a major extent, commerce is in competition with religion, economic libertarianism being in a codependent relationship with social libertarianism, the one not being able to thrive without the other in the American political scene.

As observed above, corporations were displacing churches as the dominant feature of American society in the 1920s as new technologies further facilitated mass production and mass advertising, contributing to the “flapper” culture that helped overturn millennia’s long traditional mores. That the advent of the All American typically Christian nuclear family in the 1950s worked to detach youth from the traditional cultural influences of their senior elders only facilitated the commerce driven materialization of the Baby Boomers – the nuclear family is among of the enemies of the theotraditionalists who most cluelessly favor the nontraditional lifestyle. While the counterculture of the 1960s began as a grassroots anticorporate movement that initially perplexed and sometimes vexed the corporate establishment, it was quickly captured and exploited by the revenue seeking corporations to further radicalize and thereby commercialize Western societies. Thus the counterculture is now the establishment. A major portion of the profit-based secularization project has centered on the transformative power of the mass entertainment media that attracts enormous audiences. American mercantile interests also backed the repeal of the puritanical “Blue Laws” intended to boost church attendance at the expense of retail traffic, a major factor in the crash of church attendance (Gruber & Hungerman, 2006).<sup>93</sup> Regardless of their political alliance of convenience, and the attempt via God wants you to be rich Prosperity Christianity to accommodate and celebrate modern materialism, the churches and corporations are in the end in a Darwinian competition for the hearts and minds of the populace. That when the financial resources that capitalism can call upon to materialize societies dwarf those even that the religious industry can deploy to try to save itself from further reductions.

Broadcast networks and stations have long shied away from religious themes – the citation of a Bible passage in *A Charlie Brown Christmas* (Schultz et al. 1965) was and is a rarity that unsettled the CBS executives when they screened the special– only a handful of cable/satellite channels are explicitly religious and only one theocon channel, FoxNews, has a major audience in the USA. The last point illustrates that capital, and good deal with is run by conservatives of various sorts, is not tilted entirely against theoconservatism. The FoxNews/social media combination has polarized the US as it promotes hardline Christoconservatism. Neutral CNN promoted the Trump 2016 campaign by covering his rallies live and in full because they generated ratings, and may do something along those lines in the 2024 campaign. But in the aggregate the corporate-consumer complex is strongly angled to the more profitable secular side of the spectrum. Most daily lives saturated in commercial advertising while religious sponsored ads are so scarce it may be many days before one sees one.<sup>94</sup> So while the global religious industry far outresources the atheosecular movement, capital with its tens of trillions easily outmatches the churches et al. This is a prominent reason that despite its limited advocacy groups being severely impoverished, nontheism is demographically outperforming theism, the irreligious have an enormous de facto tacit ally. To look at it another way, both industries religious and corporate are putting out product, – one product a set of rhetorical propaganda supposedly spiritual but speculative and very probably fantastical, the other product very real in its material reality and very, very alluring, and with lots more money behind it – no wonder the latter has got the advantage. One that happens to shower atheosecularism with great benefits without deliberately trying to do so.

Another potent antireligious product being pushed by corporate capital is the seemingly flippant fiction of ancient aliens. The first English language work on the subject (Von Daniken, 1968) was issued by a mainstream corporate publishing house. Very probably the editors did so while rolling their eyes – while exploiting a



European best seller in the American market. What could the harm be? Interest in aliens old and new may have been fading – until the new century when cable entity A&E realized that mainstream documentaries could not produce the ratings driven profits that can be acquired via pseudoscientific programming. Hence their highly successful sets of series on ancient astronauts. As a result, an astounding third of Americans now express belief in alien creators (Wilkinson, 2018). While a lot of this belief is casual, in the collective is it not a minor development. A substantial portion of ancient aliens belief occurs after loss of theism, but by no means all. With believing in both extraterrestrials and the Judeo-Christian God as the creator/s being in deep conflict, it cannot be otherwise concluded that the rise in the former to about a hundred million supposedly grownup Americans is yet another example of how consumer driven profit seeking is without trying doing real damage to the equally fiction promoting churches. In the battle for popularity between the creator aliens and the gods that do not exist the extraterrestrial are making big gains. And with little if any notice or clerical upset – note how ministries persistently warn their flocks about the perils of rationalistic atheism and other brands of theism while emitting not a peep about the lure of believing the civilizing extraterrestrials.

Although led largely by elitist capitalists, the corporate-consumer culture is not imposed on the majority against their strong resistance; despite persistent complaints, the public in America and much of the rest of the world has largely gone along with the extreme materialization of their societies for reasons that are obvious. Also a dynamic is that much of the creative talent in the entertainment industry is made up of nonheterosexuals who naturally promote their lifestyles in their work when such is possible. This is a reason that the global corporate entertainment giant Disney is standing up to anti-LGTBQ Florida governor DeSantis.

Deeply frustrated and often perplexed by their inability to win the culture wars for God via public discourse, theoconservatives regularly blame and condemn the media for its secular ways. The irony here being that the media is part of the liberty loving profits seeking free markets they proclaim are Godly. If religion themed programming brought in the big bucks they would be pushing it as a norm. But churches suffer from their tradition of being cloying leaden kitsch. Because head nodding theism garners grossly insufficient viewers and therefore revenue, overtly religious programming is relatively scant on commercial venues, further constraining the outreach of popular theism. The hip factor of the corporate-consumer society gives it a particular advantage among younger generations because it is difficult for religious cults to shed their square image even when they adopt aspects of modernity – as liberal theistic actor Wilson (2023) observes it’s “so not cool to be religious” – which is a reason why his effort to promote spirituality is unlikely to enjoy success. Scientologist Tom Cruise avoids publicity about his beliefs because he knows the damage it would do to his successful pop career. Attempts by religious organizations and entertainers to become tonier by adopting appealing secular aspects such as Christian Rock are at best partly effective rear guard actions that cannot match the hot cool factor of its secular milieu, while it offends and turns off theotraditionalists, and is clearly failing to stem the secular tide. All the more so because Christian pop rarely breaks into the mainstream.<sup>95</sup> Instead, the pressing appeal of material consumerism is so potent that it has for a century compelled much of conservative Christianity has embrace the historically extraordinary acquisition of as much Earthly wealth as one can get, as expressed most openly in the various forms of Prosperity Christianity, which uses modern business style methods to try to emphasize recruitment and retention.<sup>96</sup> The extent to which sexualized consumer modernity has infiltrated conservative even Christian right culture is observed in hairstyles and makeup. In the late 1800s young respectable American women often appear plain in photographs– hair was often simply tied back, and makeup was used only by disreputable sex workers and actresses. Starting in the 1950s, perhaps due to the visual pressures of television, this flipped and it became de rigueur for prominent evangelical women to adopt heavy mascara and over the top beehive hairdos as exemplified by Tammy Faye Bakker. This was eventually transferred onto little girls in heavily sexualized beauty contests by the same theocon culture that denounces sexual grooming of children. This may appear a successful tactic for staving off secularization, but strategically it is like a retreating army shooting over it shoulders – it may or may not slow down the advance of the secular enemy, but it is demonstrably not stopping it while antagonizing skeptical traditionalists (as per Costella, 1998). The adoption of the hedonistic materialistic lifestyle that comes with trying to save theism by modernizing it preps many theists for losing their need and desire to search for supernatural aid, as seen in the ongoing decline of the religious right.

Despite the patent dangers posed to popular theism by capital, the American religious right, dominated by prosperity Christians comfortable with free markets, has wanted and needed to ally with corporate powers in

the context of the Republican Party (Frank, 2004; Paul, 2009a, 2010b, 2012) because it has been the only means by which either element, via the force multiplication of their coalition, can achieve major political power. This is in association with rich right wingers funding “grassroots” conservative sociopolitical movements (Brown and Jamison, 2023; Burrough, 2009; Dalleck, 2023; Frank, 2004; Gabbatt, 2021; Martin 2013; Mayer, 2010, 2021). Otherwise the minority that is the Christoright would be doomed to political irrelevance in most of the country. Theoconservatives have correspondingly been reluctant to acknowledge that the business interests they are allied with are an enormous factor in the secularization of societies that they are trying to reverse. Thus the keep quiet about the contradiction of the Reagan coalition that has been operative for decades. The exemplar of this cynical duplicity is FoxNews, which is owned by the conservative Murdoch’s whose global Fox entertainment empire has been a leader in helping secularize the culture with its antitraditionalist, edgy programming – think the vulgar *Married With Children* and the irreligious *The Simpsons* – while the FN pundits have harshly criticized the deChristianizing of western culture in favor of progressive secularism that Fox has been a major player in bringing about. That scheme has been fraying as exasperated theocons have begun to go after free market corporate interests for their secular cultural ways. As per DeSantis taking on Disney for its support for LGBTQ rights despite the corporation being a leading engine of prosperity in his state. How far this inherent antagonism between theoconservatism and consumerism can go may prove to be limited. The Christoright industry has been politically trapped in its mutually cynical alliance with secularizing corporate industry in which the latter enjoy the upper power hand as it fills its coffers with the religion injuring product it produces. With the takeover of the Republican Party by an angry MAGA base that feels taken advantage of by corporate interests in regards both financial and cultural, there is now a growing rift between the right wing populists and big business (Ahmari, 2023; Mullins, 2023). This is exemplified by but not limited to the – financially harmful to Florida – tiff between DeSantis and Disney, globalization and treatment of workers are also concerns. These events appear to be leaving major corporate interests without a major party it can fully rely upon. But how far this split can go without damaging future political prospects of the theoright is not knowable at this time, and capital continues to get much of what it wants out of the decades long deal (Ponnuru, 2023). If the rift goes far enough the reduced access to lavish corporate financial campaign and lobbying resources may seriously degrade the electoral and influence abilities of the shrinking religious right. That as the secularizing impact of business continues with at most little reduction.

The importance of the fun factor in the withering of mass faith is not to be underestimated.<sup>97</sup> Although science has made distheism viable, the appeal of the chic faith-free life is a compelling force behind secularization that outmatched organized religion has been unable to counter by popular persuasion. To look at it from another angle, had the wide poverty of the ages continued to today because mass production had not arisen, very few would not be theists even with science removing the need for supernaturalistic creation. That matters have proven otherwise has been forcing a lacking means to overcome the free market of lifestyle powered by industrial scale materialism religious right to resort to various forces of government power to try to forcefully reimpose their passion for imposing their worldview on those who do not desire to return to blah traditional mores. Science provided the intellectual justification for nontheism, consumerism has made it the cool cultural option. The potent hip factor enjoyed by nontheism and the ensuing theoconservative need to take hardline measures to overturn it is being expressed with lethal extremity in the Russian effort to seize Ukraine. Re-dominated by the Orthodox church, Russian culture – which suffers from poor economic circumstances due to church-state rejection of western consumer capitalism – is so socially somber and oppressive that it lacks allure beyond those who do not want themselves or others to have much in the way of merriment. With the Ukrainian majority having opted for exciting western freedoms over bland Russian theoconservatism – led by the dour Putin and Kirill in his retro robes – they are grimly resisting the Orthodox Russian project to impose Christosharia on them. They want to their society to enjoy the modern lifestyle so much that they are willing to fight and die for it as much of their nation is for the moment ruined.

Modern conservatism incorporates a self-deceptive fundamental lie that has gone nearly unnoticed. The core premise of conservatism is as expressed by its most famous intellectual proponent William Buckley to “stand athwart history, yelling Stop,” – or at least slow down. The most extreme human development in history – one that has dwarfed in its swift sweeping planetary impact the invention of mere Christianity that did little to actually change human life circumstances – is the industrial revolution that has inevitably sparked the

similarly radical societal revolution of modernity that is wrecking popular theism. Freewheeling capital is exactly the kind of tradition smashing development that conservatives should rail against. Among them the Buckley who without batting a theoconservative eye embraced the novel onset of mass materialism, when as a self-professed papist Catholic should have with all Christoconservatives joined with his more threat to theism savvy church to denounce the secular corporate powers. But the self-indulgent Buckley was not going to do that – not being a priest who had taken a vow of poverty, the worldly hedonist enjoyed the good life made possible by the material wealth that has been torpedoing mass piety too much to do that. The degree that conservatives are often not as holding steadfast to their self-avowed lives of Biblical and traditionalist principle are the optional marriage-divorce laws designed in some red states to make divorce harder for those theoconservatives who chose to wed under them. Which has been hardly any, most theocon couples have kept their divorce options as open as the liberals. And the only two divorcee presidents are both Republicans. Then there is the profanity issue. For decades social traditionalists emphasized the need for societal decorum and propriety, decrying the vulgar language practiced by media seculars such as comics Bruce, Carlin, Pryor and of late Maher (2008), by rappers, and so forth. A half century ago the massacre of students at Kent State was widely excused as the result in part of the vulgar language directed at the soldiers by the protestors. That was then. 2000s conservatives have expressed no concerns about the endless stream of expletives issued by the MAGA insurrectionists on 1/6/21, etc., as their Trump utters expletives that no prior president dared. That the indulgence factor of modern lifestyles has so enraptured most conservatives that they often do not do what they in pious principle should, is exposing their cynical hypocrisy while revealing they are – in ironic parallel with mainline churches that support the progressive side of modern socioeconomics – shooting themselves in their theistic feet. Not that they have a viable alternative political strategy.

Of the two industries, corporate capital is beating out theism. That the former is more potent than the latter explains why the material product has done so much to grievously injure the ancient supernaturalistic product in just a few centuries.

#### The Reality Factor – The *Sci-Tech Threat to Theosupernaturalism*

The third factor helping secularize societies is the combination of modern science and advanced technology. Had science verified the existence of a supernatural creator,<sup>1</sup> then atheistic secularization would have been aborted in favor of some form of fact-based (rather than faith-based) theism. Instead, science has effectively removed the need for persons to believe in any form of supernaturalism, rendering the latter speculative myths and mere opinions at best, which both allows and encourages the rise of nontheism (Bloom, 2012; Dawkins, 2006; Hawkings & Mlodinow, 2010; Paul, 2010b, 2012; Shook, 2015). While science has not made religious belief impossible, that inherently weak argument applies to other forms of popular paranormal beliefs that similarly lack scientific substance – ancient aliens<sup>98</sup> is no less or more scientifically plausible than is the competing God hypothesis. The falsification of specific scriptural scientific and historical claims, such as Genesis, Exodus, and the Book of Mormon (Wade, 2018), are specific examples of this effect, but the principle applies generally to all religions that make claims regarding the existence of supernatural powers. It is probably not a coincidence that the frequency of the use of the word “God” has dropped, while usage of “evolution” has soared (Jean-Baptiste, et al., 2010), and it follows that irreligion is widespread among the well-educated and analytical, especially scientists (Gervais & Norenzayan, 2012; Larson & Witham, 1999; Preston & Epley, 2009). The secularizing effect of the science driven side of modernity is a major element in why higher levels of education have been related to more nontheism (Inglehart, 2021; Jones[Gallup], 2021, 2022; Norris & Inglehart, 2004; Pew, 2020)<sup>99</sup> as well as support for evolutionary science (Brenan[Gallup], 2019; Eder et al. 2011; Miller et al. 2022; Pew, 2015b). Interestingly, it appears that religious opinions are in the main set by educational experiences before students arrive at college, which then has relatively little impact (Downey, 2017; Eisen, 2019).<sup>100</sup> The Christoright home school movement is taking some losses due to discontent by some of those who experienced its strictures and inadequacies (Jamison, 2023). The god-like achievements of modern science and technology are lowering the awe factor that has facilitated religion (Paul & Cox, 1996). The chronic use of various technologies by ordinary middle-class citizens can degrade mass religiosity simply by absorbing time that could otherwise be dedicated to godly pursuits. As Putman (2000) argued, air conditioning, television, and, more recently, digital media have been suppressing membership in

social clubs. Among which are churches the precipitous 21<sup>st</sup> century decline of which is likely to be driven in substantial part by the attractions and distractions of social media which may also be undermining religious propaganda by making it easy to access more logical atheist arguments, in the process helping not very organized nontheism match the outreach of the far more organized and cash flush religious industry – social media may also be behind the failure of atheosecular organizations and social groups to expand in tune with the fast expansion of the nontheist portion of the population. Because religion is a time hungry social club, it is vulnerable to such sociotechnological temporal pressures. The advent of digital personal electronics may be posing a particular threat to the religiosity of younger generations because of an exceptional diversionary impact—one that helps explain the dramatic decline in youth faith.

Of these two industries, science is beating theism. That the former is more potent than the latter explains why science has done so much to grievously injure ancient supernaturalism in just a few centuries. Humanity remains highly irrational, but it is more rational than it ever has been before.

### The Disgust Factor – The *Revulsion Threat to Theosupernaturalism*

Lacking solid evidence based arguments for why supernatural entities especially moral exist, theosupernaturalists are prone to trying to dodge that problem by slandering atheists as being obstinately and self-indulgently unwilling to lead virtuous lives by doing the hard thing of striving to obey the strict rules laid down by the wise creator. The greater truth is that many atheists are revolted by the obviously far from virtuous nature of theism on moral and practical grounds. That includes the millennia's worth of religion based or accommodated violence small and large scale, the usual acceptance or advocacy of autocracy and slavery, and the frequent bigotry and intolerance outlines above. With clearly flawed logic theists try to wave this off as the fault of the humans the intelligent designer supposedly misdesigned not obeying the word of God. But the nature of the creator is itself patently and fatally morally defective, both as evidenced by the nature of the world we live in, and readily found in scripture, as will be discussed below. And theism is not as its adherents often claim an altruistic effort to participate in a greater purpose, it is a narcissistic search for favors from an ethically seriously defective supernatural power. Those distheists who have thought the matter through – and as observed by the sociological research many nontheists have not – don't wish to have anything to do with such a grievously flawed entity, even if a god or more exists. The religious industry successfully deployed mass ignorance and propaganda with oppressive societal norms and government enforcement to good effect since the advent of civilization, but that project has been seriously damaged by modern communications.

Regarding the often potent secularizing effect of the defects of theism, Putman and Campbell (2010) are among the many (Marcotte, 2021) who attribute much of American deChristianization to yet another—and ironic—theosociological backlash. They contend that the rise of the religious right intended to return the nation to the churches in reaction to secular modernity is instead causing its own reactionary blowback as most of the younger generations reject its intolerant stridence. This hypothesis is popular among the center-left because it blames the widely disliked and seemingly foolish theoright for the troubles of religion American Style. The thesis is however very problematic. It does not explain Western de-Christianization in general because it was the democracies where theoconservatism was less prominent that secularized more rapidly – if the US had had a smaller Christoright it very likely would have deChristianized sooner. Instead it has been the most theoright western country that had been the most religious for decades. And if American's were turning against religion because the theocons are so odious, then conservative should have been taking the biggest demographic hits. Instead it has been the moderate-liberal mainline churches that are not to direct blame for the foibles of the Christoright that have sunk the fastest, leaving the theoright the most vibrant segment of what remains of Ameroreligion.

### The *Quad Threat to Theosupernaturalism*

The combination of secure middle-class prosperity and long life (Socioeconomic Security Threat), the alluring culture of materialistic fun (Corporate-Consumer Self-Indulgence Threat), advanced sciences and technologies that eliminate the need for gods (Sci-Tech Threat), and the big and chronic failings of theism (Revulsion Threat) constitute the Quad Threat to Theosupernaturalism. The four dynamics work synergistically

in that they blend together and overlap and reinforce one another—the first two factors, in particular, would not be possible without the existence of the third. In most advanced democracies, the first factor is the most important, and when combined with the other three it has produced the most potent secularization effect. Thus the paired industries of science and corporate capital are trumping the religious cult industry despite the political alliance of the last with the middle. In the United States, the first component has not been sufficiently operative for its socially dysfunctional low regulation economy to produce a secular majority – yet – but the second dynamic is prevalent and has proved effective enough to prevent the theoright from establishing their dream of a permanent Republican majority – which is why the perpetually frustrated right has openly shifted to trying to impose theocratic minority rule.

As effective as the first three secularization forces can be, they are largely accidental secular driven side effects rather than calculated efforts to destroy popular supernaturalism. The fourth threat is the unintentional self-destructive fault of religion itself, and a creator if one exists.

Based on a statistical analysis, Ruiters and Tubergen (2009) conclude that, in addition to socioeconomic conditions, the religious heritage of a nation plays a role in its long-term religiosity, including the degree of religious regulation. What is not correct is the once popular hypothesis that a Constitutional free market of religion had been a major factor behind America's high level of religiosity (Stark & Finke, 1990), the theory having been falsified (as per Norris & Inglehart, 2004; Inglehart, 2021). Aside from the Darwinian competition of theism losing its grasp on the 21<sup>st</sup> century American scene, single sect Islamic societies are often highly religious.

#### More on the Superficiality of Religion—and of Popular Atheism

The ease and rapidity with which religion has lost much or most of its popularity in the advanced democracies despite the absence of a potent atheistic movement, and often in the face of the global propaganda industry of organized religion, affirms that religious belief and practice are a common but usually superficial psychological coping mechanism for alleviating the high level of anxiety associated with living in a sufficiently dysfunctional socioeconomic environment, and that religious opinion is readily abandoned in many or most people if their daily lives become sufficiently secure and prosperous. This not only refutes the hypothesis (as per Barrett, 2004, 2011) that most people must deliberately strive to overcome a supposedly strong natural human propensity to be religious if they are to become irreligious, but also it means that nontheism is similarly superficial in the hundreds of millions who have casually lost their faith without thinking about it all that much (Paul, 2009a, 2010b, 2012; Gervais et al. 2021). Not thinking that much about losing one's religion may be the most common mode of doing so, and item that could use research. That the great Western secularization has established that religious opinion is inconsistent and often casual in turn allows us to better examine the beginning and evolution of religiosity and its relationship to individual and mass violence; in particular, we can avoid errant conclusions that stem from assuming religion is universal and deeply set in the species.

It follows that the fact that the majority of humans have and continue to be religious is not evidence for religiosity being the human default mode, because the majority of humans have and continue to live in the dysfunctional circumstances that promote religiosity. To better discover the actual propensity of people to be pious or not would require running the entire planet so that every person enjoyed the level of secure middle class or higher prosperity and peace now prevalent only in the most successful democracies for a sustained period of time. Presumably, popular religiosity would sink to the low levels currently extant in such nations—whether nontheism would continue to grow to even higher or consensus levels is unknown and open to question. Also questionable is whether this pacific prosperity experiment will ever be run.

#### Taking a Closer Look at the Interactive Factors Between Theism and Nontheism with Dysfunction and Societal Success

Because intraspecies violence and war are not human inventions, being present in nonhumans, including some apes, they are not the result of religion. Increasingly complex language and materialism probably evolved due to selective pressures before the evolution of advanced *Homo sapiens* and involve a strong genetic component. The nongenetic and nontranscendent nature of religion indicated by its usual superficiality, along

with the minimal religiosity of some societies, including some living hunter-gatherers, plus the difficulty of assessing the presence and degree of supernaturalism in prehistory, means it cannot be presumed that intense shamanistic supernaturalism appeared before or among early *Homo sapiens*, and it was widespread before the advent of agriculture. But it may have appeared early and been common. The development of basal religion is likely to have been primarily a side effect of the human imagination that evolved as a means of inventing a variety of mental concepts and can diverge into less functional areas. The process is likely to have been facilitated by dreams, which can seem to represent a connection to nonworldly spiritual realms, and the use of mind-altering drugs that can produce the same impression even though they are actually intrabrain.<sup>101</sup> The propensity of humans to be obstinate in their opinions regardless of whether they are justified further facilitates supernaturalism. Considering the strength of these effects, it is the minimal religiosity of some hunter-gatherers—rather than the emergence of religion—that is rather surprising, and it verifies that religious devotion is not the human autodefault mode. Because it cannot be presumed that all prehistoric peoples were religious and believed in an afterlife, and because the actual distribution of religiosity and violence among them cannot be assessed and correlated, it is not now and is unlikely to ever be practical to determine the relationship between religion, homicide, and war prior to 10,000 BP. It cannot be determined whether supernaturalistic thinking encouraged or discouraged prehistoric strife, or if it conferred an advantage or disadvantage in combat. Studies that come to strong conclusions on these matters probably go beyond the recoverable data. Because religion lacks a strong genetic component, its evolution as a powerful force of social cohesion in a survival, including military, context is improbable at best and studies that conclude otherwise are probably errant. The nonuniversality of war in human cultures and the rarity of homicide indicate they too are not genetically programmed (Kelly, 2000) and are more similar to art and writing than to language and materialism. It remains possible that the higher propensity for males to engage in violence involves a genetic component.

As history comes onto the human scene, assessing and correlating faith and violence becomes more practical. The combination of widespread religiosity in early agricultural and civilized peoples with substantial levels of homicide and war leaves no doubt that mass polytheism did not come close to solving the violence and brutality problem, to the detriment of the godly-religion socioeconomic hypothesis. This was true even though most polytheistic cults were relatively tolerant of other sects. Most of the wars appear to have been struggles over territory, resources, and slaves. Polytheistic doctrines did not promote nonviolent worldviews to the degree necessary to dramatically suppress or prevent these wars and murder, and the tendency of a given people to believe that their gods are better than the other's gods can facilitate conflict. The development of the Roman Empire is an interesting case because not only did the Romans not wage aggressive war on religious grounds, but they even adopted the gods of one of the peoples they conquered. An example of a polytheistic religion leading directly to wars occurred in middle America, where doctrines required the capture and sacrifice of enemy persons for what were considered urgent theistic purposes. The Aztecs developed this system to such an extreme degree that surrounding client states were maintained as targets for annual campaigns purely to capture thousands of victims each year (Hassig, 1988). Khan was a devout animist (Weatherford, 2004), and his conquests were driven in part by a feeling of religious unity and perhaps superiority even though the polytheist was religiously and intellectually tolerant. The many tens of millions killed by the Mongol conquests demonstrates the potential lethality of polytheistic wars. The even greater numbers lost in the Chinese civil wars in the 700s, 1600s, and 1800s shows the same for their less supernaturalistic culture. The most recent expression of mass war caused by polytheistic racism was the attempt by Japan to conquer China and the rest of Asia; such a strategically impossible effort seemed justified only on the premise that the Japanese were divinely special and protected.<sup>102</sup> East Asian societies are often racist, many banning immigration in order to maintain ethnocultural homogeneity and discriminating against internal minorities that have. Many polytheistic societies were tolerant of or required torture, draconian punishments, and human sacrifice, including of children, in some cases.

Buddhism is interesting because in its original and most basic form it is a nonsupernaturalistic philosophy. It and some Hindu sects have developed pacifist philosophies, but this is not consistent. And Hindu doctrine centers around the extremely discriminatory caste system, and the Indian polytheists have engaged in intense strife with Muslims. That peaked with the mass atrocities sparked by the independence of India and Pakistan, continued for decades in a series of wars and low grade conflict between the two nations, and is rising within

India as the Hindus majority asserts nationalist dominance over resident Muslims, as well as Christians and Sikhs.

Abrahamic monotheism did not seriously improve the human situation concerning homicide, war, torture, and slavery, but its helping suppress most infanticide may stand as the greatest antiviolence successes of the ideology. Assessing the early stages of the evolution of Abrahamism is complicated because the anthropological data contradict the wars of extreme genocidal aggression and ethnic cleansing during the unprovoked conquest of the Promised Land described in scripture (Bright, 2000). Jews were the victims of Roman aggression, but although their rebellions were justifiable, the terror tactics devised by Hebrew religious zealots were less so. Nor were the repeated revolts, driven by religious ideology rather than strategic assessment, a sound proposition because they were bound to fail and led to the permanent destruction of the temple, and the disastrous Diaspora. Upon being elevated to the top religion of the Roman Empire, Christianity failed to promote democracy, tolerance, and political individual freedom. It did the opposite by imposing a terror state, where torture, agonizing execution, chattel slavery, and weaponized anti-paganism and anti-Semitism were legal and normal. Actions against Jews included ghettoization, economic restrictions, wearing of badges of identification, and forced conversion (Carroll, 2001; Kertzer, 2001). The tradition of virulent anti-Semitism was continued by Protestants (as per Luther, 1543). The very poor socioeconomic performance of Europe when it was at its most Christian seriously undermined the Christian variant of the moral-creator socioeconomic hypothesis which Christians have generally ignored since. Matters began to change when the growth of secular mercantile capitalism in parts of northern Europe, the Netherlands especially, pressured entrepreneurial Protestants to adopt tolerance for other theobands and began to elevate general living conditions. The degree to which Christianity suppressed and/or encouraged the development of modern economics and science is controversial (Diamond, 2005; Portilla, 2022 and refs. therein; Stark, 2006); for example, it has been proposed that the cultural and political diversity resulting from the complex geographic topography of the European peninsula was the crucial factor behind the development of modernity. Others claim it was Catholicism, or more usually a more capital friendly Protestant Reformation, that were operative, although that may have been involved in a feedback system with the geography. In the end, the confession at least allowed or was unable to prevent the advances; the absence of a scriptural requirement for a theocracy may have facilitated this result.

If secular industrial-consumer capitalism rather than Christianity appeared in Roman times and obsolesced slavery, or had the Gospels strictly prohibited bondage, then enslavement would not have kept going for another two millennia, aborting deep racism against Blacks – and a major and vital Black component in American culture.

Nor did Christianity adopt nonaggressive military policies upon becoming the dominant cult of Europe. Catholic intellectuals invented the concept of “just war,” and the Papacy and Catholic nations proceeded to use the slackly defined theory to justify a series of unethical wars to their benefit. Wars between Catholics did not involve a religious dispute, but they did establish the inability of the faith to suppress warfare, further damaging the moral-creator socioeconomic hypothesis. The war against the Cathars was pure, unprovoked religious genocide encouraged by mass theft (Pegg, 2008). The eastern Crusades were religion driven on multiple levels that were interlinked. Aside from the desire to push back the aggressive Islam that was threatening Christendom and regain the Holy Lands, the operation was so strategically untenable in the long term that it could be justified only on the premise that the creator of the universe favored the Christian cause. At the beginning of the Crusades, the Pope promised eternal rewards for combatants and declared that Muslims were heathens outside the protections of the Judeo-Christian specific Decalogue (Asbridge, 2004, 2010). The first encouraged participation, and the latter allowed the use of the terror tactics that were necessary for the Crusaders to achieve their initial victories. This included the murder of the inhabitants of the Muslim and Jewish citizens of some of the cities seized and the terror inspiring practice of cannibalism on non-Christians during some sieges (Asbridge, 2004, 2010; Peters, 1971; Rubenstein, 2008). At first, eating Muslims was compelled by hunger, but it appears to have evolved into a prominent means of inspiring terror as a military tactic. Occasional assaults upon Orthodox Christians during the Crusades, including the sacking of Constantinople, were largely opportunistic. It is a comment on the moral unreliability of Christianity that some prominent mainstream followers still shamefully downplay these atrocities in favor of the necessity of the Crusades (Stark, 2009).

That the expansion of Islam was largely achieved through military conquest undermines its moral authority. An exception was Indonesia, which is predominantly Sufi. The latter is more pacific than the Sunni and Shiite sects. The notorious Hashshashin assassins proved that the faith was capable of generating extreme terror, setting an unfortunate precedent. While Islam was markedly more tolerant of Judaism and Christianity than the last was of other forms of Abrahamism, this lenience was limited with non-Muslims being second-class citizens periodically subject to abuse, and Islam has been foundationally bigoted against polytheists, apostates, and nontheists.

Significant pacifist Christian brands have evolved, Quakers and Mennonites among them, but these have been minority movements that have not precluded the frequent involvement of Christians in a long series of conflicts. The European wars of the 1500s and 1600s were largely religious, with Catholicism attempting and failing to destroy the new sects. In the theologically diverse English American colonies, religious strife, sometimes lethal, between assorted Protestants, Catholics, Jews, and Deists contributed to the new democracy being officially secular. Because the distance between the American colonies and the English crown gave the American colonists substantial experience with local democratic practices and removed the need to directly attack the monarchy, the revolution did not descend into outright terror—although atrocities did occur on both sides, especially in the southern colonies, where the conflict devolved into an often ruthless civil war. The high level of societal violence in the early American republic when it was more pious than less homicidal Europe offers further contradiction of the moral-creator socioeconomic hypothesis. In France the need to outright destroy the monarchy to prevent its return, and a lack of democratic experience, led the Deistic regime to employ extreme terror. Counterattacks by Christian elements against French secularism proved equally ruthless. As the fortunes of the Papal States waned in the face of secular modernity, the Holy See continued to employ military forces in an ultimately futile effort to prevent being reduced to a normal church (Pollard, 2005).

That slavery finally and with historical rapidity became illegal at the same time that modern economics was developing, and many ages after the advent of the Abrahamic cults, strongly indicates that finances had much more to do with the end of the system than did religion inspired abolitionism. Even taking into account religious abolitionists, belief in the enslavement friendly Bible at best tremendously slowed down the process of rendering it deeply unethical and illegal. It follows that there is no sound reason to conclude that slavery ended because of Christianity, it would still be with us today if not for amoral secular Smithian capitalism. There was no significant involvement of atheists in slavery or the subsequent Jim Crow terror; indeed, a person who publicly proclaimed his or her atheism or proevolution stance at that time and place was at risk – observe that teaching evolution was banned in a number of Jim Crow states. As late as World War II, democratic Western and other societies that were still religious remained racist to a degree that is difficult to comprehend today – albeit less so with the revival of American Christoracism of late. Blacks were largely excluded from combat duties in part due to theories of mental inferiority; African Americans who did serve were unable to utilize public facilities in the southern states that German prisoners of war could enjoy, while Japanese families were interned. The American apartheid terror state opposed by atheists as well as center-left theists was fatally undermined in a free speech democracy in which the secular science and engineering invention of television was exposing the brutality and hatred of racist Christians, forcing a number of the neoconservatives Buckley among them to abandon their previous pro-segregation positions. Afrikaner apartheid was based on Biblical Protestantism, and was defeated by a secular liberation movement headed by nonbeliever Mandela allied with liberal Christian elements.

Because scientists of the 1800s going into the 1900s were steeped in a heritage of Christian bigotry, the latter with sad inevitability contaminated the new science of human biology (Paul, 2003, 2004, 2012). It is therefore to be expected that the new pseudoscientific version of eugenics was widely adopted by Protestants, as well as some Catholics the Vatican not being entirely opposed to the practice (Gerrard, 1914; Hastings, 2010). A majority of American states adopted eugenics laws—some of those states also banned teaching evolution. It would be atheistic scientists such as Boaz and Mead whose studies of tribal peoples revealed them to be people like the rest of the species, who would start to break down western deep racism among a majority of Whites, with the likes of Gould (1981) delivering science-based blows to racism that have been verified by the remarkable uniformity of human genetics.



Even as science was showing otherwise, theology grounded racism and forced eugenics backed by pseudoscientific hypotheses and extreme conspiracy theories were developed to their most extreme in Germany by rightist Christians and neopagans (Paul, 2003, 2004, 2012; Hastings, 2010). The Nazi theology that Jews were the creations of Satan (Hitler, 1925) led to the tremendous effort to exterminate the Hebrew “race.”<sup>103</sup> The retention of anti-Semitic attitudes by the Catholic Church and many Protestant sects abetted the extreme Nazi variant (Carroll, 2001; Gellately, 2001; Paul, 2003, 2004, 2012; Phayer, 2008; Scholder, 1988; Steigman-Gall, 2003). Nazi ideology presumed that the supernatural superiority of Aryans who alone among humans had been created by the creator gave Germans the capacity to achieve enormous conquests that would have otherwise been understood as strategically impractical for a modest-sized population (Hitler, 1925; Paul, 2003, 2004, 2012) – the ability of Nordic Aryan Finns to resist the onslaught of a large Slavic Soviet army in 1940 contributed to this opinion. Far from being atheistic in origin, Nazism was the most toxic form of theism yet seen, it is not a happenstance that sections of Hitler (1925) read as a religious tract. Not understanding the danger, the Holy See directly aided the ascent of Hitler to power to maintain their tax revenues, and backed the Fascist powers in their war against Communism to the degree that American and British aid to the Soviet Union was denounced, criticism of Fascist atrocities and mass genocides was minimal while the lesser crimes of leftist forces were emphasized, and Fascist war criminals were protected after the war (Phayer, 2008). Protestant elements were often virulently anti-Semitic, and both Christian confessions exploited slave labor in Germany (Gellately, 2001; Legg, 2008).<sup>104</sup>

Since the world war the Vatican has engaged in a series of often bizarre, headlines generating corrupt collaborations with organized crime that has destabilized the Italian democracy and led to infamous murders, as well as the better known scandals involving the abuse of children.<sup>105</sup> Anti-choice Christians have put far more effort into making women who have abortions legally guilty of murder than opposing the growth of international organized crime.

The secular left used to be a leading font of terror acts in America (Burrough, 2015) and Europe, and it still produces some of that as well as some low level street protest violence against the forces of capital and racist policing. In the United States, right-wing militants who are the leading source of current terroristic violence tend to be Christians who, along with some pagans,<sup>106</sup> assaulted the capital – few atheists were involved in the Trumpian project to stage the first American coup. The ongoing strife in Africa includes extremist Christian elements such as the Lord’s Resistance Army and The Army of the Ten Commandments that have engaged in radical atrocities and rape against other Christians, Muslims, pagans, and “witches” as a standard course of action (Griswold, 2008; Henderson, 2015; Lester, 2002) – the movement against alleged witches is far broader including mainstream clerics often for purposes of exploitation (Federici & Markham-Cantor, 2023). Genocidal leaders such as Charles Taylor and Joseph Kony regularly use Christian rhetoric (Vick, 2003), and Rwanda and Congo are majority Christian (Barrett et al., 2001). Muslims have also engaged in atrocities in these conflicts (Griswold, 2008). On the global stage, the Islamic world is too economically and militarily weak to directly engage the Western powers if it wished to do so, terror elements are left to do so on a practically limited basis. Although the oil-rich Saudi Arabian monarchy itself is not extremist by Islamic standards, their funding of the strict Wahabbi sect, and Western backing of militant Muslims fighting atheist forces in Afghanistan, has encouraged the global development of extremist Islamic elements that reject socioeconomic modernity and have copied and greatly expanded upon the comparatively secular Tamil Tigers suicide terror tactics;<sup>107, 108</sup> but to date, modern Islamic terror has far from matched the scale of anticivilian terror achieved by Christians in World War II,<sup>109</sup> or now backed by the Russian Orthodox church in Ukraine. In Israel, the growth of the Ultra-Orthodox through fast reproduction and immigration from the United States has increased strife with secular Jews and complicated achieving peace with Muslims. Fundamentalism in the modern second- and third-world countries is proving so dysfunctional and sufficiently popular that it has raised concerns among those who predict a recovery of mass religiosity in coming decades (Kaufmann, 2010; Longman, 2006; Shah & Toft, 2006) as well as those surveyed by Pew (2014).

### Why isn’t Religion Working?

If there actually is a highly moral and powerful if not perfect creator power, then one could logically and reasonably expect that wide adherence to the deity’s tenets as provided via clearly written and readily

understandable scripture would be highly efficacious in producing good societal results. That the assorted religious cults have instead failed to produce sufficiently pacific results over the millennia up to current times makes it necessary to examine the moral qualities of the ideologies that about half of the world has been following. That requires taking a hard look at what a creator if any exists has wrought and written, the latter presumably by means remote.

Starting with the has wrought, the basic monotheistic doctrine that a single very potent if not omnipotent and all wise and infinitely loving deity created the world is intrinsically problematic because the state of the world we dwell in does not leave room for a benign, moral creator. As explained at length by Paul (2008, 2007/9 and in updated version in 2020 & 2021), the planet is so defective in construction that it is an often merciless death trap for immature humans, most of whom die from nonhuman causes before reaching adulthood, aborting their ability to express the free will that is commonly proposed as justifying the creator's failure to keep the dimensions of disastrous earthly events from being epic and vastly cruel in scope. Of hundreds of billions of human conceptions, only about 100 billion have survived the many perilous and deadly pitfalls of the pregnancy sans induced abortion to be born, a vast amount of wastage not explicable if a caring and careful God was in charge of the configuration of the failure prone human reproductive complex. Among those born, some 50 billion have died as children, most from a host of virulent diseases that infest the planet and commonly torture children with their weak immune systems to death, topped off by a set of horrific natural disasters including floods, tsunamis, storms, earthquakes, volcanos, droughts, famines.

Interestingly, a few Judeo-Christian theodists have tried to skirt the issue of the hellish side of Earth by arguing that an actually nonomnipotent creator is too weak to save the earthly situation (Kushner, 1981; Oord 2019). Such is far from sensible when mere mortal humans who care about the children far more than has any creator of our planet have used sanitation, vaccines and antibiotics to minimize juvenile mortality. Nor is it likely that the pathetically weak God hypothesis will garner many adherents. Instead, the scale of the greatest yet least noticed<sup>110</sup> of all human disasters is so maximal—higher juvenile losses would crash the population—that it abjectly disproves the core premise that the creator is a pro-life source of sound moral guidance, and the premise that one should not kill humans primarily because of the instructions of a God that has overseen the death of many billions of children; this is a classic example of doing what the authority figure says, not what the authority figure does. The enormous violence of a creator against the children qualifies as mass homicide and a crime against humanity, and establishes any creator as at best recklessly amoral if not as is more likely outright evil (as per the Evil God Challenge by Law (2010)). Certainly such an indifferent destroyer of children is not a source of Divine Grace. That this is true leaves it unsurprising that religion is not doing what its followers are prone to promise it can do for societal peace and success. Paul (2007/9, 2020, 2021) documents that theologians have so far failed via the classic and popular free will and other theodicies deployed to try to justify the often hellish conditions on the planet, to come close to providing plausible explanations of the toxicity of the creator's earth to multitudes of children, a subject they have studiously avoided and continue to do so.<sup>111</sup> That this irrefutable and fundamental refutation of the prosocial Good God hypothesis remains barely known, even among most atheists, reflects a serious and scandalous failure of humanity to face and deal with the obvious nonexistence of a benign creator that the mass losses of children most also neglect exposes.

While the massive maltreatment of immature humans by a creator has received far too little attention, that of the similarly vast suffering of creatures great and small has in contrast received considerable consideration as detailed by Paul (2020), showing critical failings of understanding of biology while in the process proffering what constitutes the appalling callous cruelty that afflicts those who are seeking succor from their savior whose ways are often unethically waved away as mysterious when such events are too gravely immoral to be accommodated by any who fully understand common decency.

While conditions the third planet from the sun provide the real world proof that a moral creator that humans can rely upon to build sound societies is cannot be real, scriptures whether they be divinely inspired or totally invented by humans do not improve the situation in the aggregate. Steeped in the ethically archaic, problematic and conflicted hierarchical, sociopolitical norms of the ancient times within which they were written, the Hebrew, Christian, and Islamic scriptures that still hold considerable sway over about half the global population deliver a morally mixed and contradictory message that contains gravely deep defects – note that whether the events described in the texts actually occurred is not as critical as the fact that many adherents think the texts represent the word of a deity that must not be disobeyed. The instruction that man assert dominion over the

planet has encouraged exploitative practices that have seriously degraded the environment while inspiring opposition to environmentalism, most recently regarding the Godly fossil fuel driven climate and ocean acidification megacrises – pragmatic action being further dodged with the claim that only the creator has the power to control the climate, not his mere mortal creations – and out of control spread of persistent plastic toxins into the broad environment. To that add that the planet will soon be trashed by God in the end times so no need to care for it. In the Good Book a supposed planetary flood sees a creator of extreme and ruthless violence liquidate virtually all humans of all ages – that the world’s innocent preborn and children are drowned reinforces its indifference to their comfort, safety and future free while helping set the immoral principle of collective punishment. As observed below alleged events subsequent to the super flood implies that the new human population was rapidly segregated into races of intrinsically differing characteristics.

Judaism sets a problematic principle by claiming that a global creator deity considered only a specific ethnic group to be special while it largely dismissed the importance and safety of other peoples.<sup>112</sup> The nonhistorical freeing of the Jews from bondage was not a broad call for banning enslavement altogether, being only specific to Jews being held by nonJews. The Decalogue did not ban war even aggressive, slavery, autocracy, repression of speech, sexuality or other religions, collective punishment, torture, or most violations of human rights.<sup>113</sup> Because the commandments were an exclusive covenant between the God of the Jews and observant Hebrews, the latter were free to mistreat peoples who are nonobservant. So Moses was justified in having those who had returned to worshipping a pagan deity slaughtered for doing nothing more than expressing their religious liberty<sup>114</sup> – consider that had Abrahamic scripture banned slavery, the sect probably would not have gained traction. Far from being prolife, the Biblical uberdeity instructs the supernaturally privileged Israelites to wage optional unprovoked merciless wars of conquest involving ethnic cleansing via terror and total genocide of all ages and pregnant again in accord with an apathy towards immature deaths (Niditch, 1993; Hartung, 2012; although the historical accuracy of the conquest of the Promised Land and other mass atrocities is dubious; Bright, 2000).<sup>115</sup> The common belief that the Hebrew deity banned human sacrifice is errant (Rubenstein, 2010), such occurring with its approval in the text.<sup>116</sup> Written exclusively by men who promoted a hardline, patriarchal, autocratic arid lands religion, Abrahamic scriptures are deeply misogynist, women being the property of their fathers and then husbands under draconian and often violent societal regulations (Hartung, 2012), or their owners if enslaved.<sup>117</sup> Precluding the gender equality that is critical to societal success (Paul, 2018; Pinho-Gomes et al., 2023; WBG, 2022), the concept that men are the source of societal and familial authority is sociological inanity proven by the dysfunctions and violence often perpetuated by men. That Abrahamic patriarchy overempowers men at the expense of women leaves the latter more vulnerable to oppression and worse from the former. The Jewish and Christian texts strongly endorse the slavery common to the time, including permanent chattel enslavement enforced by up to lethal violence in. It does so in a discriminatory ethnoreligious manner, Jews being instructed to not hold other Hebrews in permanent bondage, but were allowed to do so with nonJews, and the Jesus character does not call for an end to bondage. An array of tenets proffered in Abrahamic scriptures are one way or another enforced by threats of violence and death, with the ultimate expression of abusive retribution being unrelenting torture in the Christian hell. The Bible’s chronic fear factor stems from being composed in antiquated societies in which intolerance and violence up to death were a regular means of dealing with perceived difficulties, so the volume is not able to provide the formula for peaceful national societies. Not being universal, the peace offered by the Bible and Quran is the impractical and discriminatory ideological peace of extreme conformity in which strife will cease only when all agree with the one correct creed.

That the modern Christianity that has often and on occasion justifiably been touted as a force for enlightened tolerance and progress can in major part sink to levels of dissoluteness that just a few years ago was commonly assigned only to medieval style expressions of Islam, should not be surprising in view of the primary Christian text that is the most widely read expression of moral relativism commonly sinking to deep depravity. According to some interpretations the Jewish commandments apply to observant Christians but not to heathens. While more universal than Judaism, Christianity deems only those who join the clique as worthy of benefits in the eyes of God. The calls for love and brotherhood in Christianity are only in the context of those who adhere to the demands by the Jesus character for compliance, neither Judaism nor any other sects or atheism are considered legitimate. He cites the death of the opponents of kings as a warning against disbelievers. Christ specifically denies having come to Earth to bring peace in favor of encouraging societal

divisions possibly violent, and familial strife. In accord with that promise, rather than deploying peaceful means as per Gandhi or King to protest the monetary exchange system at the temple, the Jesus of the gospels fashions a nonlethal terror weapon in order to commit an unprovoked violent hate crime against nonviolent fellow citizens at a religious site.<sup>118</sup> Jesus endorses the socially normal personal carriage of lethal weapons by his entourage.<sup>119</sup> An item the Christian Bible cannot be charged with is advocating free market Spencerian/Randian capitalism that Prosperity Christianity proclaims that it does, the work varying between feudalistic and socialistic, but the latter described in the Christian testaments is contaminated because it is enforced by the death of Christians who fail to comply. The most sinister and depraved section of the Christian Testaments, the over the top Revelation in which Jesus is a vengeful warrior deity who slaughters nonconformist humans via means that are egregiously cruel and barbaric, has become the apocalyptic seething core of the Christoright death cult that dreams with thrilling anticipation the after two millennia looming Jesus directed slaughter of the end times that they will escape through The (nonBiblical) Rapture (Ehrman, 2023).<sup>120</sup>

Islamic scripture picks up many of the above flaws, is only partly tolerant of Judaism and Christianity, and is adamantly opposed to all nonAbrahamic sects and atheism. While not as genocidal as the Bible, mass violence is endorsed as a means of spreading the belief system.

The relativistic mixed moral messages—ranging from forgiveness, turning the other cheek, love for one's neighbor and enemy, and a merciful God on one hand, to extreme retribution and violence up to lethal, and a vengeful God on the other—contained within the archaic Abrahamic scriptures is an optimal psychological recipe for moral confusion and conflict that has been insufficiently relieved by the limited liberalizing effect of the Enlightenment upon Judeo-Christianity, which did not moderate more theocratic Islam. Although as shown herein the difference should not be exaggerated. It follows that Wright (2008) and Armstrong (2009) are overly optimistic concerning the pacific foundations and positive evolution of religion. The absence of support for democracy, tolerance, and individual liberties aborted their adoption in the Christian world for millennia, and has facilitated draconian inquisitorial style policies adopted by atheist powers. In view of multitude of flaws of scripture, it is to be expected that they have so often delivered suboptimal societal results.

Among the deficient factors that contributes to the suboptimal outcomes is the Christian version of love they love to proclaim they are all about. Their version of amity, especially on the Christoright, is problematic. It is the dysfunctional possessive cloying love, such as it is, of often forced conformity and compliance in which Christians believe they know what is divinely best for those who foolishly do not adhere to their branch of Jesus adulation. This intolerant yet urgent form of love compels many Christians impose their views on others, sometimes by draconian means. Thus burning heretics and witches at the stake for their own good, and forcing pregnant women even nonChristians to give birth.

Because they are practiced by billions, evangelical Christianity and Islam are much larger factors regarding global ills than the mere few million Jews who are not trying to pull others into their religion. The venom directed towards Jews by significant numbers of Christians and Muslims is correspondingly hypocritical defamatory projection. Such is similar to how the conservatives are charging secular liberals including grooming LGBTQ with extensive pedophilia, when it is nonatheistic institutions such as the Catholic Church, Southern Baptists, and Boy Scouts that have actual documented histories of such manipulative crimes and ensuing coverups.<sup>121</sup> Such unbelievable defamatory characterization of the opposition is further necessary for Christoconservatives who loudly proclaim their righteousness and integrity the Christoright to self excuse their embrace of ethically challenged Trump, Supreme Court justices and the like that they have chosen to embrace for base practical purposes – accommodating the run of the mill improprieties of Trump is more palatable if a theocon believes he is battling the far worse crimes of the vast satanic secular QAnon cult. Aside from the Abrahamism billions follow, the impossibility of a benign creator also applies to monotheistic Deism and to pacific Bahaism.

In the wakes of the wave of major terrorist action by extremist elements of Islam against western targets, and hyper oppression of fellow Muslim by the likes of ISIS, it became common to condemn Islam for remaining reactionary archaic in comparison to a more modernized Christianity that had been reformed by the Enlightenment. Support for this thesis is found in World Values Surveys that find the residents of Muslim countries are prone to be much less tolerant of other religions than are those dominated by other cults. But the positive comparison of Christianity to Islam has been seriously undermined by the fast expanding alliance between the Christian nationalist/populist right and autocratic elements in White nations, where the Christian

right has become so toxic that it constitutes a death cult that parallels that of hardline Islam. During the Obamacare debate over using large scale government funding to dramatically expand health care coverage, the largely theoconservative hard right opposition opposed the formation of mythical “death panels” that would approve eugenics against the elderly, that myth being politically convenient at the time.<sup>122</sup> Since then many red states have refused to accept related Federal monies to cover more low income persons, boosting the state’s death tolls that are already generally higher than in blue states.

During the Covid pandemic many of the same theoconservative flipped their concerns over elder life saying that those who had lived their lives should accept an elevated death rate to facilitate younger persons enjoying their God given freedoms from government medical mandates such as wearing masks. Theocons are showing little concern that forced birth laws are requiring women to maintain a pregnancy that has been diagnosed as terminal and dangerous until the mother is gravely ill before the pregnancy can be terminated at the last moment to save her life, it sometimes being too late to achieve the latter. As it becomes increasingly obvious that the progun theory that more guns will suppress rates of societal violence is not working, some Republicans including elected officials have taken to saying that the death toll including those of children should be accepted in order to maintain God given gun freedoms (Shapero, 2023). There has been acceptance up to enthusiastic of violent up to lethal vigilantism and problematic police conduct by White conservatives against minorities and progressives. Republican politicians are featuring and firing guns, often at liberal targets, in some cases seemingly killing persons, in their campaign ads and public Christmas cards. Such violence and homicide encouraging ads are not being offered by Democrats, or in other democracies were such is seen as evidence of societal degeneracy. The propensity of those on the hard right to call for the death of their opposition – including inadequately complicit GOP vice president Pence on 1/6/21 – echoes the death to disliked person chants common to Islamic crowds.

A leading component of the antidemocratic repressive forces on the rise in democracies (Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018; Bardhan, 2022) is the religious right, that being true in Hindu, Buddhist, Islamic, Jewish, and Christian majority nations. In Europe for instance the autocratic right often sites its defense of Christian values, even in countries where few are observant Christians (Barigazzi, 2021). That brings us to the fact that in western nations the right wing often has a substantial nontheistic component, including libertarians who are typically atheists in the tradition of Spencer, Hayek, Rand, Wilder-Lane (Woodside, 2016), Friedman and the Koch brothers. As part of the general demographic secularization a fast growing and significant portion of the western right is not strongly religious, although they are not atheists (Byler, 2023; Putman and Campbell, 2010).

The most egregious expression is of the lethal reactionary anti-Enlightenment death cult nature of a substantial portion of 21<sup>st</sup> century Christianity is Russia, with the enthusiastic backing of the leadership of the Orthodox Church – a major mainstream institution, not a radical fringe element – and a reChristianized population, launched an unprovoked, full scale, culturally genocidal and ethnic cleansing invasion of Ukraine involving extensive war crimes. Because the church is imbedded in a major power with access to weaponry far in excess of what Islamic extremist groups can tap into, the threat posed by militant Christianity out-scales that of hardline Muslims. War advocates have called for acceptance of early death in combat, sometimes with the promise of a speculative heavenly reward. An overarching justification for the invasion is an expungement of western cultural modernity and liberty in favor of a traditional, drab Christian autocracy. The popular premise – held by those from the hard Christoright to atheists (as per Dawkins, 2006; Harris, 2006; Maher, 2008; Warraq, 2011) – that unEnlightened Islam poses a greater threat to planetary peace and wellbeing than does Christianity tamed by modernity has been significantly undermined. A reason for the brazen warmongering of the church is its desire of the Russia wing under power hungry Kirill to recapture the breakaway Ukrainian branch.<sup>123</sup> With the first major war in Europe since the last one with its large religious component, the extent of the lack of enlightened tolerance of large wings of Christianity has been fully exposed.

As has the continued inability of more modern Christian brands to do anything about it. There have been condemnations by major elements of Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant leadership against the Russo-Orthodox war of conquest, but compared to the determination albeit incompetent of the Putin/Kirill alliance – the actual non/religious opinions of the first have not been documented – the protestations have been meek and ineffectual. To have any possibility of success would require firm and dramatic action by the churches of Europe, such visiting as prominent leaders visiting the Ukrainian side of the frontlines, and/or a forced flight

of top clergy to Moscow demanding an audience with Putin and Kirill, and air time on Russian media to make clear the depth of divine opposition. Such might not succeed, but the churches would at least have made a brave effort. Which they have not bothered to do, in part because they are putting priority in not sundering intrachurch relationships.

Theoconservatives are susceptible to being enticed to follow the hard, dark, autocratic side of Abrahamic tradition because sociopsychological research shows that conservatives are often prone to hierarchical, authoritarian thinking in the first place (Clifton & Kerry, 2022; Kandler et al. 2016). The ancient scriptures devised by such men reinforces the attitude by giving traditionalists the seeming authority of virtuous divine instruction. This compels the theoright to brazenly ignore reality when it serves their purpose. As per when they claim that God creates only males and females and does not tolerate other sexualities, that when the human reproductive complex it supposedly devised produces a few hundred thousand each year with ambiguous genitalia. In Turkey the author of the anti-LGBTQ illiberal quasidemocracy is reelected by supporters who believe he is best qualified to repair the economy his aberrant policies have wrecked. Hitler retained large support from Protestant=Catholic Germans until the end (Gellately, 2001). That a large portion of the population is apparently drawn towards the irrational autocratic side of power illustrates why theoconservatism and its associated ills remain so prevalent.

But while the religious center-left share many social and often economic interests with secularists as well as disdain for the theoright, theoliberalism itself suffers serious dysfunctions that must not be swept under the rug of cultural-political convenience and correctness. When theoliberals contend often vehemently that the creator Jesus included clearly is an entity of tolerance and love who favors their brand of modernist policies (as per Chilcott, 2017; Cleveland, 2021; Hedges, 2009; McLennan, 2010; Walker, 2023) – often cheery picking those scriptural passages they prefer the Sermon on the Mount being common among Christian – they are merely expressing an opinion that is no more scripturally viable than are the counter opinions of theoconservatives who have plenty of texts to cherry pick to support their view of the hardline right wing creator. The views expressed by the Jesus character are so diverse that it is not possible to determine his sociopolitical nature. All Christians are cafeteria Christians in that they pick and choose which items in scripture and nature they prefer sweep the rest under the rug of convenience. It is all a tossup of opinions passed on supernaturalistic speculations that cannot be verified unless a creator does the sensible and necessary thing and shows up and clearly states its intents. That said, scripture is not the biggest difficulty with theism.

The core defect with all popular religions<sup>124</sup> is that they are intrinsically morally defective reward versus punishment schemes because the top goal of adherents is a self-focused desire to receive divine boons and not penalties in exchange for doing whatever the creators demands, the practices of the divinity not being subject to challenge no matter how unethical they are, including overseeing the torturous deaths of tens of billions of children, or their slaughter by genocidal godly soldiers, or creator endorsed slavery, or suppression of other belief systems. Religions are self-help programs in which clients are trying to cut the best deal they can with a creator they imagine holds all the power cards. The customary claims by theists that they are search of the tapping into the spiritual side of their lives is a romantizing cover intended to put an appealing gloss onto what is actually an attempt to improve one's life and/or afterlife circumstances via a large scale promotional religious industry– this can be verified in a large mainstream bookstore by examining the religion section in which shelf after shelf features self-improvement tomes often produced by specialized theopublishing houses that explain how connecting with God or some version of spirituality will make a person's life better psychologically and materially (Alaina, 2021; Miller, 2021; Morris, 2014; Oord, 2019; Osteen, 2020, 2022, Peale, 1952; Warren, 2002)<sup>125</sup> – religious books focused on improving the world we live in are comparatively scarce.

Religion is a business selling an attractive personal product. That is reinforced by how evangelicals on the street, at the door, or on broadcast ask nonbeliever if they want to be reunited with loved ones after death, or enjoy the eternal paradise, not how they owe fealty to their creator – they know the latter is not an effective mode of recruiting. Much or most of prayer is petitioning for pre and post death services. Those of religion who are committing personal or prosocial (as per Norenzayan & Shariff, 2008; Norenzayan, 2010) acts that are not to their immediate advantage are looking towards a pay back of some form at some point, like a person gambling their monies. Ergo, theists are indulgent self-aggrandizers unable to make a true and altruistic moral choice lest that put their divine rewards at risk (Paul, 2021). If a believer believes they are instructed to commit an iniquitous act by their supposed creator, then they have no choice but to do so even if they recognize to at

least some degree the immorality of the action. Thus all the waving away of the barbarities of scripture and our world and the desperately convoluted efforts to excuse them by theists from hard right through moderate mainstream to tolerant left. As per the person whose family has survived the tornado despite the house and finances being wrecked thanking the all powerful God that either sent the force of destruction or at least did not stop it in the first place, and never minding that the family a couple doors down was agonizingly killed. Or how many Ukrainians seek the comfort of their Orthodox creator that did not deem it wise to stop the Russian Orthodox from conducting the terrible war. Every day about 15,000 children die from diseases and accidents. Christians commonly claim special love and care for children, and that God shares that compassion. According to classic Christian dogma God could instantly put a stop to the daily mass wastage via a miracle of the sort the Gospels credit his Jesus third of. If so then Christians should inform God that they will cease seeking his boons until he saves all the world's children. But they cannot do that because that would abort their project to receive aid and comfort on earth and a pleasant eternal life in God's Utopia project. So Christians collaborate with God by not doing the most moral thing that according to their particular doctrine would most effectively preclude premature suffering and death of innocents. The worldly wastage is worth the seeking the celestial rewards.

This reality is richly ironic. Many theists, especially traditionalists, wax in righteous condemnation against the self-indulgent Me-ism they charge against nontheism, with particular venom against the counterculture Me sensibilities of secular hedonistic materialistic consumerism. They claim they are following a selfless greater calling from a creator with the intent of seeking the truth to how to led a moral, purposeful life. That when the critical truth they and the religious business that haven interest in truth dodge is that the said creator has overseen the deaths of countless children. In their desperate search for gifts from God theist are expressing a level of narcissistic, self-benefitting and hedonistic – there is nothing more hedonistic than aspiring to an idyllic eternal paradise – Me-ism that nontheists cannot aspire to, and correspondingly strips theists of moral authority or credibility. There is no altruism nor noble virtue nor honor no moral purpose in trying to get benefits from a deity that by the abundant evidence lacks any of those attributes and whose actions constitute evil. Simple atheism is amoral, most or all religions are intrinsically immoral. Whatever the ethical flaws of nontheism, theism is trapped in a much worse moral corner.

It is not just assertion, it is a matter of hard statistics, with survey data affirming that Christianity is focused on the self, not on the actual altruism aimed at helping others rather than self that a vast body of literature claims good Christian do (as per Williams, 1986). PRRI (2023) found that most AmeroChristians do not believe their churches should focus on social activism, their self-focused personal project of getting to heaven being the priority. And most of those – largely progressive liberals – who think churchly social work are also worshipping the child killing creator in hope of receiving gains. The large scale charitable giving and work pushed and conducted by many Christians increases their personal status earthly and possibly heavenly. Nor did the Jesus character conduct altruism as dogmatically asserted by allowing his crucifixion because – being part of the Holy Trinity – he was seeking to expand the numbers of those who would praise his supernatural ego in divine paradise. The Christian industry has succeeded over thousands of years via a massive self-promoting propaganda campaign in convincing a great portion of the population that the noble term altruism does not mean what it means – giving aid without any anticipation of recompense – into the gross distortion that receiving divine rewards in exchange for good works is altruistic. This is a premiere example of the corruption of billions of minds.

It follows that according to doctrinal ideology, in order to obtain rewards a follower of God must obey all his orders, including instructions to kill or otherwise abuse innocent persons as purportedly occurs in scripture and definitely occurs in nature. So those who believe they have received an order that they have no choice to not obey from their munificent creator have no moral agency or freedom, and the aspiration for a heavenly gift promised by Christianity and Islam therefore precludes true altruism. The anti-Christian Twain (1962, 2010) exposed this critical moral defect when the God-fearing Finn commits true altruism by declining the reward of heaven in exchange for eternal torture – “All right, then, I'll go to *hell*” – in order to do the right thing for his enslaved friend Jim (Twain, 1884).<sup>126</sup> Actual altruism simply cannot occur in the presence of a reward. This dysfunction is at its worst among theoconservatives who are prone to believe in and execute barbaric doctrines, such as draconian scriptural tales, harsh societal intolerance, suboptimal social policies, aggressive wars, and

atrocities. But even far more tolerant moderate-liberal sects are still waving away the dark side of divine scriptures they prefer to ignore, and the cruelties of our planet.

The religious center-left is further contributing to the religion problem because they are normalizing supernaturalism in general, which enables the conservative variants. Theoliberals are prone to deride the supernaturalism of theoconservatives, but the irrationalism of the first facilitates that of the right – if it is societally acceptable to believe in a Son of God with liberal sensibilities, then that becomes just one supernatural possibility, leaving conservatives free in a supernaturalism saturated culture to claim that their brand of paranormalism is at least as plausible, supernaturalism being a sound ideology according to the majority.

The theopolitically incorrect reality that most wish to shirk– including many nontheists – is that when religious people from left to right act morally as occurs a good deal of the time, it is often despite their religion. This has had the real world consequences documented herein that preclude religion from making earthly circumstances as optimal as possible.

So, because the biblical commandment against killing does not apply to nonbelievers, the Pope felt justified in declaring Muslims outside its protection, increasing the rapaciousness of the Crusades to the point of cannibalism. The story of Ham and other discriminatory policies in the Bible and Quran have contributed to bigotry on racial, ethnic, and religious grounds up to modern times, to the degree that the early scientific community retained the bias, and some creationists of late describe the races on blatantly prejudiced grounds (Braterman, 1975; Conney, 2019; Custance, 1975; Morris, 1991; Trott & Lippard, 2003). The scriptural support for slavery allowed and encouraged its retention among Jews, Christians, and Muslims to the beginning of the modern era, resulting in a massive American war. The Christianized American south remains steeped in neoracism (Wallace et al. 2014). The charge by Jesus in the Gospels that Jews are the children of Satan, the Gospel portrayal of Jews as his killers, and the violent side of the Jesus story were integral to the development of the Aryan Deutsch Christianity that evolved into Nazism. In this interpretation of scripture, Christ was an Aryan warrior sent by God to combat the Jews.<sup>ii</sup> Even mainstream Bible scholars cite the whipping delivered by Jesus at the Temple as an example of why violence is sometimes necessary (as per the commentary in Shelley et al., 1994), despite the lack of sufficient provocation in the Gospel story. The militant, anti-infidel, theocratic aspects of the Quran, exacerbated by the absence of an Islamic Enlightenment, form the basis of suicidally extremist Islam. Citing the possession and use of private arms by the companions of Christ, the American religious right promotes the saturation of American society with firearms as per “God, guns and the Bible,” leading to extraordinarily high murder and suicide rates. Hindus persist in running a caste system and oppressing Muslims whose religion disrespects pagans.

Turning to the psychology of the daily lives of contemporary ordinary citizens, the extreme death toll of immature humans guts the thesis that the creator is truly opposed to murder, and God-ordained violence in the Bible is so intense and extensive that experimental exposure appears to elevate levels of aggression in the manner of violent media (Bushman et al., 2007). The repeated use of extreme personal and mass violence to address various problems in the scriptures may have enabled and encouraged Christian “honor cultures” that demand extreme retribution for even trivial slights (Brown & Osterman, 2012; Dray, 2003; Cooney, 2019; Ehrman, 2008; Ellison et al. 2003; Grasmick et al., 1992; Messner & Zevenbergen, 2005; Neapolitan, 1997; Niditch, 1993; Nisbett & Cohen, 1999; Wyatt-Brown, 1986). The results of Jensen (2006) support the hypothesis that populations that follow a conservative “malevolent” theology centered on battling Satanic forces are prone toward higher levels of homicide than are followers of less fear-based, more “benevolent” doctrines. Bible-based juvenile corporal punishment (Dobson, 2014) appears to contribute to a tendency toward violence in adult years (Sege, 2018). The warrior nature of God’s followers in the Bible is used to oppose gun control in murderous America (Paul, 2009c, 2012, 2023).<sup>iii</sup> Hood et al. (1986), Scheepers et al. (2002), and Hall et al. (2010) find that higher levels of conservative religious practice are associated with elevated levels of racial and ethnic prejudice.

The concept that there is but one god of salvation compels insufficiently enlightened Islam to continue to impose harsh punishments on alleged critics of the faith via antiblasphemy laws, and to direct threats and attacks upon those who fail to exhibit demanded respect. Scriptural injunctions against homosexuality fuel homophobia et al. One result is massive and increasing oppression of LGBTQ by evangelicals and Muslims in Africa; egged on by American evangelicals who encourage making nonheterosexuality a capital offense



(Okereke, 2013) Hard-line Islamic patriarchy justifies extreme of oppression of women. Although less harsh, the patriarchal nature of traditional evangelical marriage contributes to high levels of violence and instability (Bennett, 2007), and conservative religious values do not appear to suppress uses of pornography that sometimes is violently misogynist to levels as low as those with more liberal views (Edelman, 2009; Perry & Whithead, 2020). Long term research indicates that the Biblically inspired abstinence-only sex education programs are not as efficacious in reducing adverse consequences of sexual activity as the less traditionalist, more pragmatic, protection-emphasizing programs directed toward European youth (Finer, 2007; Mark & Wu, 2022; Panchaud, et al. 2000; Paul, 2009b, 2012; Santelli et al., 2017; Singh & Darroch, 2000; Wellings et al., 2006), and Rosenbaum, (2009) and Strayhorn and Strayhorn (2009) explicitly demonstrate a link between high levels of theoconservatism and unintended pregnancy. The nonscriptural Christoright desire to stop abortions by making it murder subject to harsh punishments – in El Salvador women who are caught after performing an abortion on themselves are imprisoned for homicide – is likewise bound to disappoint because the procedure is common regardless of whether or not it is legal (Paul 2022a; Sedgh et al. 2007; Shah & Ahman, 2009; Singh et al. 2018).<sup>127</sup> The actual intent of the forced birth movement being an integral part of the campaign by the American religious right to use government power to reimpose traditional Christian mores on the sinfully recalcitrant American secular majority (Paul, 2022a).

Powerful elements of the American religious right have strategically focused on promoting a series of what they claim are scripturally based wedge issues rather than effectively addressing social ills, Covid being the latest example (Bartkowski et al. 2023; Phillips, 2006; Putman & Campbell, 2010; Weisman & Cooperman, 2006). The broad, historically regressive ideology of these theoconservative forces is designed to overturn the New Deal and subsequent socialistic embellishments in favor of deregulated business (to the degree that some red states are reallowing exploitative child labor even under abusive conditions; Oreskes, 2023) combined with enhanced corporate and wealthy class power (including unrestrained campaign funding), reduced taxation (especially for the wealthy) in association with deunionized, free market, libertarian economics, suppression of voting by nonconservatives (which falls most heavily on ethnoracial minorities), and minimalist government that maximizes individual economic freedom, responsibility, and risk (despite the absence of Biblical support for laissez faire capitalism), that while imposing social conservatism on the population. On the political stage this Grand Project is being conducted under the aegis of the Republican Party which has evolved into a peculiar alliance of convenience between socially conservative theists mainly but not entirely Christian mostly Evangelical Protestant, largely secular corporate powers, and libertarians who are often atheists, each collaborating when interests often but by no means always coincide, As a result, the incoherent religious right that is the main opponent to Darwinian science and to socialism has become a leading proponent of socioeconomic Darwinism despite the promotion of socialism in the Biblical descriptions of the first Christian communities – an amazing contradiction that has gone largely unnoted and intellectually under exploited by the center-left. As an adjunct to privatization, religious conservatives are promoting the displacement of socialistic government services with relatively inefficient faith-based charities that have the advantage to organized theism of increasing its outreach into the general population.

Not only can the tragedy of Nazism not be attributed to nontheism, but the socioeconomic component of both nationalist socialism as well as Communist doctrine is not atheistic since the concept of socialism enforced by the fear of lethal retribution first appeared in the Gospels as the ideal form of Christian community, aka Christocommunion. Even so, irreligious dictatorships have proven capable of committing mass violence comparable to the record of theist powers. This is not surprising in that both atheism and theism are morally neutral—gods or the one God can be as bad as they can be good. Although the absence of belief in a moral deity can allow depravity, the ideological belief in a “purposeful” deity that is perceived to be moral even though it cannot be so can be even more dangerous because of the supernaturalistic justification, requirements, and rewards the latter imparts. For example, because a nontheist is a moral free agent not beholden to power whose demands cannot be refused, they are free to pledge to obey all laws banning the murder of children and refuse instructions from a higher authority to the contrary. Because a monotheist derives all his or her moral authority from his or her proposed creator and is depending upon the deity for boons, he or she cannot refuse his or her god’s instructions to harm innocents, as per the Israelites killing the children of the people’s they were ethnically cleansing. The absence of absolutist supernatural justification may help explain why the mass Communism of the Soviet bloc faded with remarkably little trouble and considerable speed. Conversely, the

perception of godly compulsion and an eternal paradise in exchange for ardor is probably reinforcing the hardline stance of fundamentalists whose religiosity would be less intense or absent if not for dysfunctional circumstances.<sup>iv</sup>

A telling truth is that the general reduction in human violence (Pinker, 2011) has occurred at the same time that atheism has been waxing at the expense of theism.

### The Religion Immunity Factor and Hypocrisy

Theism is inherently insecure on a personal and societal basis in that, in the glaring absence of any deities showing up, it is provisional opinion to the degree that most if not all religions must be false they being critically contradictory. A thousand years ago being a Christian in Europe was not a stretch in that atheism was hardly extant, but other religions such as Judaism, Islam and assorted pagan sects meant that Jesus worship was an option open to challenge rather than the one known fact. Large portions of populations prefer to defend their views whether they are well substantiated or not, and power systems often benefit from protecting such views when it facilitates their hold over said populations. In view of its vulnerability many religions, both separately and as a collective element, have skillfully set up the self protection scheme of theopolitical correctness, in which it is widely considered inappropriate to too sharply and worse too accurately if at all criticize a persons' or society's religious beliefs. The contention is that the divine sensibilities of the pious are delicate and are not to be seriously challenged lest they be unduly perturbed in their sincere opinions, and/or the true god/s be offended. The actual intent is to so suppress analysis and reproach of divine supernaturalist beliefs that adherents are protected against learning enough to change their mind. At one extreme this is achieved via blasphemy laws and social conventions that can result in death by state or lynching. But often it is much less dramatic than that, to the degree even nontheists may not notice its subtle but pernicious power in hindering freedom of discourse. For example on a popular National Public Radio interview program, when the liberal and probably atheist host gently challenge a point made by a liberal theist guest discussing his new book on spirituality (Wilson, 2023), she went to urgent verbal loops to emphasize she did not mean to offend before he addressed her entirely legitimate query. In free speech societies conservatives who denounce Woke et al. as beyond the civility scale commonly denounce well founded direct challenges to their brand of theospeculations as far beyond the pale, while equating atheism with deep depravity if not Satan. But it is not just theoconservatives who are guilty of this cynical practice. Theoliberals often revel in going after the theoright, but brook little criticism from atheists for the enabling failings of their own brands of supernaturalism.

Interestingly, atheists often join in on the theopolitical correctness thesis (as per Sheridan. 2021), to the point of criticizing assertive atheists. In part this is because of concerns that atheists are commonly seen as disrespectful of theists sincerely held beliefs never mind that theists commonly are such towards nonbelievers. To a fair extent a reaction to the legacy of the aggressive Madylyn O'Hair, it is similar to the opinion that Blacks need to not be too uppity in order to maximize their progress in the context of a White majority. A problem with this position is that certain critical arguments against theism cannot help but outrage theists – that worshipping an anti-life creator who has overseen the deaths of tens of billions of children is intrinsically immoral self indulgence and gain, that the Jesus of the gospels was a man of violence and weaponry, that the Catholic Church literally put Hitler into power, that the opinion that there is a divine creator is no more valid than ancient aliens, that belief in the supernatural is child like wish fulfillment whether it involves the gods, ESP, astrology or flat earth, and that the first batch are being hypocritical when they denounce the rest of the paranormalists. Atheists deferring to theists more than they do to other poorly founded speculative thinking is in of itself hypocritical. Actually following the atheist version of the theopolitical correctness lest nontheists offend the theists to the point it may backfire – which it sometimes does – disarms the cutting edge of the rationalist argument, doing even greater damage while suppressing free discussion of truths that may, if they become better known, have the potential to accelerate the decline of theism. And efforts by some atheosecularists to instruct other nontheists that their preferred method of outreach is the one all others should and must adhere to smacks of controlling pathology. Compelling all atheist to adopt a deferential attitude towards religion is doing what the theist advocates of theopolitical correctness intend the premise to achieve. Different secularists should adopt the approaches most suitable to their own attitudes and needs – evolution

works by selective diversity, and a broad array of approaches promise to bring the best results to atheist outreach.

## Conclusions

By the turn of the century it was becoming apparent that atheosecularism was growing at the expense of theism in much of the world including the US. The demographic trends away from divine supernaturalism have since been affirmed to the growing distress of an increasingly reactionary religious business and its devotees. With the expansion of nontheism, the failure of the communistic brand of atheism, the capital friendly seeming “flattening” of the globe, and new communication technologies promising greater democratic discourse, it appeared that the world was about to enjoy improving world conditions based to a growing extent on pragmatic enlightened secular democratically selected policies. That optimistic thesis is not happening due to a mix of mass conspiracy theories spread on social media with reactionary authoritarian nativist/populist and right wing religious factions and regimes who have learned from the mistakes of failed autocracies while exploiting the propaganda potential of digital technologies. This is not entirely the fault of theism – it obvious from history that autocracy as maladaptive as it is, is attractive to large populations that feel they benefit from it (Applebaum, 2021) – but religion is often playing a critical role in its effort to retain power as its millennia long grip on societies and cultures slips due to the overwhelming organic secularizing effects of modernity.

What there is no science and analysis based doubt is that a revival of traditionalist religion is not going to result in improved societal conditions for humanity. If religion and/or a creator deity were a potent societal positive then that would be readily apparent after thousands of years of experience with divine supernaturalisms and the industry that sustains belief in the speculative. Wars would have been scarce at most, most lives long in part because childhood death would have been rare, prosperity for the masses the norm, political and cultural freedoms typical. Instead, the millennia worth of data provide no compelling body of evidence that religion is a reliable societal positive, and is often if not more often than not a negative. That is not surprising in that theism is based on speculative supernaturalistic opinion, and premises the existence of a creator that has overseen the operations of a child lethal planet. Although we will never know for certain, had theism not existed it is possible if not probable that humanity would be generally better off, there is not solid reason to conclude it would be worse off.

Dictatorships, religious or atheistic, are dangerous, and none has produced a highly successful and happy society. Nor was democracy created for religious purposes Abrahamic or otherwise; it arose out of political pragmatism among pagans. There is no evidence that patriarchal fundamentalism can produce successful societies. Only liberal democratic cultures that incorporate women’s rights can provide socioeconomic success in the context of human freedom, so the question is whether it is better to be highly supernaturalistic or nonsupernaturalistic. No strongly monotheistic or polytheistic democracy has been as successful at providing its citizens with the degree of secure middle-class prosperity and safety as have the most irreligious and progressive examples. Although the latter are not utopias, which probably cannot exist, the most atheistic democratic societies are the most successful in history. They are also the least likely to engage in unprovoked war. If, as it seems, the best cumulative socioeconomic environments invariably suppresses popular religiosity across the left-right spectrum, then it is not possible for a highly successful, pacific nation to be highly religious contrary to what appear to be the psychosociologically naïve hopes of theomoderates (such as Egginton, 2011; Hedges, 2009). That even a progressively religious country cannot succeed in that the very achievement of success will repress the religiosity no matter how enlightened and pacific it may be explains why mainline theism is as statistically tied to poor national conditions as is dysfunctional fundamentalism; the latter being somewhat more resistant to the secularization process because its reactionary nature garners adherents who resist secular modernity.

The psychoideological reasons for the exceptional social success and nonlethal nature of the least religious democracies have yet to be properly researched; it is not attributable to atheist or secular ideology, of which there is none, nor to active popular adherence to the movement of secular humanist doctrine because the effort is too limited in scale and popularity to be a major influence. The reduction of the popularity of the more dysfunctional aspects of religious ideologies may contribute to the posttheism success. The most important component may be the mere presence of benign conditions that, while suppressing mass religiosity, alleviate

anxiety. Simple salutary lifestyle practices, such as family dinners, may be as or more effective than grand ideologies to improve individual and societal function (CASA, 2003; Eisenberg et al. 2004). The promotion of the rights and participation of women in the public sphere, both private (Adler, 2001; Post et al. 2022; Stephenson, 2004) and political (Paul, 2018) is vital in view of women's ability to suppress reckless and aggressive behavior—this requirement is not religion friendly because the major sects are patriarchal. The nonreligious, pragmatic moral justifications for treating fellow humans well and fairly that work in the more secular democracies are practical reciprocity and the altruism of being good for the sake of goodness (Epstein, 2009).

The fact that progressive socioeconomic policies damage popular faith helps explain why the American religious Right is opposed to such policies as they, in Kafkaesque fashion, regularly denounce other first-world societies despite their obviously superior conditions, while proclaiming the American way as superior, despite its equally evident flaws. The best hopes for theism to remain as prevalent as possible are for most of human society to remain mired in the dysfunctional environment that popular religion requires, and for the reactionary fundamentalists that are most likely to spawn dangerous militants to reproduce as fast as their anticontraceptive doctrine allows them to. Ergo, religion cannot be the solution. It follows that if the most irreligious part of the planet, Europe, reverts to right wing autocracy whether theistic or secular then it will be doomed to backslide in its socioeconomic conditions. The ability of religion to suppress cultural secularism is dubious. The alliance of Western theoconservatives with capitalism is the unavoidable deal with the corporate devil that continues to secularize cultures, especially those of the most developed nations, while digital technologies promise to further divert youth from organized supernaturalism at a rate that threatens to overwhelm the rapid reproduction of fundamentalists.<sup>v</sup> Conversely, if humanity succeeds in further and greatly enhancing the safety and prosperity of the peoples of the world, then religion will further fade from the scene;<sup>vi</sup> if the US health complex becomes more universal then the nation's religiosity should decline.

On the scale of mass war how much a threat that theism poses is not clear, large nuclear arsenals being operated by both secular and theistic governments. The other means by which the numbers of humans killed by fellow humans can be driven to much higher levels than already seen—by hundreds of millions or billions—is via biowarfare involving the release of virulent pathogens.<sup>vii</sup> The persons likely to execute such an act are religious extremists who see all outside their narrow cult (presumably protected by a vaccine) as warranting death, and/or who wish to initiate an apocalypse. Assuming that mass bioterror is technologically practical,<sup>128</sup> religion constitutes the greatest human threat to humanity in that regard.

Although eliminating theism will not necessarily solve all the world's troubles because atheism can also decline into depravity on an individual to national basis, only the later in a secular humanist liberal democratic context has proven able to thrive in the most successful societies. That is the atheist advantage.

### Future Directions and Actions

A general need is for continued scientific investigation of the relationship between theism, nontheism, and societies, and its subsequent presentation to the global populace in the face of opposition by the religious industry, and indifference of the secular news media. To do so requires overcoming deeply set theopolitical correctness, which has suppressed research by implying that such work is offensive to the sensibilities of the religious or contradicts the demands of one or more gods. Also required is an end to the common evasion and denial of the morally flawed nature of religious dogmas, as well as further scientific investigation of the potential dangers posed by scriptures. Sociopolitical collaboration between atheists and progressive religious elements when such is likely to improve the human condition is acceptable, but this does not demand that the former not criticize the unsubstantiated beliefs of the latter. This task is facilitated by that a majority, including many theists, already realized religions do not offer sound solutions to Earthly problems – this notable truth should be utilized by atheosecularists. Among the most pressing needs is to spread the information on the mass deaths of children and the inability of theologians deal with the disaster to firmly disprove the existence of a loving creator, and off the massive losses of the preborn to do the same while undermining the forced birth movement crafted to revive misogynist traditional values. A common reaction by atheists to be overly autoskeptical that such information can be effective at changing minds is unsubstantiated and preemptively useless because the only way to find out if it broadcasting the dreadful statistics will work or not is to do so

and see what happens – the only legitimate concern about whether to spread information novel or otherwise is whether it is true or not. The news about the Holocaust of the Children is part of a larger project to inform theists that the religious doctrines they adhere to are not moral, and that worshipping a deity that has overseen such a disaster and other items in hope of benefits is seriously unethical and to be avoided.

On the positive side of atheist outreach there is the opportunity for further research on how nontheistic inhabitants of the highly secularized democracies are living lives and running societies successful or not in the absence of popular organized religion. Hypotheses on the origin and popularity of religion based on the errant premise that religion is universal and deeply set in the human mind require revision in view of the low level of supernaturalism in some hunter-gatherers and more developed cultures. Achieving the above data and analysis research and distribution requires the secular humanist community to expand support for active think tanks and a new service. The failure to do so to date has limited the outreach of the atheist movement, and may be hindering its organizational growth. Doing so may accelerate the growth of nontheism beyond the rapid pace it is already seeing, while hopefully improving the societal consequences of the rise of atheosecularism.

In the US the most urgent task is for those on the center-left to vote at a per capita rate that matches that of the conservatives. Doing so would result in the long predicted permanent moderate-progressive majority that dominates the Presidency, Congress, courts, and most state governments, limiting the reach and power of the theocratic to its shrinking demographic and cultural minority.

The kicker in the future is that AI is evolving with such rapidity that it is possible it will – as people are suddenly realizing – disrupt the core status of humanity in the not distant future. If that happens then the issues surrounding questions of human centered theism should become moot as human minds achieve immortality by actual practical technological means rather than the mere hopes of supernatural fantasies (Paul & Cox, 1996).

## Notes

1. It is the “Great War” in that the conflict was concentrated in Europe, and earlier wars such as the Seven Years (aka French and Indian War) and Napoleonic were true world wars.
2. See note 112.
3. The modus operandi of Mormon missionaries if allowed egress is to start with initially emphasizing common ground, and then ramping up pressures as matters proceed, is patterned after that of commercial politely assertive salesmen.
4. The flexibility should not be exaggerated. While all scientific results are in principle subject to falsification, some are so well documented that in practical terms they are not subject to refutation – this planet being a sphere orbiting a solar fusion reactor that is part of a galaxy that is one among hundreds of billions in an observable universe that is billions of years old being an example. At the other extreme String Theory remains speculative.
5. Being an open and objective means of investigation science has the potential to detect the existence of a supernatural creator. For example, the concept of the cosmic watchmaker would actually be supported if the solar system were meticulously laid out with perfectly circular orbits on exactly the same plane spread spaced via an obvious precision mathematical formula, and an earth year exactly 360 24 hr days, and the lunar month precisely 30 days – note that counter arguing that such would not be in accord with natural laws misses the point that such would be correspondingly potent evidence of divine creation. If organisms appeared in the fossil record in a random manner that precluded evolution, and/or genetic systems in different organisms were too radically divergent, then some form of supernatural creation would be favored if not required. If the geological record showed that the Earth was only a few thousand years old and a global flood had occurred, then the Abrahamic deity would be technically verified. The existence of a benign creator who granted all humans free will would be indicated if children possessed such remarkably effective immune systems that they were not vulnerable to death by disease.
6. This researcher in evolutionary sciences has been asked by people if it is true that aliens dispatched the dinosaurs in order to pave the way for humanity, a result of pro ancient aliens cable programming. Having

familiarity with some involved in the documentary industry, I have informed their marks that the programming is all about generating revenue, the networks and producers having not the slightest interest in telling the unappealing and poor ratings generating truth.

7. See note 112.

8. The ability to ferment alcohol in large quantities may have been a major factor driving the advent of agriculture (Paul, 2018).

9. Another downside to the early development of advanced technologies would have been the earlier defrauding on the aboriginal peoples of the Americas of their lands and freedoms, and mass mortality due to exposure to Old World diseases (Paul, 2009b).

10. See note 1.

11. Although the anti-witch panic began with the inane conspiracy theory of a Catholic (Kramer, 1486), it was soon rejected as too outlandish and draconian by the Roman Inquisition.

12. If not for Eurodiseases, and/or had the natives been able to put up a collective defense rather than often naively trying to use Europeans as allies in intertribal conflicts, the European colonization project very probably would have failed. If so the world would be a radically different place, possibly with Christianity largely limited to the eastern hemisphere if not Europe.

13. Also known as the French and Indian war, which was initiated by an unapproved small scale military action by low level Royal Army officer George Washington and lasted nine years.

14. The machine was invented earlier in Asia, but not being in the context of a self questioning culture had less impact.

15. To the aghast dismay of regular fundamentalist creationists who fear that flat earthism will besmirch their versions of theism driven pseudoscience.

16. Because the American Revolution was only trying to obtain a divorce from the remote British Crown it was not as draconian as the French project to directly overthrow their royalty.

17. Contrary to the claim by many promoters of public acceptance of evolutionary science that it is not a threat to theism. Darwinian theory refutes much or all of nearly all religions core creation stories, and eliminates the need for any creator entity, leaving theism suspect opinion.

18. Spencer's application of Darwinian biology to socioeconomics was misapplied in that the former did not fully understand the latter's science, but the basic concept that free-wheeling capitalism resembles the amoral law of the jungle that is bioevolution in many regards is valid.

19. Oord (2019) offers that the imperfect Bible is the result of a God of limited power. That a creator deity would be so constrained in its dominion that it cannot ensure its word is accurately presented is logically very problematic at best, and this view has very limited influence in Christian circles.

20. Thus a horsepower is the work that a large horse can aerobically sustain indefinitely, such as spinning a pump wheel or pulling a plow.

21. "He [King George] has excited domestic insurrections [by enslaved Blacks] amongst us, and has endeavored to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian savages whose known rule of warfare, is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes, and conditions" (Jefferson et al., 1776).

22. Some classic westerns are normative Lost Cause movies – in *Shane* (Stevens, 1953) honest southern homesteading farmers are under assault by sinister northern financed cattlemen, even though the it is the cavalier Confederate veteran who tries to murder the Yankee gunslinger. *The Searchers* (Ford & Wayne, 1956) also centers on southern pioneers, although the virulent racism of the main character leads to his exclusion from Texacan society.

23. In 1950s Las Vegas swimming pools had to be drained if a Black person swam in one.

24. Some creationist ranchers refuse to allow paleontologists, who are seen often correctly as atheist evolutionists, on their land to search for fossils.

25. Leading to "Letter From Birmingham Jail" by King (1963) directed against the largely supine American clergy.

26. The first epic film *The Birth of a Nation* of 1916, was totally Lost Cause, the next *Gone With the Wind* of 1939 was more qualified with the rebel cause portrayed as foolish and the two main characters as amoral, the 1960s *Shenandoah* was not sympathetic to the southern cause, the turn of the century *Cold Mountain* was

deeply hostile to the Confederacy, and the recent *12 Years a Slave* and *The Birth of a Nation* are explicitly anti-slavery, no major studio would imagine releasing a neoconfederate film).

27. Some of my ancestors knew Smith and made the trek to Utah, where the men had multiple wives.

28. The first Sherlock Holmes story, *A Study in Scarlet*, is a lurid anti-Mormon tract by the nontheist Doyle (1887).

29. Although his lack of piety directly denied him prominent political appointments.

30. In *Lawrence of Arabia* (Lean, 1962) the massive sound of distant British artillery inspires the Muslim Ali to make an ironic comment to Lawrence concerning the “advanced” nature of Christian western civilization.

31. That when the Russian red revolution was not even in accord with Marxist theory of an industrial working class revolution, an event which has never occurred.

32. The personally notorious Hunt inspired the E. R. Ewing character of *Dallas* (Borough, 2009; Jacobs, 1978-1991).

33. This includes Mormons, the ability of a male Latter Day Saint to become prosperous here on Earth being vital to establishing his credentials to rule over his own planet after further edification during transitory residency in the Celestial Kingdom that may or not be stationed at the planet Kolob.

34. The “Strange Fruit” performed by Billie Holiday was inspired by a 1930 lynching in Marion IN.

35. That specifically in reaction to evidence (Leuba, 1916) that attendance at universities correlated with reduced religiosity of graduates (Numbers, 2005).

36. See note 26.

37. Not that atheists have exploited this amazing historical story.

38. To wit, “The political revolution has placed German civil life upon a completely new foundation which no longer leaves any room for party-political activity... Therefore the Centre Party is disbanding... in agreement with Reich Chancellor Hitler [which gives] its supporters the chance to make their energies wholly available for the national front under the leadership of the Chancellor, for positive co-operation towards the stabilization of our national, social, economic and cultural conditions, and *collaboration* [emphasis added] in the restoration of law and order” 1933.

39. Lindbergh’s much lauded New York to Paris flight was in part intended to promote these fascistic goals.

40. Hitler paid his Catholic church taxes to the end. The scheme remains in place allowing German churches to maintain facilities well above those required by their low attendance levels.

41. Starting with the Easter 1933 joint message from the mainstream Prussian church administrations concerning Hitler’s recent rise to absolute power. “The risen Christ goes forth in Germany to a people to who God has spoken by means of a great turning point in history. We know that we are at one with all Protestant fellow believers in joy at the awakening of the deepest powers of our nation to a patriotic consciousness, to a true community of the Volk, and to a religious renewal... In the conviction that the renewal of the Volk and Reich can be achieved and secured only by these powers, the church knows itself bound in gratitude to the leadership of the new Germany. It is joyfully prepared to cooperate in the national and moral renewal of the people.”

42. To the degree that a Stalin who was convinced Hitler would not engage in a two front war he had long railed against, waved away British intelligence warnings in early 1941. The Red Army was well aware it could not up and conduct offensive operations against the Wehrmacht.

43. The absence of deep desire to impose communism on neighboring nations where it was not seen as a strategic necessity was the allowance of the continuation of the Finnish democracy after it allied with Hitler in the world war.

44. As widely neglected as it was critical, the shutdown of Japanese national transportation by mining their waters with B-29s and shooting up their railroads with fighters had collapsed their economy and defense structure. Had the atomic devices not been available Japan may have surrendered in August or September 1945 regardless.

45. At least so far, the attack by Orthodox Russia on Ukraine may herald a breakdown of such post WW2 norms that could lead to a war between NATO and Russia.

46. The USSR even ensured sufficient food to the portion of Germany it occupied, and churches in Eastern Europe were not severely suppressed lest the populations be even more antagonized than they already were.

47. Caused as much by portions of the Indian military fighting for the Japanese to the shocked dismay of the British. as to the work of Gandhi.
48. So much so that the 1966 statement by John Lennon that the Beatles and rock music were more popular than Jesus was taken as a matter of course in Europe. It later become controversial in the still theosupernaturalistic United States. The statement and other irreligious works by Lennon contributed to his assassination by born-again Christian Mark Chapman
49. The daughter of Laura Ingalls Wilder, the nonfiction writer Rose who promoted and at least edited the volumes, was an ardent libertarian who was one of the women prominent along with Rand in early Amerolibertarianism (Fields, 2021).
50. The first and sly use of the word gay in a movie to refer to homosexuals was by bisexual Cary Grant playing a dinosaur paleontologist in the screwball comedy *Bringing Up Baby* (Hawkes, 1938).
51. The Iranian theocracy had long promoted population control via contraceptives, although this has been reversed of late.
52. My Mormon grandfather his copies of the popular *Playboy* in his workshop.
53. Milner (2023) proposes that the often rebellious, antiauthority, socialist friendly, environmentalist of the highly popular films by the politically somewhat conservative Walt Disney was incidentally helping prime the baby boomers for their antiestablishment revolt.
54. As a detective in the US Army in the late 1940s my late father conducted such investigations.
55. Popular entertainers widely presumed at the time of being gay or bi included Liberace, Johnny Mathis, Little Richard and Paul Lynde.
56. Because they were produced by devout Catholic Frank Capra. A staple of grade school classrooms, these well produced films were a reason this researcher became a scientist. At about the same time I saw an animated short that ridiculed prescientific thinking.
57. See note 97.
58. The moptop fashion that was an important aspect of reformulating western culture was an accident of the world and cold wars. Because they were on the left flank of the allied forces, the British military ended up stationed in northern Germany, where the personal wanted entertainment by fellow Brits. Thus the nascent Beatles ended up in Hamburg where they were introduced to a new long hairstyle invented by disaffected, existentialist German youth.
59. *The Population Bomb* (Ehrlich and Ehrlich, 1968) and the Club of Rome (Meadows et al., 1972) backfired against the population control effort because of overly pessimistic predictions regarding long term resource availability.
60. The actual nature of the non/theism among the Tamil Tigers and how it related to persuading or compelling persons to kill themselves for political persons has been little researched, and it may remain so considering the situation. It is possible that the leaders and suicide terrorists were influenced by Hindu beliefs.
61. When I was in Warsaw in 1981 one location had only newspaper as toilet paper.
62. When I tried to place a press release regarding my debunking of a loving God due to the mass natural death of children (Paul, 2020) to Religion News Service it was rejected. Toning down the release for the followup study (Paul, 2021) resulted in its acceptance.
63. The Family Christian and Lifeway bookstore chains recently closed because of declining theism combined with online sales competition.
64. Additional evidence that Americans are not as religious as many pretend is found in the study of usually cryptic atheistic clerics by Dennett and LaScola (2010).
65. After decades of regularly sampling opinion on creation Gallup has not done so since 2019, probably because of reduced interest in a once hot topic, leaving a longitudinal demographic trend data gap. Also lost is the longitudinal Harris (2013) results on this and other aspects of non/religious opinion, the entity having been sold to a concern focused on commercial surveying.
66. The Bible literalism that was twice as popular than Bible skepticism in the 1970s is now less popular with the gap widening (Newport[Gallup], 2022).
67. At the local atheist groups I attend many attendees who freely acknowledge not being a God believing theist deny being an atheist.



68. Just how big the American minorities that favor Christonationalism/supremacy is not certain, the results on the question by Pew (2022b) and PRRI/Brookings (2023) not being coincident.
69. Among by science colleagues I have directly witnessed two evangelicals express dismay that a relation had converted to Catholicism in that the latter involves worshipping the priesthood, not Jesus.
70. As presciently predicted by Michener (1971).
71. The thesis that the Christoright paid nearly no attention to promoting forced birth prior to the late 1970s should not be overplayed, in 1976 the Republican platform was anti-abortion and the Hyde Amendment was passed.
72. Also weaponized via flippant scaremongering by the reviving right wing was the treaty to turn over the Panama Canal to Panama. Since then the canal has not fallen into the hands of communists and has been expanded.
73. While they are striving to take the US legally back to the 1800s and early 1900s in many regards, the bulk of the theoright is not intending to return to the full blown cultural traditions prior to the Great War, such as heavy dress and women riding side saddle. Most theoconservatives are too attracted to modernist hedonism to do that.
74. Although some progressives and minorities are now gunning up.
75. My late father was prone to citing the latest scare theme from FoxNews when I visited him once or twice a year.
76. In a full disclosure that illustrates modern complexities, I have received monies in exchange for paleoart involving the fossil halls at the American Museum of Natural History funded by David Koch.
77. A personal example of the severely damaging lack of strategic discipline on the center-left compared to the right guided by the Federalist Society is the self-indulgent refusal of the elderly, frail, probably nontheist Ruth Bader Ginsberg to resign when Democrats held the presidency and Senate in 2013/4 that contributed to the overturning of her liberal judicial legacy and RvW.
78. That the center-left supported the bad boy Baptist Bill Clinton weakens their criticism of the theoright's often enthusiastic embrace of Trump. But it is that theoright that chronically claims moral superiority based on divine principles while proving unwilling and unable to hold to them in these times of temptations modern and old.
79. A Supreme Court vote supporting minority voting rights may indicate the majority is not as extreme hard right as presumed.
- 80 The US. Congress dominated by JudeoChristians is declining to investigate the Scouts even though it has a Congressional charter (Kelly, 2023). I have concerns that my brother who became a sociopath was abused while in the organization. Perhaps an incidental benefit to atheist boys considering the frequent pedophilia of generally theist adult leaders has been the persistent failure of atheosecular organizations to persuade the Scouts to allow in nontheists. Perhaps such efforts should be dropped.
81. See note 77.
82. In terms of advocacy effectiveness Black Lives Matter was misnamed because it allows neoracists to reply "All Lives Matter" with the disingenuous implication that BLM supporters are racists that only care about blacks. It would have been more effective public relations if the slogan were Black Lives Matter Too. Woke would have better been Truth History or Reality History. Me Too is well named, as is Prochoice.
83. As detailed of late by Deneen (2023).
84. Long standing Christoright advocate of parental rights Michael Farris directly affirms the duplicity, stating that parents do not have the right to facilitate the in his view harmful desire of their minor children to undergo gender transition (Brown and Jamison, 2023).
85. When this author was in crime ridden Mexico City in 2000 it was disturbing to see police carrying AR-15 assault rifles. Now such are common in much of the US, with the semi-automatic the weapon of choice in mass shootings.
86. MAGA atheists have on occasion shown up at Baltimore atheist groups – who see progressivism as against the will of their flawless and must be obeyed and worshipped creator.
87. This decline all the more disturbing in the America was far at the top of the international socioeconomic heap at the end of the last world war.

88. The last major military contest between the Western democracies was the naval arms race centered around super battleships between Great Britain and the United States in the 1920s, although it was partly driven by competition with an increasingly autocratic and militaristic Japan. Public outcry and financial expense aborted the race via the first arms control treaties that helped set standards for later nuclear weapons agreements.

89. The financially clueless Rand (1957) centers her libertarian fiction on the premise that government and union forces foolishly oppose capitalists' operation of a supertrain at the time when the railroads were doing all they could to get out of the inherently unprofitable business that could no longer compete with the speed of air travel via government funded airports and aircraft, or the convenience and low cost of cars and buses via federal funded interstates. The inability of capital to run trains on a for profit basis led to the formation of state subsidized Amtrak without which there would have been if any passenger rail travel in the US.

The jet airliners that threatened commercial rail were themselves the result of turbine engines and advanced aerodynamics developed at great expense by governments during and after the WW2, and then applied to military aircraft such as the Boeing B-47 and B-52 that were the predecessors of the first modern airliner, the Boeing 707. Also the result of governmental military needs were antibiotics – although discovered in 1927, penicillin could not become a mass product until a massive government funded development project during WW2.

90. Even the back to nature for all of humanity Unabomber put meticulous effort into his finely crafted mail bombs.

91. Interviews of Danes by Zuckerman (2008) reveals their common casual lack of concern about death and an afterlife, and ISSP (2018) found a majority of Danes do not believe there is life after death.

92. Because organized crime families lacked sufficient large scale funds, Nevada casinos were in part financed by Mormon bankers who are not prevented by doctrine from doing so, and being well armed and running the regional legal system did not fear the mobsters.

93. The theorist tries to blame the secular left for this, but they worked in close collaboration with business interests. It is ironic that Blue Laws remain in effect in much of Europe as a means of tamping down on commercial domination of the culture.

94. Print and broadcast promotional advertisements by the American religious industry appear to have become markedly scarcer since the turn of the century, possibly because of decreasing funds associated with the sharp decline in church membership, and possibly in association with disappointing results in terms of actual recruitment.

95. The few popular Christian themed rock songs, such as “Jesus is Just Alright” (Doobie Brothers, 1972), “Spirit in the Sky” (Greenbaum, 1969), are exceptions that prove the rule that religion and commercial music rarely mix.

96. See note 3.

97. An example of the gripping power of secular culture is the early rock and roller Little Richard. Having decided his musical performances were sinful he renounced them and switched to gospel. Shortly after, on tour in Europe, audience appeals compelled him to return to the exuberance of rock and he never looked back.

98. See note 6. Ancient aliens damages popular theism on multiple levels. Not only does it propose that intelligent extraterrestrials – whose basic existence is seen as highly plausible by a large portion of the scientific community such being in accord with the physics and scale of the universe, unlike transcendent deities which are mere fantasy – were actually behind the existence of humanity in some manner. It further offers that the gods so many believe in are actually the inevitable result of peoples mistaking aliens with immense technological powers for supernatural entities. That in turn does deep harm to the credibility of clergies. And to the seemingly obstinate scientific community. The popular fascination with alien visitors past and present is another of the many tangential results of modernity, one that is vexing both the supernaturalist and the scientific establishments. With the former probably taking the greater hits it not being grounded in objective reality.

99. In recent decades, nonreligion has been rising among less educated Westerners (Byler, 2023; Paul, 2018/9; Putman & Campbell, 2010), perhaps because of the breakdown of social organizations and networking, and as nonreligion reaches deeper into populations.

100. Contra the pattern earlier in the last century, see note 35.

101. As are near death experiences.

102. The seemingly miraculous destruction of the otherwise unstoppable Mongol invasion fleet in the 1200s by the “divine kamikaze wind” produced by a typhoon facilitated the belief of divine favor. The involvement of religion in the motivation of the Japanese kamikaze attacks is uncertain, many if not the great majority of the pilots were strongly pressured or forced to commit suicide (Ohnuki-Tierney, 2006).

103. That Jews were the supposed creations of Satan explained how they could be subhumans, yet so intelligent that they posed a grave danger to the Aryans created by God. That Hitler actually believed this explains why infrastructure and transport went into eliminating Jews that would have been better used against the invading Allies.

104. Further evidence of the involvement of religion in the Nazi regime is presented in Scholder (1988) and Steigman-Gall (2003).

105. The pernicious collaborations between Paul VI and John Paul II with organized crime elements is detailed in Martin (1982), Fonzo (1983), Dionne (1986), Colby (1987), and Raw (1992). Vatican involvement in the largest-ever American insurance fraud is covered by Behar (1999), and recent Vatican banking troubles are detailed in Donadio (2010). Francis may have taken steps to improve this situation.

106. Timothy McVey appears to have been an idiosyncratic theist when he committed the Oklahoma bombing (Cole, 1996).

107. See note 60.

108. The opinion that it is inherently difficult to recruit suicide terrorists is psychologically naïve in that desires to commit suicide is fairly common. A large portion of Muslim suicide-murderers appear to be mentally and physically afflicted persons that terrorist elites appear to be searching for and exploiting by providing an “honorable” path to suicide in a culture in which the latter is otherwise strictly taboo (Lankford, 2010; Merari, 2010).

109. Whether the mass use of conventional and nuclear bombs to destroy cities and many of their inhabitants shortened the war is doubtful (Dower, 2010; Friedrich, 2006; Hasegawa, 2005), and the operations over Europe resulted in extremely high Allied aircrew casualties (Bowman, 2007, 2009); see note 44.

110. Because it has gone under the radar of human awareness, having occurred in dribs and drabs rather than big headline generating events. And because the culture and religious industry have not wished to consider the grim theological implications.

111. PDFs of Paul (2008/9, 2020, 2021) were provided to leading theodists with no personal or public reply then or since from nearly all who continue to push free will theodicy.

112. The initial deity of the Jewish Testaments was not the sole creator as is indicated by the first line in the Decalogue, but a subdeity that was assigned to handle the Semites. As per how when Moses performed minor divine magic in front of the court of pharaoh, the latter’s priests were able to do some of their own. Strict monotheism with the one creator being exceptionally proJewish appears to have been a latter development in the wake of the conquest of Israel by the Babylonians (Ehrman, 2021; Gilad, 2018).

113. Asbridge (2004) applies these defects in the commandments to the unethical nature of the Crusades.

114. In the classic *The Ten Commandments* (DeMille, 1956) this is whitewashed with the spurious additions that the backsliders are about to sacrifice an unwilling female virgin until God causes the sinners to fall into a flaming chasm. In the TV network miniseries by the same title (Hutchinson & Dornhelm, 2006) popular with approving evangelicals, the lethal suppression of freedom of religion is presented in accord with the Biblical plot.

115. In DeMille (1956) this too is sanitized. Moses orders the Israelites to liberate the Promised Land in Cold War rhetorical style when the inhabitants who had not attacked the Jews are to be conquered and annihilated in the Bible, none of which is shown.

116. As per the story of the Israelite King Jephthah’s willing sacrifice of his obedient daughter to the Jewish God. This perverse story is found in some children’s pictorial Bibles.

117. One misogyny that cannot be attributed to the Bible is forced birth requirements, that being a civil matter in which the father but not mother can seek financial compensation for loss of his terminated property, while induced potential abortion is a tool a husband can use to test the sexual fidelity of his wife.

118. Sidenotes in Bibles published by Christoconservatives often cite the cleansing of the Temple as an example of how nonlegal violence by theists is sometimes necessary (Shelley et al. (1994). Early in his political career, theist Hitler carried a whip to honor the assault by Christ – whom he thought had an Aryan father –

upon the corrupt Jews in their Temple. Nontheist Jesus admirer Mandela valued the rebel's violent side as justifying the same in his movement (Kolsen, 2023).

119. In the form of swords, the expensive cutting edge deadly devices of that age. Peter uses his to cut off the ear of a Roman soldier during the arrest of Jesus, which the latter then regenerates. An example of how such biblical passages directly influence current thinking occurred during competing rallies for and against gun control following the 2011 Tucson massacre: A reverend cited the passage in which Jesus approves the purchase of swords as justification for his carrying both the New Testament and a semi-automatic (Kunkle & Helderman, 2011).

120. Ehrman (2008) provides seminal analyses of the moral flaws of the Bible in general.

121. See note 80.

122. Another telling example of how the conservative ideology can automatically oppose attempts to alleviate societal dysfunction with health and life saving policies is how Sarah (Death Panel) Palin rejected a campaign led by Michelle Obama to improve childhood nutrition as interfering with the God-given right of parents to feed their offspring as they see fit.

123. The beliefs of Putin are unclear, perhaps atheist as per his KGB heritage, but there are claims his family legacy and personal preference is Orthodox.

124. And perhaps all, see Paul (2021) for a description of an ethical supernaturalistic religion which probably cannot exist much less be popular.

125. Note that such tomes are prone to be accompanied by carefully psychologically crafted images of fluffy clouds in a blue sky and or flying birds

126. Huck Finn is not as almost always characterized a condemnation of racism, had Twain intended that he would have set the novel in the contemporary, post Reconstruction apartheid south. It is an attack on Christian morals, which is why it uses the N-word on a regular basis, to make clear how Bible believing Christians referred to Blacks. Twain (1909/62) is a more extensive and explicit condemnation of theism on ethical and societal grounds.

127. Also impractical is the liberal hope to make abortion "legal but rare," the procedure being common even in progressive secular nations with extensive and explicit early onset sex education and protection programs (Paul, 2009a, 2022a; Singh et al., 2018).

128. The extinction disease agent may be a bioengineered microbe, or a form of replicative nanotechnology (Paul & Cox, 1996).

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