

Goldwin Emerson Responds to Bruce Tallman

February 14, 2015

Generally, I don't respond or offer rebuttals to London Free Press articles although I always try to respond to individual emails from those who send emails directly to me.

First, let me commend London Free Press and its editors for including the *Spirituality and Ethics* column each Saturday. I have noted that the London Free Press has included articles from a wide variety of perspectives. They have included columns from Hindu, Islamic, Jewish, Humanist, and Christian perspectives as well as from many other writers within the past few years. Christian points of view representing Roman Catholic and Protestant faiths are included. Articles from many Protestant denominations ranging from liberal to more traditional and evangelical concepts are included as well. For readers who are interested, the *Spirituality and Ethics* column offers thoughtful and interesting perspectives. Of course, writers from such varied points of view present different ideas and writers are free to offer their own best reasons why they think as they do.

Like many readers and writers, I can learn from the thoughts of others. I appreciate London Free Press allowing such varied perspectives. To me, it seems a little presumptuous, perhaps even pompous, to attempt to rebut ideas which have historical roots such as Judaism, Humanism or Oriental religions which precede Christianity. Unless I am an expert in all spiritual perspectives I think it inappropriate to offer the "correct" view in a rebuttal. Frequently, rebuttals reflect the reader's mistaken understanding of what the writer was conveying in the first place. Let's trust our London Free Press readers to accept what is meaningful to them. I am always pleased however, to respond, to individual emails which offer alternative ways of thinking or to respond to questions for clarification. I think the motives for such individual emails tend to be offered with sincerity and without malice or other alternative reasons.

Some questions from readers can be easily answered, but some require lengthy answers going beyond the normal limits of approximately seven hundred words which is normal for the *Spirituality and Ethics* column. To quote Tallman, (London Free Press, May 24, 2014) in one of his rebuttals, he said, “The thing I like about being Catholic is that you get to be deeply religious and keep your brains at the same time”. Coming up with succinct answers or explanations about Roman Catholic dogma, for example, while remaining true to current science and to rational or logical discussions about any of the following may not be practical within the limits of rebuttals to the columns of the writings of others. But perhaps Tallman ought to devote his “deeply religious” ideas and his “brains” in explaining some of the science and reason behind the following ideas that are sacred to Catholics, but remain enigmatic to non-Catholics. These include a modern psychological explanation of religious practices of exorcism, or the phenomenon of stigmata or the chemical processes of the doctrine of transubstantiation or the biological concept of the immaculate conception. Perhaps Tallman believes these are some examples of complex ideas which may be better handled in one-on-one first hand conversations, or person to person emails rather than public rebuttals.

It is unfortunate, in Tallman’s rebuttal (February 7, 2015 of my January 24) article he misquoted point 10 from my article, when he omitted my word solely from his quotation even though he has marked it with quotation marks in his rebuttal. It would have made his objections to secular humanism less strident and intimidating.

This present column is not meant as an attack on Bruce Tallman. I have had the privilege of visiting with Bruce in his home and at other settings over a friendly cup of coffee. He is thoughtful and sincere. He is, in the best sense, a Christian gentleman. He tries his best to listen to other points of view and I respect him for his opinions. However, he should perhaps consider *lightening up* on his propensity to set readers and fellow writers on the “correct” path to spiritual enlightenment. Let’s let the readers decide what makes the best sense to each of them. Bruce, maybe it’s time we met one on one for coffee and conversation again.