



The Enlightenment



A Mini-Journal of the Humanist Association of London and Area
Visit Our Web Site at www.humanists-london.org

Volume 12

Number 11

October 2016

The Lessons of History

By Don Hatch

Henry Ford is quoted as saying, "History is more or less Bunk. It's tradition. We don't want tradition. We want to live in the present and the only history that is worth a tinker's damn is the history we made today." Just what did he intend to infer? Perhaps among other things, he was suggesting that just because something has not occurred in the past, does not mean it cannot happen in the future. For example, in the early 1930s Henry believed that the V8 engine would be the engine of the future and he desired to build an engine with the entire eight cylinders cast in one single block. When he instructed his engineers to produce a design for the engine, they agreed to a man that it was impossible to cast an eight cylinder engine block in one piece. Henry replied, "do it anyway." And the rest as they say is history. The Ford V8 was first produced in 1932 and for many years after WW II, the V8 became the standard power plant for practically all of the larger rear-wheel drive automobiles. There is a lesson to be learned here. We should never discourage inventors or dissuade scientists and technologists from providing advancements that make our lives better and more enjoyable. This is a no-brainer as we look ahead. (Think of Steve Jobs and Elon Musk).

But what about the history of past years? Can we make use of our knowledge of past events to make improvements in today's society? Can a careful analysis of history provide useful indications of how we might avoid previous mistakes and point the way forward to a better future?

I believe the answer is yes in some cases, and in the following pages of this *Enlightenment* I will delve into two broad categories, namely the economy and religion, and attempt to ferret out past events that might provide at least a few clues for practical and realistic future actions that might help in solving the myriad of problems now facing humanity.

Both subjects are of extreme importance. Prosperous societies with optimum equality and minimum poverty can only occur when a country's economic engine is thriving, and maximum freedoms can only occur when there is complete separation of church and state, and mosque and state, without the threat of a theocracy. And both subjects are timely. We have income inequality on the rise, and ominous threats of radical Islamic terrorism are ever present, even here in Canada. Political leaders seem unable to offer effective solutions to these problems, but perhaps examining the past may help provide a few useful clues. *(Continued on page 3)*

President's Remarks

I think we would all agree that our recent public event at the Wolf Performance Hall in September was a great success. Our guest speaker, Hemant Mehta, gave a very interesting and inspiring presentation on the topic "Why are young people leaving religion?" About 225 people attended, including several visitors from as far away as Hamilton and Windsor. Hemant is a well-known author, blogger, and public speaker who, at the age of 33, is one of the leading young voices for secularism in North America. Although he prefers to call himself an atheist rather than a humanist, he emphasizes the positive values of a non-theistic worldview and seeks to engage in constructive dialogue with religious believers while promoting secularism, an approach that is very compatible with that of most of us who are members of HALA.

In discussing the reasons for the rise of unbelief among the Millennial generation today (see also the article by Goldwin Emerson in this issue), Hemant pointed to the proliferation of books on atheism by Dawkins, Hitchens, Harris, et al., as well as the widespread availability of the Internet, which allows inquiring young people raised in religion to "google" alternative worldviews and "fact-check" their preachers' sermons. He stated that surveys of disaffected young people reveal that the church has become less appealing because it is perceived as: too insular, too irrelevant, too anti-science, too sex-negative, too exclusive, and too anti-doubt. He also gave moving accounts of young atheists in the United States who were victims of harassment and ostracism from their Christian peers as recently as a decade ago, but noted that atheism has become much more socially acceptable in recent years.

At our monthly meeting in October, we continued with the theme of Hemant Mehta's presentation by having three of our younger members, Sherry Keddie, Sara Magee, and Jason Reed, speak on the topic "Why I left religion." Each of them grew up in quite different religious backgrounds, and they each gave a very engaging and poignant account of their personal journey away from religion. I'm very pleased that a growing number of younger adults such as these three are becoming active members of HALA and are bringing with them new experiences, perspectives, and enthusiasm. ~ Rod Martin

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On The Economy

I believe it is not too much of a stretch to speculate that people living in a prosperous economy with optimum equality and adequate social safety nets, will be happier than those living in a struggling economy with income inequality and lack of adequate social safety nets. So where can we look for examples to support this claim? For whatever they may be worth, world happiness surveys may help provide an answer. One happiness survey I came across showed the top five countries as Denmark, Switzerland, Iceland, Norway and Finland in that order. Another survey listed the top ten in descending order as Denmark, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, Switzerland, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Iceland and Finland. Note that these are all secular countries with low levels of religiosity and in the past they were predominately Protestant, perhaps making the transition to a secular society easier.

These countries have arrived at a system of social democracy that seems to have worked, and whose citizens have been willing to be taxed at levels that supported the system. It would appear that the economies of these countries have been operating at levels that generated sufficient tax money to support the social safety nets (Denmark citizens pay the highest taxes in the world) and unemployment is usually relatively low. But with globalization and jobs moving overseas, and robotics replacing many human jobs, can these economies continue to thrive? With the world economy more or less in neutral, and a mass immigration of Muslim refugees into Europe, this is a most important question.

Unfortunately there are dark clouds on the horizon. To cite just one example, there is the rapidly increasing cost of health care as the baby boomers age. Unless generations X, Y and millennials are fully employed and earning good wages, there will not be enough tax revenue to cover the required medical and other social safety net expenses. So how might we devise strategies and actions that could help provide practical realistic solutions to these pending problems? Would examining events of the past provide helpful clues?

Yes, I do think we can learn something from the period beginning in 1945 and ending in 1980. For me, and others born in the early 1930s, this was a "golden age." We were too young to remember the worst of the great depression, too young to fight in WW II, and fortunate to begin working in the 1950s, enjoying the peace and prosperity that existed after the war. We started families, bought and paid for a home, and educated our children, often on just one income. Many of us have retired with defined benefit pensions and are enjoying life to the fullest, knowing that in Canada and the other Western countries listed above (but not in the U.S.), our medical expenses will be covered. It has been, and still is great for many of us born in the 1930s.

We generally accepted that we would enjoy a higher standard of living than our parents, and most often we did. And we are pleased that our children have, by and large, had at least an equal standard of living, although in many cases only if the family had two incomes. But now, the future for our grandchildren is less certain, as many well educated youth are having difficulty finding well-paying jobs, except possible in certain technical areas and finance. Obviously we cannot return to the 1950s, 60s and 70s, but surely it is prudent to ask: were there in those years, parameters contributing to the prosperity and well-being of society that were present then, but not now when things are more uncertain? The answer is yes, there are at least two. Namely, higher top bracket income tax rates and a lower salary gap between middle class workers and the top 1%.

So far I have been citing conditions in Canada, but I want to switch to the United States, because income inequality is higher in the U.S. than in Canada, partly because our banking system was more resilient during the 2008 financial crisis and unlike the U.S., Canadians did not lose their homes as a result of sub-prime mortgages. Also, statistics are more readily available in the U.S.

Top bracket income tax rates in the U.S. averaged over 90% during WW II, but in the years 1946 to 1980, the average came down to about 75%. After Ronald Regan came to power in 1981, rates immediately dropped to 50% and since then have been reduced further to around 35%. This more than 50% drop has meant fewer dollars are available for much needed social safety nets. Also, needless wars have commandeered money that could be going to other worthwhile causes. Another factor contributing to lower standards of living for the middle class is the unconscionable amount of money being earned and hoarded in tax havens by the 1%. In her relatively recent book *Plutocrats*, Canadian author and now Federal cabinet minister, Chrystia Freeland, notes that in the U.S. in 1980, the average CEO made forty-two times as much as the average worker. By 2012 this ratio had skyrocketed to 380. The trillions of dollars earned and hoarded by the 1% contribute little or nothing to the economy. It would be better if this money was invested at home in business activities that make positive contributions to society and generate tax revenue to pay for needed infrastructure improvements and social safety nets like universal health care.

While discussing the 1%, it is necessary to point out their influence on the U.S. Congress today. In her very recent book *Dark Money*, author Jane Mayer documents how over the past twenty or more years, the Koch brothers and their billionaire cronies have been able to effectively gain control of the Republican Party, to the point where no Republican member of Congress dare vote to increase taxes or spend money to combat global warming. When Republicans control both the House of Representatives and the Senate, the United States is no longer a democracy: it is an oligarchy controlled by big money. And many of these billionaires have no concern for the middle class as they watch this segment of the population get poorer while the oligarchs themselves get richer. (Bill Gates and Warren Buffett with their large charitable foundation are exceptions).

How long can this situation continue? When will the masses declare they have had enough and revolt? There was a minor revolt in 2011 with the Occupy Wall Street movement, but it was not well organized and fizzled out. There was no capable dynamic and charismatic leader to carry it forward. But what if such a leader emerges and is able to implement a well-organized revolt? Australian Bill Godfrey in a letter to the editor with the title, "Kings are not on our side," suggests that perhaps the time is ripe for history to repeat itself.

Kings are not on our side

A recent television program depicted a weak King Louis XVI trying to repair France's economy by reining in the tax-free status and privileges of the nobility and clergy. He failed repeatedly, and in the French Revolution that followed he lost his head and the nobility and clergy lost their privileges.

Substitute today's one per cent and large corporates for the nobility and clergy and you begin to ask whether anything has changed. Apart from the fact that our "kings" seem to be trying to justify and protect their privileges rather than rein them in. Who can wonder that we, the 99 per cent, are getting a bit restless.

Is a revolution in the offing? It is not inconceivable, and unless some very astute strong leaders come forward and start to reverse the present inequalities in our societies, revolutions are real possibilities in countries with high income inequality. This prompts one to pose the question: can analysing past historical events provide any clues on how we can move toward a more equitable society? Let's explore.

If nothing else, historical records chronicle a story of continual change. Systems of governing evolve, empires come and go, and new inventions and ideas change the way people live. But history's greatest change ever began with the start and culmination of the industrial revolution. It started in England in the mid-1700s and spread throughout the Western world. An agrarian, cottage industry and mercantile society evolved into an ever-changing capitalistic laissez-faire economy. Perhaps highlighting changes in the rate of speed that humans are able to travel will illustrate the extent of this change. For centuries, prior to 1800, the fastest that humans could travel was at the 50 km/hr speed of a galloping horse – or 65 km/hr, if you owned a camel! By the mid-1800s, steam locomotives had reached speeds of over 80 km/hr and early in the 1900s a locomotives reached 160 km/hr in England. In 1948 a jet aircraft exceeded the 1230 km/hr speed of sound, and in the later 2000s space shuttles travelled at 28,000 km/hr. Amazing progress in such a relatively short time! And equal achievements have occurred in the field of electronics. A hand-held smartphone is not only a means of communication, but also a camera, an encyclopaedia and a host of other apps are available. Unbelievable! The continuing progress in the areas of science and technology since the start of the industrial revolution has been truly mindboggling.

And fortunately there has been social progress as well. Democratic governments, considered to be the best form of government (at least in the western world), have evolved and been established in numerous countries. Slavery in the western world was eliminated and free elementary and high school education became available for all. Women achieved the right to vote. Living electrically eliminated much drudgery in the home, thus allowing women freedom to work outside the home. Improved means of transportation provided freedom of mobility and in many Western countries free medical care became available. (Well, not really free, we must pay taxes for these services).

But this progress has not entirely been a bed of roses. During the early years of the industrial revolution, conditions in factories were abysmal by today's standards. Before the advent of unions, working hours were long and wages were low. Working families often lived in city slums. These undesirable conditions were accurately portrayed in many of Charles Dickens' novels.

Perhaps worst of all, humans have not only had to endure the Great Depression of the 1930s, but also two atrocious world wars resulting in the greatest carnage and loss of lives in human history. So we have to conclude that, despite unprecedented advances in science and technology through amazing human ingenuity, human nature appears to have changed very little since the dawn of civilization about ten thousand years ago. We are still greedy and xenophobic and instead of negotiating, we are often prone to go to war when conditions that displease us occur.

The point of the above summary of the years after the start of the industrial evolution is to illustrate that prior to what I have called the "golden age" of the 1945-1980 period, progressing from an agrarian/mercantile society to an industrial society consisted not only of desirable positive happenings, but also of negative undesirable occurrences. So do we have to go through a new extended period of ups and downs before another "golden age" arrives? Maybe we do!

Unfortunately as events have unfolded, in recent years living standards for many have deteriorated as income inequality increased. And the challenges ahead are exacerbated because we have entered a new digital age, just as our antecedents entered the steam age in the 1800s. It seems almost certain that there will be problems ahead and adjustments to this new environment must occur before another “golden age” with equality for all can emerge, but how long will it take?

This current situation is depressing for me because I would like my grandchildren and great grandchildren to have the same opportunities for making a decent living and enjoying the kind of life that I experienced. Solving current problems will require astute qualified and capable leaders, but they are few and far between. Will it be necessary, as has happened in the past, for another depression, another war or even a revolution to occur before leaders like FDR will emerge and who will be concerned with the well-being of all of society, not just the greedy elite? I hope not, but who knows?

On Religion

As if the economic challenges we face are not enough, we also face serious religious problems in the form of radical Islamic terrorism. And we in Canada are not immune, as recent events in London Ontario have shown. A young radical named Aaron Driver attempted to set off a bomb somewhere in London or elsewhere, but fortunately was foiled by the RCMP who had been monitoring him. He may have been planning to set off his bomb in the London Citi Plaza, and if this were the case any of us who happened to be there at the wrong time could have been killed or seriously injured. Scary stuff!

Why are we so unfortunate as to be saddled in the 21st century with problematic, ridiculous monotheistic religions that are essentially nonsense, absurd, and with mumbo jumbo rituals? Is this too damning a description? Absolutely not! If there is no supernatural deity, as freethinkers, atheists and humanists believe, then monotheistic religions are based on something that does not exist and therefore are ridiculous and their rituals and dogmas are truly mumbo jumbo. But if monotheism is so ridiculous, how is it that today about half of the world’s people are monotheists and apparently get satisfaction from belonging? Perhaps understanding the history of the origin of monotheism might give us some clues.

Around 500 BCE, four great transformations came into being that have continued to influence humanity to this day. They are: Confucianism and Taoism in China; Hinduism and Buddhism in India; monotheistic Judaism in Israel; and philosophical rationalism in Greece. This period has come to be known as the Axial Age. Confucianism is a philosophy (not a religion) concerned with leading a satisfying secular life based on family values while living in a society hopefully free of political corruption. Hinduism and Buddhism are religions that originated in India and have prospered in significant parts of Asia. Monotheistic Judaism is not only a religion, but also the culture of people of a few specific ethnicities. Jews do not proselytise and attempt to inflict their beliefs on others. Like Confucianism, Greek philosophical realism was secular in nature and considerable Greek influence was transferred to the Roman Empire as the Roman elite adopted Greek stoicism as their predominate philosophy. This philosophy is eloquently expressed by Emperor Marcus Aurelius in his *Meditations*, published in Greek, shortly before his death in 180 CE. It is unfortunate that this great work did not become the “Bible” of Western civilization instead of the Christian Bible. It is also unfortunate that monotheistic Christianity replaced the secular lifestyle of the Roman Empire in the early 300s, after the reign of Emperor Constantine.

Monotheistic Christianity grew out of monotheistic Judaism. Jesus of Nazareth, a Jew preaching a message of salvation, formed a cult of a few followers. The Jewish authorities in the Temple knew he was a threat and an impostor and had him crucified. Jesus' band of followers continued on after his death, but eventually died out as they were unable to attract many fellow Jews. For some puzzling reason, the apostle Paul picked up on this questionable salvation message and successfully established a number of Christian churches in the eastern Mediterranean area. This message of salvation and a supposed idyllic afterlife appealed to the Roman peasants. After Constantine declared Christianity to be the official religion of the Roman Empire, the Catholic Church began to grow and prosper, and reigned supreme until the Protestant Reformation in the early 1500s. The reformation helped to foster the Renaissance and Enlightenment periods, allowing science and democracy, both suppressed by the Roman Catholic Church, to begin to flourish.

But what was the appeal of the Christian Church that caused it to become so dominant in Western society? Most likely its message of salvation and the promise of an afterlife! Yes, people were convinced in the existence of a supernatural deity and in the reality of the supernatural Jesus-the-Christ, the son of this deity, who through his death and resurrection could virtually guarantee some form of idyllic existence after death to those who believed in him. To a freethinker all this seems absurd, but nevertheless the reality is that for 2000 years Christianity has dominated the Western world, and non-believers have a huge challenge in convincing believers about the fallacies of their beliefs.

Are there lessons to be learned here, lessons that can help us today, particularly in regard to the problem of Islamic Jihad? As is well known, during the 1000-year period before the Protestant Reformation, the Catholic Church committed many well-known atrocities including the Crusades, Inquisitions, and burnings at the stake for blasphemy, apostasy, and witchcraft even as late as the early 1700s. Thus it took about 1700 years since the founding of Christianity by the apostle Paul for the Church to cease committing cruel and vicious atrocities against those human beings who did not conform to the dictates of the Church. This naturally begs the question: will it take 1700 years since the founding of monotheistic Islam in 622 by the prophet Muhammad, before Islamic Jihadists cease committing atrocities against humanity? If history repeats itself, and there is no guarantee that it will, it will require an Islamic Reformation around the year 2100 and it will take until 2300 for the carnage to cease. Obviously the world cannot wait that long to solve this horrendous problem, but what can be done to stop the Jihadists who hate the West and are bent on killing the "infidels," and how long will it take to bring the killing of innocent people to an end?

In addition to Jihad there is the ongoing conflict between Sunnis and Shias, particularly in Syria, which in some ways is reminiscent of the 30 Year's War (1618-1648) between Catholics and Protestants. The carnage and destruction got so bad in some countries that both sides finally realized the futility of the war and formed a lasting truce. The Islamic conflict goes back to the early years of Islam and one would think that this problem could be solved by the Muslims themselves once they realize the ridiculousness of the conflict. And why should the West care? Why not just let them keep killing each other until they come to their senses? Unfortunately, we cannot, because the lives of innocent children are being snuffed out and the Jihadists are setting off bombs in Western countries and need to be stopped.

As outlined in the June 2016 *Enlightenment*, the root cause of Jihad is the Wahhabis of Saudi Arabia who for years have been using oil profits to establish mosques and madrassas around the world to promote

Sharia law and indoctrinate youth with radical ideas. And this indoctrination has recently increased through the use of the internet and social media, allowing dissatisfied youth all over the world, including Canada, to become indoctrinated and eager to set off bombs at home and join fighters in the Middle East. All told, the problems are severe and no one seems to know how to bring the current troubling situation to an end.

It is most unfortunate that we face these problems today because prior to 1500, for centuries the world of Islam was in the forefront of human achievement. The Islamic world was the foremost military and economic power in the world, and the leader in the arts, mathematics, and sciences. So what happened? Why did the West start to pull ahead while Islam stagnated? The reasons are well documented in Bernard Lewis' book *What Went Wrong?*, published in 2002. Some of the reasons are:

- In Europe prior to 1500, the Catholic Church wielded considerable power and influence over heads of state. After the Protestant Reformation, the separation of church and state in various countries allowed the creation of civil societies governed by secular laws. These conditions favoured the advancement of science and technology and also allowed democracies to evolve and prosper.
- The explorers and settlers of the Americas sailed from European ports, not Muslim ports. The riches and exports of America were beneficial to Europe and many European citizens found welcomed freedom as they migrated to the new world.
- By relegating women to an inferior position in society, Islamic countries have deprived themselves of the talents and energies of half their people. Not so in the West.
- In the matter of separation of Mosque and State, most Islamic countries have not advanced, and Iran in particular has gone backwards. And far too many countries allow the archaic practice of Sharia law.

Surely it should fall on the shoulders of moderate Muslims to bring about change by starting an Islamic reform movement à la Protestant Reformation. But moderate Muslims are conspicuous by their silence, most likely because of fear of being assassinated by the Jihadists if they attempt reform. Nevertheless, there is one respected Muslim authority that is speaking out. King Mohammed VI of Morocco has stated emphatically that there is a link between Islamic radicalism and Islam writ large. He advocates cutting this link and is doing so in Morocco by, among other things, promoting equality of the sexes with a moral code that is consistent with the precepts of Islam and the modern principles of human rights. We need more Islamic leaders to follow his example and speak out. (See Sept. 8th 2016 Globe and Mail page A13 www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/the-boldness-of-a-kings-speech/article31753065/)

And what about the secularists, why are they not speaking out more about the fallacies of Islam? They know that like Christianity, Islam is based on a fictitious deity that Muslims call Allah, the first pillar of Islam. Islam is every bit as ridiculous and nonsensical as any monotheistic religion so why don't all atheists, freethinkers and humanists unite and start speaking out about the shortcomings of monotheism and about the harm these religions have caused and are causing? They should point out that there is ample evidence right before our eyes that countries that are essentially secular are those whose citizens are the happiest and the most-well-off. Unfortunately, like Christians, secularists tend to

form separate groups, rather than unite for a common cause behind an organization such as the International Humanist and Ethical Union (IHEU).

It is not that there is any lack of evidence that secularism trumps religion every time. For example, the two maps on the front page of the July 2016 *Enlightenment* show the correlation between peaceful countries and the least religious or more secular countries. Another reality that needs to be emphasized by secularists is the correlation between religiosity and income inequality. The lower the income inequality, the less religious a country tends to be. A good example of the opposite is the United States, where Christian evangelicals are present at a higher percentage than in any other western country. With increasing inequality and a lack of adequate social safety nets, needy U.S. citizens often look to churches for help and comfort. Fortunately for the needy, this is one of the good things about churches.

In the long run it is likely that Christianity will continue to decline in the West as mainline churches are losing members because young people are not buying into supernatural beliefs. In some countries less than 5% of citizens attend church on a regular basis. (See Goldwin Emerson's article below). The really serious problem is radical Islamic Jihad as outlined above.

Islam today is in much the same state that Christianity was in the time before the Protestant Reformation in the early 1500s. Then the Catholic religion occupied a major place in the lives of most citizens as they adhered to the prescribed sacraments of the Church. Likewise today, religion occupies an important part of the lives of most Muslims as they subscribe to the five pillars of Islam and, in far too many cases, to the dictates of Sharia law. Dare we hope that a few leaders like the King of Morocco will come forward and bring about a Reformation that will bring Islam into the 21st century? We desperately need history to repeat itself for the peace and prosperity of our troubled world. Unfortunately there are few encouraging signs on the horizon.

I cannot offer definitive solutions to the problem of radical Islamic terrorism. It is most disheartening that the Jihadists have been indoctrinated with spurious beliefs that somehow have to be unlearned. But it is clear in the West at least, that humans thrive best under prosperous secular societies with low income inequality. Would reducing income inequality in Islamic countries help speed up the end of Jihad? I believe it would. Again we come back to economics. Countries must have thriving economies to bring about living wages for their citizens and a reduction of religiosity leading to more secularity.

Shifting Trends in Religion

By Goldwin Emerson

A few years ago, a growing number of people who, when asked what their religious affiliation was, classified themselves as "none" (London Free Press, June 25, 2014). This growing number are now the third largest group of people, following behind Christians with approximately 2.2 billion adherents world-wide, and Muslims with approximately 1.6 billion. The Median age among Christians is 31.5 years, while among Muslims, the median age is 23. (Daily Mail Reporter, Dec. 18, 2012) These age factors are important in that other factors being equal, Muslim populations will likely increase at a more rapid pace than Christians and may eventually surpass Christian populations world-wide. Of course, there are other religious factors involved. For example, some religious teachings may encourage population growth

while other religions may believe that smaller families are a more morally responsible route in a world population of over 7 billion people.

Within Christian populations, Roman Catholicism predominates with approximately 1.2 billion or approximately 50 % of Christian adherents. Remaining Christians are a mixture of various Protestant and other sects. Among Protestants there are two main branches. These are evangelical religions, which are increasing in number, and main-line denominations such as Anglican, Presbyterian, United Church, and most Baptists which are slowly decreasing in numbers.

Muslim religion predominates in many mid-east countries, but is less evenly spread world-wide, while Christian populations are more evenly spread throughout the world. On the other hand some religions, such as Hinduism, have over 90 % of its total adherents in one country, India. Judaism is predominant in Israel with approximately 40 % of its world-wide adherents in that country while another approximately 40% live in the United States.

The “*nones*” are those who, when asked on a survey what their religious affiliation is, replied “none.” They are a growing but diverse group. Some are atheists, some secular humanists, and some are agnostics. Among the agnostics, however, there are quite a few who maintain religious affiliation without regular attendance at formal religious services. Agnostics may or may not believe in a Supreme Being, but agnostics, as the term etymologically implies, generally agree that while one can believe or not believe in God, it cannot be known whether or not God exists.

“Nones” are more likely to be found among younger adults. When asked whether or not they believe in moral principles, they are likely to maintain fairly high moral values with regard to social aspects of everyday life. These values include sexual equality, freedom of conscience, honesty, integrity, and most other socially acceptable principles of modern living. While some believe in God, many have become disenchanted with traditionally held religious doctrines and procedures. Generally, the “nones” do not have concern for an afterlife, which is different from the belief of most traditional religions. Some “nones” may be believers in God, but see their relationship with God as individual and different from what is customarily offered in traditional organized religions. This latter group may also have strong feelings of spiritual reverence, but are not drawn to religious affiliation. There are many variations among “nones” and it is difficult to summarize what is common among them.

Modern societies make it difficult for religion to maintain its traditional appeal. Most of us know of friends and relatives who seem to live at a more frenetic pace than was the case years ago. Women used to do a great deal of volunteer church work and took on family responsibilities for bringing children to Sunday school and they often taught Sunday school as well. Today, many mothers work outside the home. They drive their children to music lessons, art classes, sports practices, and many secular events. Modern mothers help children with their school homework, and of course, they do the usual tasks of making meals and doing the normal housework. Fathers too work hard at their everyday occupations, paying bills and mortgages, buying and repairing vehicles, and developing their careers. Some fathers, but not all, help with household tasks. In such a fast-paced modern world, for a large group of people, religious affiliation has become a lower priority than it was years ago and “nones” gradually continue to increase, particularly among young adults.