



# The Enlightenment



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## "What A Wonderful World"

I see trees of green,  
red roses too.  
I see them bloom,  
for me and you.  
And I think to myself,  
what a wonderful world.

I see skies of blue,  
And clouds of white.  
The bright blessed day,  
The dark sacred night.  
And I think to myself,  
What a wonderful world.

The colors of the rainbow,  
So pretty in the sky.  
Are also on the faces,  
Of people going by,  
I see friends shaking hands.  
Saying, "How do you do?"  
They're really saying,  
"I love you".

I hear babies cry,  
I watch them grow,  
They'll learn much more,  
Than I'll ever know.  
And I think to myself,  
What a wonderful world.  
Yes, I think to myself,  
What a wonderful world.

## What A Wonderful World – Continued

Back in October 2017, many Canadians celebrated their annual Thanksgiving holiday. At my home we enjoyed a bounteous meal with four generations of my family present, each of us realizing that we have so much to be thankful for. In my case, I have enjoyed 27 years of retirement in reasonable health, have been able to engage in many pleasurable and mind-stimulating activities and associate with many like-minded friends. As I now sit at my computer, I cogitate a bit, and think about just how privileged we are to live in Canada and enjoy the many pleasures our wonderful world provides. Perhaps nowhere is this awe and wonder described so beautifully as in the famous song *What a Wonderful World* (printed on page 1) sung so memorably by Louis Armstrong some years ago.

The lyrics of *What a Wonderful World* capture the magnificence of trees, the beauty of flowers, the splendor of azure skies, clouds, starry nights, rainbows, the camaraderie of friends, the joys of loving and the fascinations of childhood. Yes indeed, what a wonderful world nature has bestowed upon us, immediately bringing to mind the responsibility we have of preserving our fragile environment for our descendants.

For sure, the natural world is magnificent and wonderful, but humans, in their various ways, are also quite remarkable. Three and a half billion years of evolution has produced homo sapiens (the wise human) a creature that can learn, converse in an understandable language, can imagine and invent and live in organized communities while appreciating the creative talents of inventors, architects, engineers, authors, artists and musicians. And the last two hundred years have been truly amazing. In that relatively short time, humans have learned how to travel from the speed of a horse or camel, to flying faster than the speed of sound. We have learned how to use machines to reduce drudgery and manual labour, how to turn night into day through electricity, how to communicate at the speed of light, how to fly and even reach the moon. And in the last twenty-five years we have changed the way we live through the internet and the smart phone. Futurists tell us, “we ain’t seen nothing yet.” What lies ahead in the areas of science and technology boggles the mind.

But should we really celebrate these achievements? Yes and no! We should certainly celebrate the positive, but at the same time, reflect on the negative. Unfortunately, the same science and technology that has provided so many benefits has also given us the means to annihilate humanity and much of nature as well. Why have humans done this? Why do humans still go to war? Why has the human propensity to go to war not lessened since the age of Enlightenment? Some may argue that we are now less prone to go to war, but the threat is still there. We still have religious wars, and rogue nations like North Korea. Skillful diplomacy is mandatory if wars are to be prevented.

And now there is another major problem. That problem is inequality. We know that humans are not born with equal mental and physical capabilities, but all individuals brought into this world should have an equal opportunity to make use of the talents they possess, and be able to obtain adequate potable water, food, clothing and shelter, in order to live a satisfying life in an atmosphere of freedom. Unfortunately, greed, political ambitions and inability to provide prosperous economic conditions for everyone get in the way.

Yes, there is no doubt we do live in a wonderful world, but there are many challenges ahead. And as humanists, we believe that furthering the progression of a more secular world with less religiosity, can be

helpful in maintaining the amazing planet on which we live and advance the capacity for humans to live in peace. (DAH).

## **Scopes Trial Narrative Would be Same Today**

*By John de Lancie*

Actor John de Lancie gave these remarks at the Freedom From Religion Foundation's pre-dedication dinner in Chattanooga, Tennessee, on 13 July, 2017, the night before the unveiling ceremony for the statue of Clarence Darrow outside the Rhea County Courthouse in Dayton, Tenn., site of the 1925 Scopes trial.

About ten years ago, I had the unusual experience of touring our country with a show about the Scopes "Monkey" Trial. Ed Asner played William Jennings Bryan and I played Clarence Darrow. This was not *Inherit the Wind*; it was from the actual trial transcripts. It was one of the most interesting theatrical experiences of my life. I had no idea what I was getting myself into.

During rehearsals, we concentrated on the legal details: the maneuverings of the lawyers and the judge. Our job was to give the audience the "experience" of the trial, while at the same time arriving at the same conclusions we held: that this was all an intellectual exercise, a historical or pastoral curiosity which took place long ago and far away.

That is, until our first performance, when a man abruptly stood up and screamed at the top of his lungs that we were damned and going to hell. We froze. The show came to a screeching stop as we stared into the audience, wide-eyed and dumbstruck. Suddenly, we weren't in Kansas anymore — although, actually, we were!

That performance was my first, full-throated encounter with the realization that some people take this stuff seriously.

And so, as we moved from town to town, and each performance brought out new and more vocal outbursts, I began to listen more closely to what was being said. Not what I was saying — I was in complete agreement with Darrow's words — but to what Bryan was saying. And after a time, I began to "hear" his argument and to understand in a more visceral way that both of these men were talking across a great gulf. Darrow's reasoned, rational approach was having no effect whatsoever on Bryan. Nor would it ever.

I'm going to read a few paragraphs of Darrow's text and then I'm going to read Bryan's rebuttal. Listen to the ideas and the buzz words that are still in play today.

### **Darrow's words**

Darrow said: "I am going to argue this law as if it were serious and as if it were a death struggle between two civilizations. What we find here today is as brazen and bold an attempt to destroy learning as was ever made in the Middle Ages. The only difference is we have not provided that Mr. Scopes shall be burned at the stake.

"The people of Tennessee adopted a piece of legislation that says you shan't teach any theory on the origin of man, except the divine account contained in the Bible.

"Now I ask you: what is the Bible? It is a book primarily of religion and morals. It is not a book of science — never was and never was meant to be. There is nothing prescribed that would tell you how to build a railroad, or a steamboat, or how to make anything that would advance civilization.

"It is not a book on biology: they knew nothing about it. They thought the Earth was created 4,004 years before the Christian era. We know better. They want the Bible to be the yardstick to measure every man's intellect; to measure every man's intelligence; and to measure every man's learning.

“Every bit of knowledge that the mind has must be submitted to a religious test, and that is a travesty of justice and of the Constitution.

“If today you can take a thing like evolution and make it a crime to teach it in the public schools, tomorrow you can make it a crime to teach it in the private schools and then at the hustings or in church.

“At the next session, you may ban books and newspapers. If you can do one, you can do the other, and after a while it is the setting of man against man, and creed against creed, until with flying banners and beating drums, we are marching backwards to the 16th century when bigots burned the men who dared to bring any intelligence, enlightenment, and culture to the human mind.”

Bryan’s response fascinated me. It drew a clear, concise line in the sand. And as I sat there, night after night, I began to realize that no level of “exquisite detailing” about fossils or, in later years, DNA or carbon dating was or would have convinced Bryan to change his narrative — his fantasy.

While Darrow argued law, intelligence and enlightenment, Bryan talked magic.

And when your audience is primed for a magic show (as invariably a religious audience is), you’re not going to get very far with lessons on biology.

### **Bryan’s rebuttal**

Here is Bryan’s rebuttal: “Mr. Scopes tells the children to copy this diagram on evolution, which effectively detaches the children from the throne of God and links their ancestors with the jungle.

“And then, if these children believe it, they go back home to scoff at the religion of their parents! But these parents have a right to say that no teacher paid by them shall rob their children of faith in God and send them back to their houses skeptical infidels, agnostics, or atheists!

“Atheists think life is a mystery that nobody can explain. Not one word about God. They want to come in with their little padded-up evolution that commences with nothing and ends nowhere.

“They do not explain the great riddle of the universe; they do not deal with the problems of life; they do not teach how to live. There is no place for miracles.

“They eliminate everything supernatural from the Old Testament and the New.

“They don’t tell us where man became endowed with the hope of immortality. They believe that man has been rising all the time; that he never fell from grace and that, when the savior came, there was no reason for his coming, and that he was born of Joseph and that he lives in his grave.

“Evolution is a doctrine that not only destroys their belief in God, but takes from them every moral standard that the Bible gives us.

“This issue, between believer and unbeliever, is bigger than any court and we are not going to settle that issue here.

“The Bible is the word of God. The Bible is the only expression of man’s hope. The Bible is not going to be driven out of this court by ‘experts’ who have come hundreds of miles to testify that they can reconcile evolution and its ancestor in the jungle, with a man made by God in his image and put here for the purpose of a divine plan.”

There you have it: Bryan’s argument, “Stay away from our beliefs . . . stay away from our children . . . your ‘education’ turns them against us . . . our beliefs are non-negotiable . . . our sacred text is literal . . . and we have the answers to all the questions you will ever need to ask.”

Sound familiar? The chasm between us is as stark today as it was then — maybe more so. Red/blue; urban/rural; guns/no guns; life/choice; a closed versus open world are all embodied in the sub-text of that speech.

Add the “fear of God” into this fundamentalist mind-set and you’ve got a system that will never change.

**Educated arguments supported with facts are now suspect, if not dismissed out of hand.**

### **“Death of wisdom”**

As Darrow said, “The fear of God is the death of wisdom.” Educated arguments supported with facts are now suspect, if not dismissed out of hand. And so today we are forced to live in a world of “alternative facts,” a world of conspiracies and nonsense.

A world where critical thinking and healthy skepticism are vehemently attacked. Where the notion that kidnapped children, living on Mars, is no longer the silly scribbling of some comic book writer but finds traction in a voting population that brought us our latest occupant of the White House.

And let’s not forget the self-righteous VP, that Bible-thumping sidekick who gives hypocritical lip service to, as Bryan said, the “Bible’s moral standards” while stripping the poor of their dignity and health care. These two posers are more aligned with the vengeful persona of the Old Testament than with the enlightened founders of our nation, or the men and women who got us to the Moon, or who deciphered the human genome.

We are in for a bumpy ride, but we will figure it out. We are up to the challenge. Don’t forget, over the long run we’ve been winning all along.

After the Dark Ages came the Enlightenment. Through the Civil War came emancipation and then suffrage and civil rights. After Dayton came Dover.

Some people are afraid of knowledge. But Darrow believed in the amazing, astounding and extraordinary power of the human mind.

And so do I, Clarence. So do I.

### **Editor’s Note**

The above article is a follow-up to the brief article in the October *Enlightenment* on the unveiling of Clarence Darrow’s statue in Dayton Tennessee on July 14<sup>th</sup>, 2017. Pictures of both Bryan’s and Darrow’s statue were shown.

## **TOUCHDOWN JESUS’ REPLACEMENT READY TO HUG SNOWBIRDS**

*By Duncan Watterworth*

Heading south on Interstate 75 this winter? Be prepared to find Jesus. Two years after his shocking destruction, Touchdown Jesus has risen again from his pond near Munroe, Ohio. But is God onside this time?

If you cruised Interstate 75 between 2005 and 2010, you couldn’t miss the “King of Kings”, a six-story tall statue of Jesus’ head and shoulders rising out of a pond, arms held high. The super-sized, flood lit statue was built at a cost of \$250,000 beside the super-sized Solid Rock Church, an evangelical megachurch.

Every American immediately recognized the two uplifted arms as a football referee’s touchdown signal, and the nickname Touchdown Jesus was widely adopted. But some thought the statue appeared to be sinking, and called it Quicksand Jesus. The colossus certainly glorified, if not Jesus, then at least the church. Although the oversized statue would have looked more at home in Las Vegas than on the Ohio plains, it was a tourist attraction for the town of Munroe, along with the factory outlet mall and two large flea markets just off the interstate. And whether inspiration or abomination, King of Kings or colossal kitsch, the sight of Touchdown Jesus was a delightful break from the tedious interstate scenery.

But then, out of the night sky on the 15th of June 2010, a taste of Armageddon smote the Solid Rock Church. A lightning bolt hurled directly at Jesus, and He lit up like the Fourth of July. Although the statue looked rock solid, the Solid Rock statue was made of flammable styrofoam with a thin fiberglass skin. And it had no lightning protectors. The statue never had a chance. The blazing inferno, reflecting in the pond, was captured on iPhones from the interstate, and makes dramatic viewing on YouTube.

In the wake of the inevitable headline: "Jesus Statue Destroyed by Act of God", people of all metaphysical persuasions were left trying to interpret this event. What did it mean? Did the explanation involve hubris, pride and excess, or idolatry, or simply meteorological probability? Surely believers in the All Powerful would assume that such a high profile and symbolic act would require authorization from the highest levels. What soul-searching and theological debate should precede a decision to rebuild?

The good news for snowbirds is that Jesus has been resurrected. A new statue was erected beside the interstate last fall, with a new design and new materials. The new statue, called Lux Mundi ("light of the world"), is a full body design, with Jesus stepping forward and holding His arms out sideways as if ready to embrace. He has already been dubbed "Hug Me Jesus". And this time He is made of fire resistant materials, and has lightning protection.



Lux Mundi

I'm looking forward to seeing the new Jesus. It makes the drive more tolerable, and might instigate a shopping stop in Munroe. I hope this statue avoids the fate of the last one. But did the Solid Rock congregation sufficiently address the concerns of the All Judging? Was it simply a matter of design? Sure, the new statue is protected from lightning, but how about earthquake, tidal wave, or some sort of plague?

## **Finally: An Effort to Reform Islam – Will It Work?**

Extremists "won't tarnish our religion," says Saudi Arabia's assertive crown prince who opened the first high-level meeting of a kingdom-led alliance of Muslim nations against terrorism, vowing that extremists would no longer "tarnish our beautiful religion".

The powerful Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman said an attack on an Egyptian mosque that killed more than 300 worshippers would galvanise an Islamic military coalition that aimed to counter "terrorism and extremism".

Top defence officials from 40 Muslim-majority nations met in Riyadh on Sunday [26 November]. They are part of an alliance first gathered two years ago by Prince Mohammed, who is also Saudi defence minister. The crown prince has said he would encourage a more moderate and tolerant version of Islam in the ultra-conservative kingdom.

Prince Mohammed told delegates the attack in Egypt "was a very painful occurrence and must make us contemplate in an international and powerful way the role of this terrorism and extremism." Gunmen carrying the flag of Islamic State attacked the mosque in North Sinai.

The group of Muslim nations, called the Islamic Military Counter-Terrorism Coalition, has yet to take any decisive action. Officials say the group would allow members to request or offer assistance to

each other to fight militants. This could include military help, financial aid, equipment, or security expertise.

“The biggest threat from terrorism and extremism is not only killing innocent people and spreading hate, but tarnishing the reputation of our religion and distorting our belief,” Prince Mohammed said.

However, Iraq and Syria, at the forefront of the battle against Islamic State, are not members, nor is mainly Shiite Muslim Iran, the regional rival to mostly Sunni Saudi Arabia.

## **How China Retains Power**

### **The one-party state draws heavily on the tools of democracy**

**An Article in the Melbourne Australia Age by Peter Hartcher**

How has China managed to become the world’s most durable autocracy?

An intriguing new book by an Australian academic argues that it’s because it’s not really an autocracy at all.

The collapse of the Chinese Communist Party has been predicted year in and year out for decades. Yet its grip on the world’s most populous country has been unbroken now for 68 years. “Yes, my prediction was wrong,” wrote prominent American sinologist Gordon Chang when the party outlived the prediction in his 2001 book that it would fall within ten years. “Instead of 2011, the mighty Communist Party of China will fall in 2012. Bet on it.”

Australian academic John Lee made a career out of arguing for the forthcoming collapse of China until he finally went to work for Foreign Affairs Minister Julie Bishop as an adviser last year. Judging by the government’s new white paper on foreign policy, Lee has changed his mind or been overruled.

Their error, and the error of an army of other doomsayers, is entirely understandable. The longevity of the Chinese Communist Party’s rule is unique among modern one-party states. Every day it continues is another record-setting day in defiance of precedent. So, the interesting question, surely, is how they do it?

The answer from John Keane’s new book, *When Trees Fall, Monkeys Scatter*, is that China is not a rigid dictatorship in the model of the Soviet Union but a restless experiment that is endlessly innovating in how to govern. “The big controversial idea at the heart of the book is ‘Don’t think of China as a big, simple case of authoritarianism’. That’s the way three-quarters of my profession thinks of China,” says Keane, a political scientist and University of Sydney professor.

China is, he says, “a political laboratory structured by methods of government that contradict all the standard textbooks of political science.”

And one of its experimental aspects is to draw heavily on the tools of democracy. “The book is basically a catalogue of what are locally called democratic innovations that the Chinese Communist Party has been fostering for four decades,” Keane tells me.

The party uses voting, elections, opinion polls widely and constantly. Keane says that China has an extraordinary total of about 800 polling agencies, and half are independent of the party.

Local villages commonly elect their own leaders. Local and regional governments conduct votes on matters like proposed developments and new parking laws. “In Beijing there was extensive polling by the party leadership to tread very carefully in introducing new public transport prices,” reports Keane.

Democratic methods are used in the private sector, too. Alibaba, the world’s biggest on-line retailer, for instance, held a secret ballot among tens of thousands of staff on how it should allocate a portion of company profits to social causes. The party tries to read public opinion and the public mood by intensively surveying the internet. The party conducts on-line forums and debates on all sorts of matters at many levels. “Even live streaming of public forums is a part of the system,” says Keane.

But hold on. It's a one-party state. There is no alternative. The people have no choice in who governs them. Why does the party bother?

The essential reason is fear.

Before taking the leadership, President Xi Jinping commissioned a year-long study of why Soviet communism collapsed. This is the fate that the Chinese Communist Party's efforts are designed to avoid.

"The party knows that its ultimate resource is popular loyalty to it. They know that if the people get annoyed locally, regionally, certainly nationally, they are sunk. They want to avoid another Tiananmen Square," the 1989 student demonstrations that the party ultimately quashed by shooting the protesters.

### **The Chinese people are not as quiescent as many assume.**

The party uses its democratic methods not to grant democratic freedoms but to manage public grievances and avoid mass uprisings. The Chinese people are not as quiescent as many Western visitors assume. Every year there are an estimated 150,000 protests, rallies, demonstrations, occasionally violent ones, across China.

It's a high priority for the party that these so-called "mass incidents" remain manageable and localised. Where possible, the party even tries to respond to public concerns.

It's sophisticated. Explains Keane, "They use the internet as an early warning device." The People's Daily Online Public Opinion Monitoring Centre, for instance, uses data-harvesting algorithms to send summaries of internet chatter trends in real time to party leaders, he writes. "Often with advice about which language to use in handling hot topics."

This is central to the longevity of the party and it reminds us of an observation by the American political scientist Francis Fukuyama: "All societies, authoritarian and democratic, are subject to decay over time. The real issue is their ability to adapt and eventually fix themselves."

Instead of assuming that one-party systems must fail and become more like ours, perhaps we should be learning from the efforts of China's one-party system to fix itself. If it can learn and adapt and Western democracies cannot, which system ultimately will prevail?

**Way to go Julie!** – On Nov. 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017, Governor General Julie Payette, in a speech to the Canadian Science Policy Conference in Ottawa, drew criticism for simply calling a spade a spade on topics such as global warming, astrology, evolution and medical quackery. On evolution she said, "And we are still debating and still questioning whether life was a divine intervention or whether it was coming out of a natural process let alone, oh my goodness, a random process." Maybe this was not politically correct, and she will no doubt be more cautious in the future, but it was, nevertheless, refreshing.

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