

THE BIRTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF A PHILOSOPHICAL REBEL

Ignorance of the other side's basic positions and arguments is one of the greatest intellectual vices of our times. Certain premises of past great thinkers are often built upon by the culture at large, and by most intellectuals in general, assuming these thinkers were right. But through my investigations of the other side, I've found their thinking to be much more persuasive than that which passes for conventional wisdom in our society. The catch here is that most of those who possess the commanding heights of our society intellectually seldom <sup>seriously</sup> investigate evidence that assaults their intellectual foundations, despite frequent pretensions of "open-mindedness." Those in fundamental disagreement intellectually with those at the top hear the opposing side almost everytime they open a newspaper, watch the TV news, or sit in a classroom. In contrast, those at the top seldom face the opposition's arguments, except perhaps in a crude, popularized form. As I have found, such injunctions to be open-minded by the intellectual elite are usually reserved for practice by the other side, and generally are not for use by the eastern liberal establishment. But even with this ideology omnipresent in the culture, and despite being raised in a deistic liberal democratic family, I engaged in a complete intellectual rebellion that made me into a flaming fundamentalist of a despised sect, and who in politics tends to waver between libertarianism and arch conservatism. Explaining my transition from a deistic liberal democratic background to a fundamentalist conservative/libertarian point of view will be the focus of this paper.

who had been married before, was 31, and my mother, who had not been married before, was 33. My father was a computer programmer (after having been a claims adjuster), while my mother had been a cooking demonstrator for the Columbia Gas Company in Ohio. My mother gave up her career after she married my father. Peculiarly, even though my mother was a woman definitely willing to state her opinions on some subject in my experience, she opted to give up the authority to write checks. When I was young, and had to get a check written for school, my father had to write it. No joint checking account here. This was despite my parents would together sit down once a month to figure out in a long session how to pay the bills. I point out this issue to illustrate how authority was divided between my parents. My father never abused my mother, or us kids (I have a younger brother and sister) physically, though before he died ~~there was a situation where he was~~  
~~seriously broke and in which he would not pay for~~ He always had a job, however, and we never faced poverty or want. We owned our own home throughout my life until well after my father died.

Now I have to explain my relationship with my father, and the kind of person he was since he influenced me more than my mother. He was a great talker, and would frequently talk to me, or my brother and sister as well, for an hour or two at a time. We kids mostly would listen, while he would talk and smoke his Phillip Morris cigarettes on his contour easy chair. He would not talk gossip about the neighbors, or about sports, or even much about his friends. What I heard instead was politics and history, especially military history. World War II interested him greatly, though he had been way too young to fight in it. He would talk about his past relationship with his father and family, and how things were when he was growing up. I heard the "glories" of Watergate, and about our errors in Vietnam a number of times. I distinctly remember him describing

Rosemary Woods and about erased tapes, complete with a diagram he drew

\*On the subject of mental illness, there's a tendency I think to call the mentally ill rich, "eccentric," the mentally ill middle class, "he had a

that described how many times a certain tape had been erased. (I was leaning against his easy chair while he was talking in this case. Other times, we (or I) would be across the room on (say) the couch while he said something). Sometimes the topic would be about computers, the economy, or even science. He once described the lightest to heaviest distillates of oil, from butane to grease, with gasoline and kerosene inbetween.

There were several very important results of the many long talks my father would have with me. (My mother was not one to engage in such monologues). One was a longer attention span, and a creation of intellectual curiosity in me. His giving me so much of his time, as well as doing this with my sister and brother also, showed his love for us. (He would also, when mom wasn't around, tuck us in bed and kiss us goodnight). I gained a love for reading also from my mother, who would read us stories before we went to bed. At night I would read in bed after my parents tucked me in and turned off my lights. I would use flashlights and/or small, portable nightlights "secretly" so I could continue reading. The result of this was I was a good student in school as long as I can remember.\*

I did have some serious problems in school, but they were emotional and social, not intellectual. I was a favorite target of bullies in fourth grade after we moved to a new home in Pennsylvania. I would be teased, and would cry easily, which must have provided them with an incentive to target me again. Interestingly, my father and mother never once told me that "Boys shouldn't cry." The result was in the fifth grade when I moved on to a middle school I was placed into a learning disabilities resource room for the fifth and sixth grades because of emotional problems. The classrooms were in a normal school so that the kids could be mainstreamed easily by giving them classes just down the hall or on the next floor. There were about ten students to a class--and two teachers. Since Pennsylvania has

\*My father told me once or twice my kindergarten teacher predicted I would be held back at least one grade before I graduated from high school. He enjoyed me proving that prediction false, which it turned out to be. He died before I graduated from high school, however.

an en local parentis statute, the teachers had the authority to enforce discipline--and these teachers sure needed it! Most of the other kids were very rebellious, and violated rules all the time, not to mention also being slow learners who couldn't read and write well. A couple of times I would help one or two of them on their work, and they would only want the answers. I would avoid giving them to them, and try to have them find the answers on their own by drawing attention to this or that part of the reading. Especially during the sixth garde, I was mostly mainstreamed, and had three or four classes I would go to a day.

My greatest weakness was in sports. I had no physique, and little coordination. Nor did I really understand the rules to games such as football or basketball. When I started playing the latter two sports in fifth grade for the first time really, I was lost. Athletics were a constant torment to me, and I wished I never had a gym class. I was constantly teased for being bad in sports, especially in basketball.

I remembered seeing a cartoon on TV--an episode of a rather forgettable cartoon called "The Brady Kids," a spin-off from "The Brady Bunch" sit-com. It described a conflict in one episode between "brains and brawn" in school, and in this conflict I chose brains, since I at this time reasoned by inventing tools one could defeat the guy with brawn. At this time my father tried to help me some in this area of athletics. Although he had never been much of a sports fan (I can't remember him watching sports on TV hardly at all, except for the Rose Bowl game), he decided to try to correct my weakness in this area some. He would force me to play catch with him, which I can't hardly remember doing before with him. He also taught me a little about boxing, and had me box against my brother Brian at least once. (Brian is only about 1½ years younger than I am). Also, I did fairly often play games outside with some of the neighborhood kids, such as tag, "baby in the air," and kickball. But none of these efforts or

activities solved my weaknesses in sports.

As I look back on it now, I gained a very strong inferiority complex from gym class in the fifth through eighth grades in my middle school, which still affects me now. Since I had no physique, I constantly pressured my mother whenever she considered buying or making a shirt for me to get/make one with long sleeves. Then "they" couldn't see how unmuscular my arms were. I almost never wore (say) some colored rock and roll T-shirt in high school, and still don't. I remember seeing a guy who was real smart in math from one of my classes always running around with a T-shirt on, exposing his very thin arms, which I thought was stupid to do. Also, whenever I end up playing in some sport for some reason, and do badly, it still is very hard to fight away the tears. This occurred most recently when I was out on a group date with people in my church a couple of years ago. I knew intellectually since this was my second time bowling, I would not do well at all, for obvious reasons. But knowledge of this fact, or that this activity was only for fun, did not keep back the tears completely. One's present free will always cancel out at whim deep seated emotional responses at whim. When I worked one summer in Yellowstone National Park six years ago, merely seeing people play basketball in an employee gym there was enough to cause me to leave with some tears in my eyes without playing at all or being asked to play. Due to these failures in athletics, I turned to reading even more.

Another result of all the bullying and teasing, which did gradually drop off as I got older and into high school was a total lack of caring about what my peers thought of me. I desired tolerance and being left alone, not friendship, and I consciously thought this. The only reason why I used acne cream on my face was due to my mother's say so. I didn't care myself that someone saw any pimples on my face because I wasn't out to please them or make friends with them. I never dated in high school, and didn't date until

after I started attending the services of my church during the junior and senior years of college.\* I wasn't in the high school social scene at all, and didn't want to be. These attitudes did have some positive effects: I never got drunk or took drugs in high school. One guy in college I knew, my suitemate in McDonel Hall, was very surprised at my attitudes on things. He told me I was the only person he knew who wasn't constantly worried about and talking about what his or her friends thought about him. I did go through the ritual of trying to conceal my intelligence while talking to kids, but I never would refuse to answer questions in class or get lower grades to increase my popularity. As I see it now, <sup>of not caring about what other people think</sup> this attitude set me up exquisitely well for Ayn Rand's message.

To simplify the layout of my intellectual autobiography, I will first describe the development of my views on politics, and then later take up separately the discussion of my religious views.

My father had been a good liberal democrat, and so was my mother,

she wasn't vocal about the subject and her parents had been Republicans. My father gave \$50 to McGovern's election campaign in 1972. I was taken along on the trip to downtown L.A. to a rather poor section of town where the local McGovern campaign headquarters was, where he went in to give the money. I heard all the "glories" of Watergate repeatedly. I remember seeing Nixon's resignation speech. <sup>Before this,</sup> I remember my father one time wouldn't let us kids see the beginning of the "Wizard of Oz" because on another station he wanted to hear Haldeman (I believe it was) say something on TV. The subject of Vietnam came up also, but my father didn't harp on the morality of the war (as I remember) but on its stupidity. He compared the British attitude towards winning the American Revolutionary War versus the colonists' guerrilla war with our troops trying to put down the Vietcong guerrillas. It just cost more than it was worth, so they then

and we now just gave up. I distinctly remember the collapse of Vietnam

\*I did not really learn how to get along with people before joining my church and attending its services. I couldn't "read" people hardly at all before this time, and I didn't have any real friends.

in 1975. I remember pictures taken from inside the plane of people hurriedly running to get inside the holds of huge American planes that were already starting to take off as the communists closed in. I remember pictures on TV of Vietnamese fleeing on boats from Da Nang, which was a city I had never heard of before, but I never forget that name since. My father showed me an article from one of the Philadelphia newspapers with about five maps of Vietnam showing how in less than two months South Vietnam fell to North Vietnam. He said the crack up at the end was remarkably fast. I didn't take either Watergate or Vietnam's fall personally in any way. I didn't see it as proof of America's wickedness or weakness, and had never been told to place any faith in Nixon to begin with. They were just major events.

My father though was not a complete liberal in some areas. On the issue of racism his views were strange. He never once used terms such as "niggers" or other derogatory terms. The Gardina, California\*neighborhood we lived in was an integrationist dream when we first moved there when I was about three years old. It was about 60% white, 10% Asian, and 30% black. However, he moved when most of the whites moved out four years later. I remember him at the time attack forced busing by saying would never allow my sister to be raped or my to be attacked by gangs in the Los Angeles school system. I also remember him saying west coast people, including the blacks, were more friendly than those out east. The first grade class I went to was almost all black, except for me and an Asian girl. I did play with the black kids on my block, as well as with the <sup>kids of the</sup> Japanese family my mother was fairly close friends with. I certainly wasn't raised a racist in any traditional sense. But . . . ? I also remember him telling me blacks have a sixth sense that instantly tells them if the white near them was racist. He told me of a black man who sat near him in a waiting room for an office where job interviews were being held. As my father explained it, the black man was somewhat confused as he looked at him. Why?

\*One of the innermost suburbs of L.A.

The black man couldn't instantly make up his mind whether my father was a racist or not. I'm not too sure what kind of conclusion to draw about whether or not my father was a racist (certainly my mother never said anything that could be taken to be racist), but it is interesting to think about for me.

The first election campaign I cared about at all was the presidential campaign of 1976. My father, though originally he wanted Udall in the primary, wanted Jimmy Carter to beat Jerry Ford, and, following him, so did I. In 1980, I disliked Edward Kennedy, and thought him too liberal. Even though I was very much a Democrat, and disappointed when Jimmy Carter lost to Reagan, I already had begun to move to the right. I remember making a poster for my social science class that asked people to vote for Jimmy Carter and against Reagan in 1980. I felt in 1980 that if Jimmy Carter had had more time, the Federal Reserve would have lowered inflation enough for him to win. Now why I was opposed to Edward Kennedy in 1980 I can't put down to some specific stand of his. He was just "too liberal" for me, though my father here again must have indirectly influenced me. He did not like JFK much, and said the greatest achievement of his administration was getting his head blown off. (That's how he put it). He had told me about the trials of the Kennedy family, about how JFK's older brother Joseph had died in World War II, and about how RFK looked to be a good replacement for JFK, but had gotten assassinated. He talked more than once about Mary Jo Kopeckne and Chappaquiddick. Some of this must have influenced me, for at this stage I was definitely not an independent thinker.

But by the time of the 1982 midterm elections, I had switched parties and had moved far to the right. In 1980 I had opposed Reagan as being too conservative, but in 1984 I was so irked at his compromises with liberals I would have voted Libertarian in protest.\* The cause of

this transition was a badly battered copy of Barry Goldwater's "The Conscience". \*Why I didn't really vote that year in the general elections was because by then my church had convinced me of its view Christians shouldn't participate in politics. But it is still perfectly permissible to stand off to the side and argue whether one candidate is better than another, for often this is the



of a Conservative. I bought it for 2½¢ (along with another book for 2½¢ making for 5¢) at a Goodwill store in Concord, Michigan in either late 1980 or early 1981. Now I had heard of Goldwater before. My father with great relish described him being crushed by Lyndon Johnson's landslide victory in 1964. So I read this book, found its arguments quite plausible, and for a time considered myself a conservative Democrat. But since being a "conservative Democrat" is an oxymoron in the state of Michigan, I soon somewhat reluctantly became a Republican. I thought if I had lived in the South I would have stayed a Democrat, but since I lived in Michigan this was impossible, for I knew the Democratic party in Michigan was liberal to the core.

I continued to read various conservative books even while I was in high school. (I graduated in 1984). The source from which I got many of these books was interesting. The contributors to the public library in Jackson ran a small book store two days a week with their volunteer labor, and they sold paperback books for a mere ten cents apiece. One could even exchange books at no cost by giving them so many paperbacks you didn't want for 10¢ each, and then getting back a similar number from them at 10¢ each. So for \$1 I could buy 10 books easily, so I took full advantage of this situation to hunt through the old paperbacks for any conservative books I could find. John Stormer's book None Dare Call It Treason in particular exerted a profound influence on me. It, like Goldwater's book, was an artifact of the 1964 presidential election. For this reason I don't consider a large amount of the concern about Communism, external or internal, a hysteria. Sure, overkills occurred, but likewise I could take extremist quotes from Malcolm X (who many people are trying to build into some kind of hero these days), Elbridge Cleaver, Stokely Carmichael, and other assorted Black Panthers and say "civil rights hysteria" also existed. But the latter extremism doesn't discredit the basic concerns of the civil rights movement, nor did the overkills of the anti-communists prove anti-communist to be invalid.\* We should always remind ourselves Stalin, by starving to death 20 million Ukrainian peasants and sending at least 10 million more people to the Gulags, has a human rights record worse than that of Adolf Hitler. Mao during his regime killed more of

John Stormer talked briefly about Joseph McCarthy, and how many of his concerns were not misplaced, how his message and person got smeared media. Now I had heard of McCarthy before because I had by this time (and still am) an avid editorial page reader. My father had also mentioned him once or twice in the past. Judging from the vicious polemics launched against him, every bit as bad as the ones he launched against his opponents, people weren't all that terribly afraid of him, or else they wouldn't have said anything. (I've enclosed a copy of his argument here for the record). John Stormer also talked about how many liberals and socialists, although they weren't communists, would ignorantly do things helping them. He also praised the John Birch Society, which was an organization I had heard my father describe as ultra-conservative. Since I had already noticed the liberals were wrong in many areas, I decided they could be wrong about McCarthy as well. So I went to the library and pulled out William F. Buckley and L. Brent Bozell's McCarthy and His Enemies. While I never read it systematically from beginning to end, I could see plainly many of the people McCarthy publicly accused had had some very suspicious records. Also, instead of thousands of accused people and a "reign of terror," I found out only 46\*people had been publicly named by McCarthy. Once I heard Phil Donahue say McCarthy destroyed a generation of writers, which was a statement wildly off base--but how many people these days know it is? Now Buckley and Bozell weren't trying to make McCarthy into some perfect human being who was always right. One character named Leo Cherne, a statistician, counted 66 criticisms of McCarthy in the book.\*\* They focused solely on his anti-communist investigations, and did not cover his unscrupulous campaign tactics, for example. Their basic argument was that McCarthy's concerns were correct basically, but he didn't do his homework many times, and was inclined towards making extreme statements he couldn't really prove fully. Instead of saying, "There are 205 card carrying communists working for the State Department," he should have

\*William F. Buckley and L. Brent Bozell, McCarthy and His Enemies (Chicago: Henry Regenery, 1954), p. 273.

\*\*Ibid., p. xii. (This is the forward of the 1961 edition)

said, "There are 205 people who are serious security risks working in the State Department." Of course, the latter charge wouldn't get as many big headlines in the newspapers. On the subject of McCarthy people's emotions get easily totally bent out of shape, but let's apply some reason to the situation and realize McCarthy's enemies were out to get him every bit as much as he tried to nail them in return, causing an enormous amount of bias on each side of this controversy.

Also, Buckley and Bozell describe that the Tydings committee was determined to clear the people McCarthy had named, and Buckley and Bozell expertly critique this committee's clearing process. Tydings hardly was a person with no axe to grind. Owen Lattimore, for instance, was accused of having "a desk in the State Department" and having close ties to the State Department. When Lattimore denied this, and said he never had taken Lauchin Currie's mail at the White House, the counsel for the McCarren committee, Robert Morris, whipped out a personal letter written to E.C. Carter by Lattimore. In it he said, "Currie asked me to take care of his correspondence while he is away . . . ." Mr. Lattimore, after briefly talking to his lawyer, said: "Mr. Morris, I should like to add to what I have just said that this refreshes my recollection . . . ."\* Lattimore was later indicted for perjury for this incident. It was evidence like this that showed me the popular view of McCarthy was plainly off base, but even bring up such a view is the purest heresy in liberal eyes. But read McCarthy and His Enemies, one finds out conventional wisdom needs some serious revision on this subject.\*\* Perhaps, thirty years from now, historians will be able to write more objectively on this subject, just as they are starting to become more objective about the Industrial Revolution and 19th century capitalism and can keep their politics out of their historical analysis.

Another two books that interested me and that I borrowed around this time was James Burnham's Suicide of the West, and (I felt a bit shameful

\*Ibid., p. 155-156.

\*\*It should be noted that as the Russian and east bloc government's archives are made available to Western historians, many disputes about the Cold War will be able to be settled. For instance, I remember a column two years back by George Will

and secretive as I took it home with me) The Blue Book of the John Birch Society. I found the former to be quite interesting in political theory, especially for pointing out people may hold certain beliefs, but in practice some of the beliefs may clash, forcing choices to be made. Also interesting was the view the liberal seldom or never sees an enemy to the left. (In fairness, many traditional conservatives seldom see a threat from the right, unless they have libertarian, anti-authoritarian tendencies). The latter book I read just to see what Robert Welch had to say for himself. I wasn't totally persuaded the first time I read it through, but I found his idea of getting conservatives on the offensive and creating issues for liberals which he interpreted to mean that as societies grow older, they demand more government to confront to be very wise. He also discussed Spengler's view of history, <sup>(i.e. social-</sup> ~~ism)~~ <sup>thus</sup> ~~dooming them,~~ and slammed Toynbee's <sup>interpretation.\*</sup> He also plainly advocated isolationism, and thought American involvement in World War I was a great error.\*\* (Remember, he wrote this about 1958, when isolationism was something for liberals to attack retrograde conservatives on, due to the error of the "American Firsters" just prior to World War II). He made a statement to the effect he would rather have a government of 100,000 thieving bureaucrats than 1 million conscientious bureaucrats because the size of government was the problem, not its efficiency or honesty.

The best example I know of Welch's idea of putting conservatives on the offensive in recent history was how Reagan derailed the nuclear freeze movement in 1983 with his "Star Wars" speech. The liberals had been on the offensive with big rallies and marches (especially in Europe) pushing for a nuclear freeze, and conservatives on the defensive trying to argue against it. But, suddenly, with this speech, Reagan flip-flopped this whole situation. He pushed for an ABM/laser system based in outer space that could shoot down incoming ballistic missiles coming in from Russia (or perhaps from some Third World country). By arguing for an ABM/SDI system, the

\*My Western Civilization history teacher at Jackson Community College was a big fan of Toynbee's, so I vaguely recognized this name when I encountered it a couple of years later.

\*\*Welch was opposed to the Vietnam war until near its end. (Ironical?)

conservatives were now on the offensive in the U.S., and liberals now had to suddenly argue against a defensive system that couldn't kill anybody, but only save lives. In the U.S., the nuclear freeze movement took a hit that it never recovered from long before the INF treaty was signed. Reagan (very inadvertently) changed the ground for debate, and without knowing it applied Welch's advice.

The main reason for taking the communists seriously is if\* they take their own ideology seriously, they have to be aggressive and expansionistic. Marx said that the world could not be half communist and half capitalist since the capitalist part would "contaminate" the half communist part.\*\* If the process of dialectical materialism is to necessarily and inevitably result in a one world "classless" communist society, it is the job of every true believing\*\*\* communist to promote this condition. If Lenin said, 'As long as capitalism and socialism exist we cannot live in peace; in the end one or the other will triumph--a funeral dirge will be sung over the Soviet Republics or over world capitalism,' or Khrushchev that "We will bury you," concerns about communism were not misplaced since people generally act upon their spoken ideology if it is in their own self-interest to do so. (And what ruling dictatorship want to run the world?) <sup>anywhere</sup> ~~wouldn't~~ "The United States will eventually fly the Communist Red Flag . . . the American people will hoist it themselves" (Nikita Khrushchev in a speech in Bucharest, Rumania, June 19, 1962). On top of this, you can add traditional Russian nationalism (which was plainly appealed to during World War II by Stalin--"The Great Patriotic War") as a motivator, even if it conflicts with communist ideology in certain particulars. The Russian <sup>ruling elite</sup> ~~out~~ of their own national self-interest and desire to protect communism, would have built atomic weapons regardless of whether the United States used them on Japan or not at the end of World War

II. So long as the capability to build them existed, they would have built

\*These days, it seems only some Western university professors do so any more.

\*\*Finally, a prophecy Marx was correct in! (i.e. Eastern Europe in 1989).

\*\*\*That is, if they take their own ideology seriously. When Gorbachev has legislation passed creating a right to private property, the communist faith obviously is dead as a motivator in the countries that experienced it.

them, even if we wouldn't have built them at all. All nations tend to strive to get military advantages over their enemies, and building A-bombs if they can is only a very unpleasant example of this process at work. (Why did India build the bomb? To get an edge on Pakistan<sup>or on someone else</sup>). Fortunately for us these days, the communists have lost all faith in the power of their ideology, but until they did under Gorbachev, this inherently expansionistic ideology, as well as fascism and nazism in the thirties and forties<sup>were</sup>, was a threat.

On top of this, if the basic values of the Russian government and the United States differ, the Cold War was inevitable. Particular personalities would<sup>not</sup> have mattered much since the underlying ideologies were so opposed. One side maintains private property is a right, profits are moral, democracy is the only truly legitimate form of government since it puts some restraint on the rulers,<sup>the</sup> freedoms of speech, religion, press, and assembly are inalienable, and that the God of the Bible exists and should be obeyed. The other side maintains property is theft unless owned by the collective in common, profits are immoral, democracy is a fraud, and unnecessary since the leaders know what is best for the people, that the press is to serve the ideological purposes of the state, that religion is to be purged and persecuted, and assemblies of people which oppose the "dictatorship of the proletariat" are to be broken up, that individuals are to only serve the collective (i.e. the state), that any opposition to "social reform" (i.e. the collectivizing of farmland) is to be ruthlessly suppressed, and that religion is "the opiate of the people" and should be destroyed. Obviously, the two sides disagree on so many fundamental issues conflict was inevitable, especially if one side thinks its ideology has to takeover the world and that it is inevitable that it does so. Fortunately, for all parties involved, and the future of the human race, no final hot war occurred during this conflict.

Another book that had a serious influence on me was William E. Simon's A Time for Truth, which drew upon another book I also read by Dan

Smoot called The Business End of Government. Both of these books showed the failures of government intervention and regulation on business. Simon's book (it was coauthored with Edith Efron) described one incident I particularly remembered. A meat packing plant owned by Armour (I believe) had a long tube through which meat was ground and pushed. The USDA came along and insisted a hole be put in it so they could inspect the meat. Armour complied. But then OSHA came along and insisted the hole be closed for violating safety regulations. Armour couldn't win. Or, Dan Smoot described many of OSHA's abuses, in particular one incident in which the company was fined \$500 after a worker ripped off a hole cover and committed suicide by jumping into<sup>A</sup> hole. OSHA was acting as if only the employer was responsible for safety, and not the employee at all. Both made a more philosophical case that with freedom the marketplace would avoid many abuses and inefficiencies and would be self-correcting. For instance, if an employer runs an unsafe plant, a union could be formed employees would quite and/or sue the employer, etc.\*

One theory I adopted at the time, but later dumped, was the infamous John Birch Society conspiracy theory. In brief, this theory holds that the Rockefellers, Rothschilds, and certain other extremely wealthy men helped finance, create, and control communism<sup>\*\*</sup> so they could make money off of wars for their corporations and turn the whole world into a one world socialist-fascist state through the U.N. They stress the idea that these wealthy men hate competition against their companies, so as a result they want to use government regulations and taxes to squash upstarts since beating them by lowering prices and/or raising quality costs too much in profits. These rich men want an economy like that of Nazi Germany or Fascist Italy in which the government doesn't actually own the means of production, but through taxes, tariffs, wage and price controls, and other regulations there is

\*Obviously, I am not going to write a book here defending laissez-faire capitalism. That isn't the purpose of this essay.

\*\*They maintain also these international bankers created Hitler as well so that the stage would be set for another war to make money off of.

effectively total governmental control over what is now "private" property. Property becomes a burden, not a blessing. The rich, in this theory, have special connections in the bureaucracy of this-to-be-formed fascist state that they call the shots and make lots of profits since the regulations are designed to crush their opponents, not them.

This theory is pushed in the book None Dare Call It Conspiracy by Gary Allen, which I admit I have read, and another called The Naked Capitalist, which draws upon Quigley's Tragedy and Hope. The John Birch Society zealous<sup>y</sup> pushes this theory even now--that the Rockefellers are telling Gorbechev what to do--but this part of it has to be nonsense. If this was so, then why did Gorbechev not only allow more freedom in his country, but allow socialism to collapse in eastern Europe in 1989 by failing to send in the tanks? Why not send in the Red army, if Rockefeller wanted to enslave eastern Europe? (This is the way they think). Furthermore, the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), and the Trilateral Commission may have lots of members in many presidential administration's cabinets, but this does not explain the fact that policies can change greatly from one administration to another. The changes in the policies in the shift from Jimmy Carter's administration to Reagan's shows there are differences of opinion among these two groups' members. They dominated the cabinets of both Reagan and Carter--and yet produced very different policies. Sure, as shown in the books East Minus West Equals Zero by Werner Keller and Western Technology and Soviet Development by Anthony Sutton the five year plans were financed and/or <sup>its</sup> industry was built through Western businessmen. But this only shows a mindless desire to make money selling rope to the communists, not a conspiracy that controls the communists. Furthermore, if they are so powerful, why don't they just suppress the opposition by not allowing any mainstream publishers, news-papers and magazines to publish conservative columnists or authors? George Will certainly shouldn't be getting published in Newsweek or the Washington



Post if this conspiracy is as all-powerful as the Birchers suggest.

Now I have to admit I used to believe in this conspiracy theory, but clearly it can't be true. I still do believe various powerful rich men influence the governments in their countries to pass regulations hurting their competition (including foreign competition) and to get subsidies for their own companies. The billion dollar Chrysler bailout is an excellent example of this. Notice that the New Left says things like the John Birch Society conspiracy theory all the time, minus the part about the Rockefellers-Rothschilds controlling Russia. It's a well known fact businessmen are always trying to lobby the government for subsidies, tariffs, regulations, etc. that help their own company and/or industry at the expense of the taxpayer, consumer, or (often foreign) competition. The New Left says the solution here is a woolly-eyed, decentralized socialism, while I (and the Birchers) say a policy of lassiz-faire is the solution. A separation of business and state is required, for the same reason church and state are separate: to avoid the evils resulting from entangling the two. If the government didn't have the power to raise protective tariffs, give subsidies, pass regulations that hurt one company at the expense of another, etc., such activities wouldn't occur.

But most important in my political development, as well as my views on certain fundamental disputes in philosophy is that favorite unperson of the American left, Ayn Rand. Early, in 1983, while looking through the paperback books at the bookstore I mentioned above, I encountered a book with a very peculiar title, The New Left: The Anti-Industrial Revolution. The author's name--"Ayn Rand"--was put in big letters over the book's title, telling me, "This author is famous." Of course, I had never heard of her before. Her\*title confused me, and so I thought, if this is a left wing book, I'll just dump it off here and exchange it next week for another book.

It turned out to be one of the most fascinating books I ever read.  
\*Or; I should say, "his," since I thought she was a man at first.

This collection of essays I found very powerful. Most people who for the first time encounter Ayn Rand do so in the form of The Fountainhead\* or Atlas Shrugged, but I encountered her by a very different route: non-fiction first, then fiction. She used the term "epistemology" in the first essay in the book, so I soon found myself looking it up in a dictionary. The essay "The Student 'Rebellion'" was a devastating critique of the Berkeley student uprising in 1964. It analyzed the origins in philosophy of the students' ideas, which certainly was an unusual even for me. She attacked the environmentalists in the essay "The Anti-Industrial Revolution." From this essay, I can trace much of the anti-environmentalist movement (what little of it there is). For instance, Edith Efron's The Apocalypics draws upon it philosophically, for she was a personal friend and follower of Ayn Rand. But the essay that especially attracted me was "The Comprachicos," which is a devastating critique of the American educational system. She stressed how its purpose was to create people who can't think for themselves. She was especially critical of John Dewey's\*\*"Progressive" method as applied to preschools, and advocated Montessori's approach in reply.

But what especially "got" me personally was this experience she described, especially in light of the prior essay to this one, "The Age of Envy:"

"The thinking child is not antisocial (he is, in fact, the only type of child fit for social relationships). When he develops his first values and conscious convictions, particularly as he approaches adolescence, he feels an intense desire to share them with a friend who would understand them (which certainly had been true of me); if frustrated, he feels an acute sense of loneliness. (Loneliness is specifically the experience of this type of child--or adult; it is the

experience of those who have something to offer. The emotion that

\*"When I first noticed the decline in reading during the late sixties, I began asking my large introductory classes, and other group of younger students to which I spoke, what books really count for them. Most are silent, puzzled by the question. The notion of books as companions is foreign to them. . . . Sometimes one student will say 'the Bible.' . . . There is always a girl who mentions Ayn Rand's The Fountainhead, a book, although hardly literature, which, with its sub-Nietzschean assertiveness, excites somewhat eccentric youngsters to a new way of life," (Allan Bloom, The Closing of the American Mind, p. 62.)

\*\*John Stormer's effort mentioned above was also very critical of him

drives conformists to 'belong,' is not loneliness, but fear--the fear of intellectual independence and responsibility. The thinking child seeks equals; the conformist seeks protectors.) One of the most evil aspects of modern schools is the spectacle of a thinking child trying to 'adjust' to the pack, trying to hide his intelligence (and his scholastic grades) and to act like 'one of the boys.' He never succeeds, and is left wondering helplessly: 'What is wrong with me? What do I lack? What do they want?' He has no way of knowing that his lack consists in thinking of such questions. The questions imply that there are reasons, causes, principles, values--which are the very things the pack mentality dreads, evades and resents. He has no way of knowing that one's psycho-epistemology (that is, the way an individual person's mind processes information--EVS) cannot be hidden, that it shows in many subtle ways, and that the pack rejects him because they sense his factual (i.e. judging) orientation, his psycho-epistemological self-confidence and lack of fear. (Existentially, such loners lack social self-confidence and, more often than not, are afraid of the pack, but the issue is not existential.) Gradually, the thinking child gives up the realm of human relationships. He draws the conclusion that he can understand science, but not people, that people are unknowable, that they are outside the province of reason, that some other cognitive means are required, which he lacks. Thus he comes to accept a false dichotomy, best designated as reason versus people, which his teachers are striving to instill and reinforce. The conformists, in the face of that dichotomy, give up reason; he gives up people. Repressing his need of friendship, he gives up concern with human values, with moral questions, with social issues, with the entire realm of the humanities" (her emphasis, Ayn Rand, The New Left: The Anti-Industrial Revolution (New York: New American Library, 1971), p. 213-214.

Here, at last, I felt someone explained how I felt. When in eleventh grade my mother made me to start seeing a psychologist because (as she saw it) I had few friends, I smuggled along with book for one visit. I unveiled it and showed it to the psychologist at a dramatic moment. I now also know this was how she felt when younger. In her first novel We the Living she has a section on her <sup>heroine Kira</sup> trying to socialize in an office to try to safeguard her job which brings up the same questions. (We the Living is semi-autobiographical, as many first novels are).

One note in her thinking concerned me. I could see even in The New Left: The Anti-Industrial Revolution she was not a religious woman from the tone of a few of her statements. Yet at this time I was just now starting to come in contact with my present church. (My mother did not raise me in the faith I now hold, nor did my father). Since then I have read all her novels and much of her nonfiction, and I now now here to be one of the most flaming atheists imaginable. Even Madalyn Murray O'hair would have a hard time <sup>equalling some of</sup> Ayn Rand's rhetoric on the subject. John Galt's speech in Atlas Shrugged has to qualify as one of the most atheistic documents in popular circulation (remember, this novel has sold millions of copies, unlike, say, Russell's Why I Am Not a Christian), although Robert Heinlein's Stranger In a Strange Land would <sup>rank</sup> a close second for its offensiveness.\*

The strength of her atheism didn't hit me until I reread parts of Atlas Shrugged for my research in English class my senior year of high school. For this class, for which the only assignments due were three huge term papers all semester long, we had to do a report concerning George Orwell's 1984. (Why? because that year was 1984!) It was suggested that you could compare 1984 with some other writer (Ayn Rand and Kurt Vonnegut were suggested), or do some sort of report on it that did more than rehash the plot. Now when I had first read 1984 in the summer of 1982, I had been so badly frightened by it I had \*It strikes me as comical some fundamentalists attack and try to remove from the schools such trivial books as Catcher in the Rye and ignore books like Atlas Shrugged. If you are going to burn books (and I certainly would not), burn the right ones!

put it inside a much larger book so I wouldn't have to see the spine of it on my bookshelf when I looked at it. Now since I had read 1984 before, and was very familiar with Ayn Rand, so I chose to compare and contrast the two authors' messages. Even now I think that the only really worthwhile literary analysis I have done was comparing these two in my 15 or so page report on them. I never could get out of Shakespeare or some poem all the symbolism and deep meanings my teachers were always finding in them. I in college what later liked Plato in the Protagoras had to say on the subject of interpreting the poets: "No one can interrogate poets about what they say, and most often when they are introduced into the discussion some say the poet's meaning is one thing and some another, for the topic is one on which nobody can produce a conclusive argument (347e)." Plato exaggerates here, but his point is well taken as far as I'm concerned: There's lots of subjectivism in the field of literary analysis, so I intend to avoid it.

This class in high school was very interesting for the intellectual conflicts in it among the students. The basic format was a requirement that the students write three 15 page term papers all semester long, and there were plenty of opportunities for students to read <sup>them</sup> aloud and discuss their papers and projects. One guy named Alan Graft played the resident liberal, Joel Hamkins the libertarian, and I was the conservative. The teacher had us students read aloud or report from our papers whenever we finished them, and class discussion could be quite intense, with other students getting in their say as well. In one report "cycle," Alan had a report on global warming and the greenhouse effect, Joel one on the Social Security system's flaws and inevitable collapse, and mine was a broad-based assault on government regulation of business. Clearly, the selection of topics showed our biases.

Now during this class was my first real contact with a libertarian, and he tried to sell me on libertarianism. He showed me his party card once or twice, as I remember. It was through his arguments that on social

issues other than abortion my conservatism collapsed. He argued that drugs should be legalized back in 1984, long before such a notion became widely discussed. It seemed unthinkable, but I couldn't deny his logic, for his political premises and mine were the same: AYN RAND. If the government shouldn't have anti-trust laws, a Federal Reserve, or OSHA, and should leave private property alone, then it should leave our social lives alone as well. I distinctly remember being at a meeting of a political club at high school after school one day. Alan Graft was reading aloud from a paper written by Joel advocating the legalization of drugs and talking about the stupidity of "victimless crimes." (Alan was reading it aloud instead of Joel because Joel was tied up doing something else at the beginning of this meeting of the club). Alan was commenting on it while he read it aloud, and was quite witty in his put-downs, with assorted audience members joining in sometimes. But I found Joel's logic unanswerable, and I had to face the charge of hypocrisy on freedom (giving it in some places and denying it in others) whenever I faced libertarianism. "That's nice you stupid hypocritical conservative that you would abolish the minimum wage laws and allow people to work for \$4.24 an hour if they wished to. But why do you want to deny me the freedom to put into my body any chemical I wish, if you will allow me to work for any wage I wish?" Hence, I capitulated that very day to libertarianism on such issues of prostitution, gambling, and drugs. (I was already in favor of legalizing pornography due to Ayn Rand's First Amendment absolutism, which equals the ACLU's on the subject).

However, I never felt very comfortable on the subject of legalizing such things because of my religious beliefs. I also abhorred anarchism, and could never buy into the view some libertarians held that no government should exist at all. Emotionally, I was so committed to law and order my passions sometimes tempt me to abolish certain basic constitutional rights in times of emergency for criminals, such as the writ of habeas corpus, if society was so crime-ridden no one felt safe on the streets. In such

situations the ACLU's mentality gives so many rights to criminals that nobody else could safely walk the streets, day or night. I deeply resented the ACLU mentality that because a policeman forgot to slash the t or dot an i legally a murderer should go free. We emphasize procedural law so much the substantive law is destroyed. The murderer is clearly the greater threat here, not the government. Recently when the drug cartel in Columbia gunned down <sup>with machine guns</sup> in broad daylight before a huge crowd a presidential candidate opposed to them, I got so emotional about how basic democratic processes and law and order were being subverted by a enormously powerful criminal element that I felt that government should slap into jail such people without trail or other legal niceties, or even declare war on them and gun them down on sight. Intellectually, I believed such consitutional rights should be given even to the drug lords and their henchmen, but emotionally it was a very different story. In emergencies, and Columbia's situation certainly qualified as one with the vast private armies the drug lords could finance, I felt that obeying the legalities of Miranda and the exclusionary rule cause much more evil than they prevent. Hence I tended to sit on the fence between libertarianism's belief in totaly freedom from government control so long as you didn't start the use of force against someone, and conservatism's emphasis on law and order and community values. Even now, I still haven't really solved this problem, leaving me a man of "mixed premises" as Ayn Rand would say, although the libertarian solution I would assent to as the best human solution to the problem of government prior to the millenium. Its hard to force people to be moral.

However, I never really could buy libertarianism's foreign policy of isolationism, which the John Birch Society also advocated many times also. I wanted foreign alliances like NATO to stop the communists. I didn't want the communists to take over the rest of the world, and leave us standing alone, an island of freedom in a sea of slavery. <sup>in the book The God That Failed,</sup> (One liberal once) described communism as a vast one company town nobody is allowed to leave ever, with the government taking the place of (say) the Pullman <sup>car</sup> company). The John

Birchers also pushed isolationism many times\* in their writings, but I couldn't really buy into it. (I was a fairly regular reader of American Opinion since my high school library got it. It was a depressing magazine because it was always talking about the latest disaster the liberals or communists were putting over America and the West). I even read a chapter out of a book by the libertarian presidential candidate of 1980 justifying these views, but intellectually it just wasn't persuasive to me. It wasn't nonsense by any means, and in some cases it might be a good idea. <sup>Much more recently,</sup> I found Pat Buchanan's arguments against the Persian Gulf War to be intellectually quite appealing, though I could never quite go really all the way in accepting them. Earlier than this, I remember Jimmy Carter on TV proclaiming we would defend the versus any (Russian) attacks, with all the Congress in a combined session praising him by thunderous applause. I thought he was stupid for making this commitment, for it was half way around the world and we got far less oil from there than did western Europe and Japan, who also were both much closer to it as well. They--the Europeans and Japan--should defend it, I felt then, not us. Thus, I did have some isolationist tendencies when younger, and to some extent they still tend to affect me, even if intellectually I liked the aggressive stance Reagan took with the communists in Nicaragua and elsewhere. I really liked the idea of financing on the cheap anti-communist guerrilla movements in <sup>places like</sup> Nicaragua, Angola, Mozambique, and Cambodia. Here we were on the offensive for once, instead of trying to "contain" communism and capitulate to the Brezhnev doctrine of "once communist, always communist." As the communists would go around the world financing guerrilla movements with a little money and some arms without using their own troops (which we <sup>use</sup> did in Vietnam and Korea), we could do the same to them without risking our own troops. This doctrine of Reagan's fit neatly in with Goldwater's Why Not Victory?, which proclaimed boldly a policy of nuclear brinkmanship and the view it was better to be dead than red. By trying to subvert the government of Nicaragua (which I

\*The Birchers are not philosophically consistent in this area as I see it. Sometimes they liked NATO, but other times they didn't. Robert Welch initially opposed the war in Vietnam, but later supported it.



always thought Reagan should have openly proclaimed, instead of all this weapons interdiction nonsense), he was on the offensive, and so applying Welch's advice inadvertently once again. Liberals spent more time arguing, against aiding the rebels in Nicaragua, and didn't spend so much time complaining and trying to stop aid to the government of El Salvador. For I liked the idea of being on the offensive against communism, especially if we could do it on the cheap without American troops, thus allowing me to be somewhat isolationist in not sending them abroad, yet interventionist by giving some arms and money to the locals to let them fight for us.

But for me, this whole issue of foreign policy went out the door, at least from an overall spiritual view, once my church persuaded me of its apolitical, pacifist doctrines. Since then, I have had to make the distinction between what secularly may be the wise thing to do (say in foreign policy) and what God really wants, as stated in the latter half of Matt. 5. Certain policies one can argue about secularly about whether they are good ideas, but this secular world is only temporary, and such policies and the human governments that pursue them are only temporary as well. But this story concerning my religious beliefs I'll take up later.

The main issue which cemented me to Ayn Rand's basic views of politics and economics\* was her moral assault on the welfare state. Even to now, I've seen no satisfactory secular refutation of her views here. The left ignores them, and the right either is ignorant of them, is too polite to use this weapon, or is too moderate to want to. But this kind of argument amounts to a virtual political A-bomb for the right to use on the left, with the latter having no real defense systems. (Note how Nozick in State, Anarchy, and Utopia uses implicitly Rand's arguments versus John Rawl's A Theory of Justice for an example of the power of Rand's arguments).

Her basic argument is the poor have no right to a guaranteed income because it must be taken by force from the rich or middle class. And stealing

\*I must admit I found her ethics somewhat tempting, but never bought into them. It's important to remember she wasn't a social Darwinist who wanted the rich to steal from the poor. Instead, she felt the rich had a right to ignore the poor but that they (the poor) had a right to be protected from the use of force against them. All, rich and poor, had the right not to be attacked and robbed by anybody.

is still stealing, even if the government <sup>the one</sup> is doing it. Suppose in a given democracy 90% of the people vote for a law that says all the property and income of the rich is hereby confiscated. This is still stealing, even if the IRS is doing it, not individual holdup men.\*\* Her argument is those who earn the money have the right to keep it, and "social justice" is fulfilled when the talented, capable, etc. are allowed to keep what they earn, and not have it taken by force from them. Those who inherit money are allowed to keep it because this money still certainly wasn't earned by the poor, and the will of the bequeather reflects the right of the prior owner to dispose of it as he or she wishes.

In turn this doctrine of hers is based on the view there are no "positive rights," but only "negative" ones. "The right to food" presupposes the right to take it from someone who won't give it to you voluntarily. "The right to an education" means forcing someone else to pay for it if you can't. "The right to medical care" means forcing someone else to pay doctors to provide it.

Also, this view draws a sharp distinction between economic power and political power. The man with a lot of money cannot put you into jail if you criticize him--unless he corrupts the government into doing so by bribing the courts and the police. If someone owned GM, he couldn't put me in jail for insulting him or otherwise compulse me into doing his will unless he bribed or somehow "threatened" DPS. He could fire me if I worked for him, but there is always another company I could go to work for. (The free enterprise system has too many different organizations <sup>(literally millions of them)</sup> in it for blacklisting to be effective enough to starve people into submission by denying them work. The Russian government can starve <sup>dissidents</sup> into submission, but that is only because one employer--the government--employs almost everyone. True socialism is a one company town nobody is allowed to leave ever, nor could it be left if one worldwide government did own everything). The rich man will only

\*My libertarian friend pointed out that if 51% of the population approved a law that enslaved the other 49%, such a law would be democratic--but obviously not moral. The fact the government does it does not sanitize what is going on.

have equally great political power to punish his opponents or competition if there is no separation of business and state. Since there is such a mix in a mixed economy such as ours, the wealthy (or some other lobby) all the time punish their opponents economically through legislation--but if such legislation wasn't constitutionally allowed to be passed, they couldn't pull off such stunts.

Also, consumer sovereignty is assumed to operate here. The best justification for this doctrine is that give enough time and no tariffs or other barriers to entry (including government regulations), it is true. The Detroit auto industry was able to rip-off American consumers to a fair extent for many years with low quality. True, the quality was much better than what was found under socialist enterprises, such as Yugoslavia's "Yugo" and East Germany's "Trabant," but still it wasn't as good as it could be. The Japanese broke up Detroit's laziness, including the UAW's, and American cars' quality have definitely improved over the past decade. Thus consumer choices exert pressure on business to improve their products, unlike the case under a socialist system in which only one "company" makes everything and the central planners lose nothing personally like profits that would force them to change.

Finally, Ayn Rand's view is an assault on envy and the "dog in the manger" attitude. With me, there is a powerful emotional resonance here. The mentality "If I can't have it, nobody will" is the deep down spirit animating socialism, even if this is almost never admitted. If greed is the motivator of the rich and of the right, I will retaliate by saying envy is the motivator of the poor and of the left. (Both sides can play this game of attacking the other's motives, may it not be forgotten). Passing laws that denying everybody something only because some can't always have it themselves is immoral. Imposing equality of condition so that the capable are lowered to the economic level of the bottom is a social INjustice. (Curiously, imposing equality of income is <sup>normally</sup> called

"social justice," yet this ignores how different causes (people's talent, <sup>capitalism?</sup>  
\*The Left denounces capitalist "monopolies" but wants to create a monopoly but had under

abilities, effort, luck, education) cause different effects (amount of money earned)). The rent control laws in New York City are stupid for making it very difficult for average people to find apartments since no one will build new apartments. Hence to help some of the poor, everybody else gets punished. Everybody else in society suffers (barring special exemptions, for New York allows luxury apartments to be built), including the people who are poor who don't already have apartments. Likewise, oil and natural gas price controls were urged so the poor could have heat in winter, but if the production costs of natural gas rise to (say) \$3 a thousand cubic feet due to inflation, but the natural gas companies legally can only charge \$2, everybody freezes to death since then nobody is allowed to buy the good even if they do have the money in question because some people can't. These price controls were why we nearly all froze to death in the winter of 1977 since the gas companies couldn't increase production to meet rising demand. If one wants to help the poor by government action, direct rental or heating financial assistance is far wiser than punishing the rest of society and denying it the freedom to buy what it wants because it can afford things the poor can't always. Give people the freedom to buy things others can't, and may the poor <sup>and their advocates</sup> learn to control their envy and avoid <sup>self-righteously</sup> trying to force the rest of us to live as they do.\*

True, I can't possibly hope of justify a policy of laissez-faire in this "short, brief" paper. But the economic writings of the likes of Milton Friedman, Henry Hazlitt, F.A. Hayek, Ludwig Von Mises, Murray Rothbard, etc. pose a serious challenge to the Keynesian status quo. Friedman's book on American monetary policy has already revolutionized economics departments in America about how the Great Depression was caused. (The government in the form of the Federal Reserve reduced the money supply 30% in the 1929-32 period, which was the main cause of the Depression besides the Smoot-Hawley tariffs). John Kenneth Galbraith hardly has the last say on this subject any more in mainstream economics departments nationwide.

\*Unlike Ayn Rand, I do believe we have a duty to help the poor. Right now I am voluntary

When it comes to such basic rights as freedom of speech, religion, press, assembly, trial by jury of peers, the writ of habeas corpus, the legal requirements for search warrants, etc., I'm very much in the mainstream in supporting such rights. Equality under the law is a vital necessity. If a poor man and a rich man under identical circumstances rape a woman, both ought to go to jail for an equal amount of time. I know full well we have many failings in this area in this country, but it is a goal that is mandatory for justice to exist. The republican form of government, as exemplified in the U.S. constitution, is the best form of government found this side of the millenium. It's the system that best will preserve individual rights and impose accountability and responsiveness upon the leaders of a society to listen to the masses. Hence in this area I'm fairly mainstream, except for the Christian chilastic perspective that maintains this form of government is fundamentally temporar in the overall scheme of things.

Now at this stage I could discuss in detail all sorts of issues in politics. I could argue for why liberty (from government control and taxes) is more important than equality, even equality of opportunity. I could vent my fury against the Federal Reserve and its fiat currency system. I could attack "affirmative action" (the nice sounding euphemism for race quotas) for the fact it would deny the sons of a working class white Appalachian coal miners with a 3.0 from getting into U of M, but the daughter of a Cosby-style black "Huxtable" family with a 2.5 would be admitted solely due to <sup>what authorities have deemed</sup> having the right pigmentation for her skin. I could attack the emphasis on "diversity" as "tribalism" reborn, as a racial and gender "spoils system," and as an assault <sup>intensified</sup> by the left because they lost "the main debate" (capitalism vs. socialism) with the collapse of socialism in eastern Europe in 1989. I could point out, using Warren Brookes' columns in the Detroit News and Edith Efron's The Apocalypics to show much of what passes for conventional wisdom on environmental issues

is false or exaggerated. But this is to be an intellectual autobiography, not a political polemic which I'm afraid it has already become.

Now its time to back up, and describe the development of my religious beliefs. We only attended a church in my family consistently for about two years, and it was a Unitarian-Universalist church at that. I was about eight years old at the time. It was an extremely liberal church. It had no minister, but a continuous series of speakers with their own views on life. No hymns were sung. No Bibles were carried to church. I was taught the theory of evolution in Sunday school classes. No one prayed publicly during services. Such terms as "sin," "damnation," "immortal soul," "repentance," or "hell" were nowhere to be heard. In my family, religion was not at all associated with Christmas or Easter in any real way. Hence, my family was very liberal religiously, though belief in God was professed. I never saw or heard my parents pray. They were not atheists or agnostics, but religion played little role in their lives at all.

I do remember when I was about seven getting a religious tract at the Jackson county fair. I took it seriously (as serious as a seven year old could) and prayed to God on it. But this very soon faded away. My grandmother, who was and is a staunch Baptist and who lived in Jackson, may have had something to do with this incident, but I can't remember for certain. Maybe she was with us.

Until I started to come in contact with my church, I really only prayed once to God. The incident that caused this is quite embarrassing, and perhaps shows a deeper underlying psychological problem, but let's state it for the record. When I was younger I was fascinated by fires and burning things. Whether it be playing with matches, wanting a fireplace of our own, cooking something by myself (when I shouldn't), or watching a refuse pile from yard work cuttings burn, I found them fascinating. Well, one time I chose to set afire the leaves in a rain gutter near my home by lighting kerosene in a tin can and putting it in there. After lighting it, I walked away right away

(fearing being caught). A lady with a station wagon full of groceries almost at that moment stopped, and asked me what caused the fire. No doubt, she was suspicious of me. But I blatantly lied (something I didn't do very often) and said I didn't know, it may have been caused by a cigarette tossed from a passing car. A little later, after walking around my block the long way to my house and going inside, I came back and wanted to see what my fire had done. There was a fire truck there putting the fire out. A large group of spectators surrounded the gutter as a fire hose pumped water into it. I felt so guilty about causing all this I left right away for home. There I prayed to God for forgiveness for a couple of minutes by myself since I felt so guilty. I was about 11 at this time.

I also read an illustrated children's Bible some during these years when I was about 12 or 13.

But the decisive event occurred in the east side Kroger store in Jackson in the June of 1982. As I was walking out through the automatic opening doors, I looked down and saw a pile of magazines. The title of the magazine was The Plain Truth. The cover had on it only a picture of Leonid Brezhnev. Immediately, my conservative mentality was activated, and I said to myself "Real communist propaganda! I've got to see what they are saying!"\* I promptly swooped down, snatched the top magazine, and situated myself on the wooden bench near the supermarket's entrance to see what "they" were saying.

I soon found out the magazine wasn't "communist propaganda" at all, but a Christian religious magazine. I found the articles somewhat interesting, and so sent away for a free one year subscription and a free copy of the book The United States and Britain In Prophecy. The magazine had two articles dealing with drugs and/or alcohol which for some reason got my interest. Earlier that very day while riding my bike I had been thinking about whether or not I should work on Sundays for some strange reason. I was soon to hear a lot more on that subject.

\*Of course, when was the last time there was mass distribution of Communist propaganda in Jackson county?

The United States and Britain In Prophecy when I received it I read in only one or two days. It was summer time, and I wasn't going to school, so I could do this. This book described that the English speaking nations had been specially blessed by God materially. But now, due to our sins we were in economic decline already, and soon were going to be horribly punished and have all of our material blessings taken away. The book particularly stressed the need to keep the "Jewish" seventh-day Sabbath. We could stop this disaster from happening, but all of America, as well as those living in the other English speaking nations, must repent and turn to God to do so. I took this very seriously and very personally. This book decisively changed my outlook on life, and made me repent and turn to God.

Unfortunately, this change in religious views put me on a collision course with my mother. (My father had died a year earlier in 1981). She condemned the Sabbath because it would make it impossible for me to have a job when I got older. While for sometime I had tried to keep the Sabbath "secretly" after reading The United States and Britain in Prophecy for a number of months, this soon proved to be impossible. I didn't want to tell my mother about it, which I'm afraid is an indication of how close to --or rather, distant from--her<sup>I was</sup>. But even as this book pointed out, it couldn't be kept secretly. I was not dissuaded from my course by such an argument she made concerning finding work. If to serve God material things must suffer, so much the worse for material things. She, fortunately, seldom brought up the issue, and didn't harangue me much at all about it even the first time the issue was brought up. Needless to say, the way I first clearly and directly informed my mother of my views on this subject (by a note) showed I wasn't very close to her. (But then again, how many adolescent sons are?)

I continued to get new issues of the Plain Truth. First, I had asked for a subscription in my mother's name, but soon I had to put it in my name since she hated the magazine and didn't want it. One article in one issue



attacked belief in the immortality of the soul and eternal torment. That one article was enough to change my mind. Even though my parents didn't teach me such things, I had nonetheless had heard and came to believe in the immortality of the soul and eternal torment. But now, I read that the wicked would be destroyed, not eternally tormented, and I felt this was one of the most marvelous truths that could be known to the mind of man. Wicked souls that don't repent are destroyed, not eternally tormented (Eze. 18:4,20; Matt. 10:16). "(They) shall be as though they had not been" (Obadiah 16). "And you shall tread down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet . . ." (Mal. 4:3). The unrepentant will be totally destroyed and annihilated into non-existence (Ps. 37:10,20). This was an enormously appealing doctrine, and my belief in eternal torment happily went out the window almost instantly.

Over the years, by reading books by Jehovah's Witnesses and the Seventh-day Adventists, as well as my own (the Worldwide Church of God) church's materials, I've become a virtual expert at proving the Bible says nothing about the soul being immortal, going to heaven or hell at death, or eternal torment. Instead, the dead stay dead until the resurrection (I. Cor. 15:12-19, Rev. 20:5). Then God will make them alive by his Divine power. The concept of an immortal soul came into Christianity because the early Catholic Church Fathers dragged into it beliefs from pagan philosophy, especially from Plato.

Another doctrine I appreciated later on was that the vast majority of people will be saved, not lost. God isn't trying to save all the world now (John 6:44,65; Matt. 13:11-13). Those who do not accept Christ in this life can be saved in the next after being resurrected. Eze. 37:11-14 shows those who were of fleshly Israel ("The whole house of Israel") and weren't saved in their first life aren't instantly executed in the lake of fire after being resurrected. Those judged in Rev. 20:11-15 are not immediately sentenced

to death, as shown by the hundred year period of Isa. 65:20 (notice the context of ve. 17). The Seventh-day Adventists always have maintained the vast majority will be lost, which is a depressing thought, and I rejected their view on the basis of my church's arguments on the subject.

So, from the summer of 1982 to the December of 1986 I continued to get literature from the Worldwide Church of God, but never attended one of its services. I began to tithe, pray, and to try to keep God's law (the Ten Commandments) the best I could, including the Sabbath. I gave up observing Christmas and Easter since they had pagan origins and nowhere are found in the Bible. I began to observe the "Jewish" Holy Days like the Passover, the Days of Unleavened Bread, and the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), as the early Church did (I Cor. 5:7-8; 16:8; Acts 20:6; 2:1; 27:9). As I graduated from high school, and then went to Jackson Community College, I continued to learn more spiritual truth. But I did not attend a service of my Church until the first or second Saturday of December 1986, when I was going to MSU. Since my church had no congregation in Jackson, and I would have to get my mother's permission to drive the car 30 miles to Lansing or Ann Arbor (the closest locations), I knew attending was out of the question until I was out of my mother's reach while living at MSU.

Now while I was attending JCC in the fall of 1984, I happened to be in the library there when I saw a certain Christianity Today magazine. The current issue had a cover article on the Seventh-day Adventist Church, which I found very interesting. It talked about Ellen G. White, their prophetess-author, and many of their doctrines. But towards the back of the magazine was a one page article on . . . the Worldwide Church of God. It discussed how one of its leaders was caught in in messy divorce--slander lawsuit court case that had cost the church a pretty penny to defend for him. It also talked about Herbert W. Armstrong's divorce from his second wife! (Mr. Armstrong was the human leader of the Church, and had written The United States and Britain in Prophecy). And I didn't even know he had a

second wife!

After this incident, I formed a research plan. I would systematically look up "The Worldwide Church of God" and "Herbert W. Armstrong" in The Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature for the past 20 or 30 years, and see what turns up. I found all sorts of magazine articles on the Church, and hunted them down to read. And, did I ever find a mess: power struggles, divorces, changed doctrines, failed predictions, charges of adultery, etc. The attorney general of California even tried to seize the assets of the Church in 1979, setting off a litigation explosion and a media extravaganza. As I saw it then, and still do today, I emphasize doctrine and don't expect moral perfection from the human leadership. Also, many of the abuses mentioned in these articles to the extent they existed are being cleaned up by the changes the present leader of the Church is implementing, Mr. Joseph Tkach. I also found out much later many of the charges made were exaggerated or false, but the secular media (biased against Christianity in general, and televangelists\* in particular) played up the charges. I also found out that the Church wasn't kidding when it said it was willing to change doctrine when proven wrong. Also, the Church was a target for other Christian groups since its doctrines were unorthodox ("the Armstrong cult"), hence many in the religious community aren't going to try to defend it, but join in on the attacks. (Fortunately, during the lawsuit many traditional Christians sided with the Church because they saw the attorney general of California was going way too far and was violating the First Amendment right to freedom of religion). Hence, the Church has a rather unfair media-inflicted black eye that emphasizes all the bad things and ignores all the good things, that you will discover should you do research on it.

During this period before I started to attend my church's services, I had interesting contacts and relationships with other groups. I attended the Seventh-day Adventist Church for nine months (9/85 to 5/86), and so got to know their doctrines well. I still greatly admire them for being so close to

\*The Worldwide Church of God has The World Tomorrow telecast, which is presently the number one religious TV show in America. It is highly respected for never asking for contributions on the air, unlike most other religious TV shows. Mr. Armstrong used to be its sole speaker, though since he died four men take turns

the truth in many areas, but I could not accept the Trinity doctrine nor Ellen G. White as a prophet, so I left them. During this time I read many of their writings, and found them to be quite useful. Ellen G. White was a fairly capable writer, and her books were useful to have read.

Somewhat earlier, I had read magazines and books by Jehovah's Witnesses, but I couldn't accept their Arianism, which is the view Jesus is not God, but was created by God the Father long before the Virgin Birth. I found out about their stance on the soul not being immortal by a magazine ("Awake!") a paper route customer gave me who didn't want it. This magazine attacked belief in the immortality of the soul, which fascinated me, for it was nice to know some other church agreed with the Worldwide Church of God on this subject. I soon sent away for some of their books and subscribed to their magazines. I got my first copy of the Watchtower the same day I got a Reason magazine.\*

I also investigated the Jehovah's Witnesses by reading a book by an ex-Jehovah's Witness from the public library in Jackson. Originally, it was titled Doomsday 1975. I pulled this book out partly because I wanted to more about the church Michael Jackson had been a member of. Throughout my life, I had never been one to idolize popular heroes such as sports figures and rock stars. But in the senior year of high school, I had liked the music on the album "Thriller" so much I had come to admire him. For the first time, at the age of 18 in the January of 1984, I bought a LP with my own money ("Thriller"). I even bought a poster of him, and had it on my bedroom wall. I went out and bought an earlier album by him ("Off the Wall"). In my practical office training class in high school I liked overhearing four black girls eagerly talk at their desks about him one time (which was based on the tabloids they had with them). So I felt I had to know about his religion as well. Since I hadn't gotten much of their literature at this time, this book was an eye-opener concerning their doctrine.

\*This dichotomy is symbolic of my fundamental intellectual stance on the subject of faith and reason conflicting. As per St. Thomas Aquinas, the two need not conflict once assigned their proper realms. Revelation (faith) answers the "Why?" questions, and science (reason) answers the "how?" questions.

In the summer of 1985, I worked in Yellowstone National Park as a Group Tours Clerk, which was an office job. My roommate in the company dorm turned out to be a Mormon. I didn't know much about the LDS Church then, but I had heard about the likes of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young, and of certain doctrines of theirs, such as celestial marriage and the pre-existence of souls. One time about two years earlier I had picked up and read a couple of brochures by them while on a family vacation in 1982. Now the Mormon described to me some of his church's doctrines, including the belief God the Father had a body of flesh and bones. Now I saw right away this belief collided with John 4:24, but I felt I had to investigate his church more closely when I got back to Michigan. Before rejecting or accepting Joseph Smith as a true prophet, I wanted to know more about him. Maybe he really was a true prophet. So I went out and bought a book called The Godmakers by Dave Hunt and Ed Decker which examined the origins and doctrines of the LDS Church. It proved to be an absolutely devastating analysis of Mormon doctrine and (especially) history. Nobody reading such a book, even when discounting the authors' very hostile attitude, could possibly accept Joseph Smith as a prophet or the Mormon Church as the work of God.

Here I should back up some to describe a very important part of how my religious beliefs developed. Now my attitude on the relation of reason to religion had been somewhat peculiar. I was prepared to accept belief in God by faith only if no rational arguments existed on the subject, but I would not accept a fundamentalist approach to Scripture by faith alone, especially concerning the subject of evolution. My father had mildly ridiculed my maternal grandmother for believing we didn't come from monkeys, and I had been taught evolution in both Sunday school and children's books. Thus when Herbert Armstrong in some early Plain Truth magazine <sup>I got</sup> said man had been on the Earth for six thousand years, I thought to myself, "Yeah, sure Mr. Armstrong--I believe you." I wasn't about to change my mind on evolution on his say so. Hadn't scientists proven the Earth to be billions of years old?

But, when I was (once again) in that used book store, I happened upon a book called, The Remarkable Birth of Planet Earth by Henry Morris, Ph.d. Now I knew full well this book was by a creationist scientist. About six months earlier, in the early summer of 1982, I had briefly glanced through a book by him called The Troubled Waters of Evolution a few weeks before I picked up my first Plain Truth magazine. It had been on a browsing, softcover rack in the Jackson Community College library which was a library I had never been in before this time. I didn't find it terribly persuading then, but it was interesting. I had been even earlier influenced by a pamphlet sold by the Dawn Bible Students that argued for a form of theistic evolution based on having millions of years per day in Genesis 1. This was why I probably had picked up Morris' book to begin with. So now, in early 1983, I am standing in this used book store trying to figure out if I should read this book, The Remarkable Birth of Planet Earth, for I definitely recognized the author's name. I said to myself, "I'll give you creationists a chance and see if you can prove your case."

So I bought the book, and read The Remarkable Birth of Planet Earth with an open mind. It succeeded in changing my mind on the subject for good. Especially clever was a mathematical, probabilistic argument that showed the impossibility of random development of complex structures even when the evolutionist was given very generous time and space parameters to generate the first cell in. It included an interesting critique of radioactive decay dating methods, which cast very serious doubt on the idea scientists really have proven the Earth to be four billion years old. (I know this sounds ridiculous, but you have to read their arguments before dismissing them out of hand).

As I see it now, what Morris did was to quantify the old argument between the atheist and the theist. The theist in the past would say, "Life is so complicated, it couldn't have occurred by chance." The atheist would then reply, "But with a vast universe, and unlimited time, the statistically

unlikely become inevitable." Therefore, until recently when fundamentalists and others could begin to quantify the complexity of living structures, the atheist could plausibly argue this. But now, as shown by such numbers as Fred Hoyle and Chandra Wickramasinghe's infamous  $10^{40,000}$  to one statistic\* (the calculated odds of <sup>randomly forming the</sup> 2000 enzymes any cell needs in order to exist), quantification of this dispute is troublesome to atheism. Especially when it can be shown inanimate matter has no inherent tendency to organize itself into higher levels of complexity, but acts only randomly, the atheists shouldn't be so confident in their position. After all, the Big Bang theory maintains the universe did have a beginning, and thus there isn't "unlimited time" for them to work with to come up with the first cell. Hence, my practicing of open-mindedness on the subject of evolution made me into a creationist.

Of course, embracing creationism and fundamentalism has to qualify as one of the rankest intellectual heresies imaginable in intellectual circles. The offense becomes even greater if you happen to think reason sides with religion in this dispute, instead of resorting to the Kierkegardian--Barthian brand of existentialist fideism. But I say most of the standard liberals who ridicule us on this issue never have bothered to exercise any of their alleged open-mindedness to actually pick up a book by a fundamentalist scientist concerning creationism and actually read it. To say there are huge gaps in and anomalies in order in the fossil record sounds ridiculous, until Duane Gish's The Challenge of the Fossil Record is examined.\*\* The idea that catastrophism is the best way to explain most geological formations, not gradual uniformitarianism, sounds absurd, until John C. Whitcomb and Henry Morris' The Genesis Flood is picked up. Such as book as Scientific Creationism (Henry Morris, ed.) sounds to be proclaiming an oxymoron, until perused.

Questioning radioactive decay dating procedures sounds especially absurd, but creationist assaults here need to be taken seriously. Slusher's Critique

\*Fred Hoyle and Chandra Wickramasinghe, Evolution From Space (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982), p. 24. It should be noted they are pantheists, not Christians.

\*\*Stephen Jay Gould's "punctuated equilibrium" theory of evolution admits these gaps do exist, but try to explain them scientifically (unsuccessfully, I would add).

of Radiometric Dating is the most scholarly of such assaults. While I am not convinced the Earth is only six thousand years old,\* I have remained open-minded on this issue and acknowledged that the earth could be much younger than 4.5 billion years old. By having read many such books on this subject, I am very confident I could hold my own in debate on this subject, especially since I have perused the anti-creationist side as well.

This isn't the place to engage in an anti-evolutionist polemic. All I am doing is boldly maintaining is that conventional wisdom is wrong here. But those at the top of intellectual circles are not about to exercise any open-mindedness towards a serious examination of the fundamentalist case here, but will rest content merely to ridicule it. But such ridicule may keep the average person from bothering to read (say) The Genesis Flood,\*\*this isn't going to accomplish the purpose of changing the minds of those few who actually have read such books.

My belief in God has only been seriously shaken once. This occurred on day in late spring while I was reading something by Ayn Rand in my research in English class in 1984. I suddenly wasn't being persuaded by my own renditions of the argument from design. I wasn't arguing or talking with someone during this class. I was just thinking, and growing increasingly worried. But my anxiety was put right by reviewing a booklet by Mr. Armstrong called "Does God Exist?" It pointed out how the universe had to have a beginning. This restored my confidence. Since then, despite over five years of college and a major in philosophy,\*\*\* my faith has never been shaken. I've seen the nastiest arguments the other side has to offer, including ones using Hume's Dialogs On Natural Religion and Kant's Critique of Pure Reason, but I found them unpersuasive. Such arguments don't work on Christians who are

knowledgeable about apologetics.

\*My Church, by holding to the "gap theory," maintains the Earth is 4.5 billion years old by sticking most of the fossil record between Gen. 1:1 and 1:2.

\*\*Even many evolutionists will admit this was the book that gave birth to the "modern" creationist movement (i.e. post-Scopes trial).

\*\*\*I only chose this major due to the interest in the subject Ayn Rand had generated in it for me.



The subjects of the Bible's overall historical reliability was mostly a separate subject for me from evolution. For instance, was there any rationality in accepting the truth of Jesus' resurrection from the dead? Or was it by faith in the Bible as an accurate historical record alone? When I was in Yellowstone National Park in the summer of 1985, I encountered Josh McDowell's More Than Just a Carpenter through a traditional Christian Bible study group. It fired my imagination as few books have since, for it showed to me accepting the resurrection wasn't an issue of faith alone, but given what the historical documents say (i.e. the New Testament Gospels), this is the only plausible hypothesis that explains all the facts. The natural world cannot always explain the natural, but sometimes a leap beyond it is necessary to explain what happens in it sometimes. Those who accept The Passover Plot's thesis obviously haven't read McDowell's devastating critique in Evidence That Demands a Verdict of such a theory. The Passover Plot wasn't proclaiming anything very new. But, of course, as usual the types who pride themselves on their open-mindedness will read The Passover Plot, but won't condescend to read the reply in Evidence That Demands a Verdict.

To briefly sum up my position on rationally accepting the Bible as God's literal word, there are two basic approaches: historical correlation and fulfilled prophecy. Let's consider the form first. Many times a historical event is reported in the Bible, and also is found in some pagan source. For instance, higher critics used to ridicule the mentions of Jesus' hometown of Nazareth as fictional. But then a marble slab with a decree of Claudius mentioning Nazareth was discovered in 1878. Higher critics used to argue that the Torah couldn't have been written by Moses because writing hadn't been invented by 1500 b.c. But when Sumerians and Babylonian cuneiform tablets much older than 1500 b.c. were dug up, the higher critics were abashed briefly. Mentioned of King Belshazzar being the last king of Babylon were ridiculed, since Herodotus mentioned only Nabonidus as the last king of Babylon.

But when tablets were unearthed mentioning Belshazzar as king, the higher critics against had to beat a hasty retreat. The unearthing of an inscription at an ancient Roman theater on the bottom of an overturned stairway mentioning Pontius Pilate was fatal to doubts concerning his existence. Arguments that Abraham couldn't have used camels (Gen. 24:10) since they weren't domesticated yet have taken blows from contemporary Babylonian inscriptions showing camel riders, and an eighteenth century b.c. relief discovered in Phoenicia at Byblos that shows a kneeling camel. I could go on and give many other such similar stories. When Bertrand Russell<sup>said</sup> "The early history of the Israelites cannot be confirmed from any source outside the Old Testament, and it is impossible to know at what point it ceases to be purely legendary,"\* he was sadly blinded by his anti-Christian bias.

Also, the Bible has predicted the future many times, and it has happened. The falls of Babylon (Isa. 13:19-20) and Nineveh (Zeph. 2:13) were predicted long in advance, when they were yet thriving capitals of vast empires. Cyrus' conquest of Babylon was predicted in Isa. 45:2; 44:27-28. Edom's destruction was foretold in Jer. 49:17-18. Alexander the Great's invasion and conquest of Persia is prophesied in Dan. 8:5,21. Dan. 8:8,22 accurately predicted the breaking up of Alexander's empire into four dominions ruled each by one of his generals. The ancient city of Tyre's destruction by Darius and Alexander is predicted in Zech. 9:3,4 and Eze. 26:3-7. Christ predicted the fall and destruction of Jerusalem in Mark 13:2, Luke 19:43-44, 21:20-24, and Matt. 24:15-20. None of these specific prophecies were couched in slippery, Delphic oracle style, nor will the argument these passages were written after the events mentioned in them occurred hold water upon close examination.

On the other hand, though, faith is still needed to accept the Bible. One must in faith believe all of it, and not just those parts that correlate with history or are fulfilled prophecy. Revelation is worthless unless it tells

\*Bertrand Russell, A History of Western Philosophy (New York: Simon and Schuster,

information we don't already know. I cannot prove by human reason, independent of the Bible that the Godhead has two beings: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). To some degree this isn't blind faith, since believing Jesus existed due to the New Testament's record requires no more faith than believing Augustus (a contemporary of Jesus) existed because Vergil and Suetonius talk about him. Unlike Hinduism or Zen Buddhism which are metaphysical systems, Christianity (and Judaism) are historical religions that <sup>assert</sup> certain people did certain acts at certain times. Ancient archeology and history favor the Bible's assertions in this area in most cases, as illustrated by Werner Keller's book, The Bible As History, which certainly isn't a fundamentalist apologetic. But still, faith is needed to assume all the Bible was inspired, not just parts you can confirm by human reason correlated with contemporary pagan sources, or is fulfilled prophecy.

But due to the fascination is showing commitment to Christianity has a rational foundation has led me to read many an apologetic. I particularly enjoyed C.S. Lewis' efforts due to his superb <sup>prose</sup> writing style: Mere Christianity, The Screwtape letters, Miracles, God In the Dock, and The Problem of Pain are all worth rereading. I have always wished I could write as well as he did. He is a master of the writing art. Josh McDowell and Don Stewart's works Answers to Tough Questions and Reasons Skeptics Should Consider Christianity, Paul Little's Know Why You Believe, and certain Jehovah's Witness books (Is the Bible Really the Word of God?) have been useful for building the fundamental knowledge of how to defend commitment to Christianity as rational. My church, which pushed a strong rationalistic stance that said God can be proven to exist and the Bible can be proven to be God's literal word, has had various articles and booklets defending such views, helped me in this way as well.\*

\*This rationalistic emphasis of my church was one of the most powerful drawing points for me. There is none of the "Just believe, brother" kind of mentality, but instead Mr. Armstrong's stock phrase on the World Tomorrow telecast was to say don't believe me, believe the Bible. Henry Wallace, according to Joe Flynn in The Roosevelt Myth (p. 225) was repelled from the Catholic Church due to "what he called the scholastic method of reasoning, with its unyielding insis-

It's so tiresome to see skeptics repeatedly raise such a question as "Where did Cain get his wife?" when such issues can be very easily settled. Doing this shows skeptics don't know even the most rudimentary fundamental positions of the other side. It's like a conservative attacking Marx's economics without knowing Marx's labor theory of value. Likewise, people who have never even read the New Testament routinely blast Christianity. But anti-theistic prejudice closes minds all the time.

My<sup>basic</sup> religious beliefs could be stated as follows. The Bible is infallible, without error, and is fully inspired by an Almighty God who means business. Revelation is God's way of giving humanity crucial information needed to be happy in this and the next life which human reasoning, by itself, won't obtain for us. The Bible is the only source of revelation. God is two Beings (John 1:1-2) but is one God (Deuteronomy 6:4). The Holy Spirit is not a person, but is God's personal force (Rom. 8:16, 26 (KJV)). Jesus Christ had always existed prior to being born through the Virgin Mary (Heb. 7:3; John 1:1; Micah 5:2). Jesus was both God and man as he walked the earth (John 1:1,14) and by his sacrifice we are saved if we accept it (John 3:16; Romans 5:8-10). Man is not an immortal soul (Eze. 18:4,20), but he is a living soul (Gen. 2:7), with no inherit eternity or immortality. The dead are not in hell, heaven, purgatory, etc., but are totally dead (Eccl. 9:5-6,10), awaiting a resurrection (John 5:28-29; Rev. 20:12-13) to life (Rev. 20:5). The wicked will be totally destroyed and annihilated, not eternally tortured (Mal. 4:1,3). God's law the Ten Commandments is still in force (Rom. 3:31), but we are saved by faith in God's grace (Ephesians 2:8-9), not by the works of the law (Gal. 2:16). Baptism is by the immersion of adults (Mark 1:9-10) and the laying on of hands is necessary for receiving the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:15-19). The Seventh-day Sabbath is still in force (Matt. 24:20; Isa. 66:20), tithing should still be done (Matt. 23:23), and the Old Testament Holy Days should be still followed today (Acts 20:6; 27:9; 20:16; Zech 14:16,19).

Christians should never bear arms in warfare (Matt. 5:39-47; John 18:36; Luke 22:49-51). Jesus' Second Coming is a literal event (Matt. 24: 27,30; Rev. 1:7) and will occur soon. He will land on the Earth near Jerusalem (Zech. 14:4), and will inaugurate the beginning of a literal millenium of prosperity and peace for all humans with the saints ruling under Him (Rev. 5:10; 20:3,6; Isa. 11:6-9; Isa. 2:1-4). I could list a lot more than these beliefs, but this will give a basic overview of my church's doctrine.

Now I'm sure the reader must be wondering. "Mr. Snow, why are you messed up in such a crackpot religion. Fundamentalism is bad enough, <sup>but</sup> here you are, somebody admitted to a masters program in history, and here you are defending Herbert W. Armstrong's peculiar, disrespected brand of fundamentalism. Why? Aren't your politics enough heresy for anybody to swallow?"

My answer to this question is two fold. The part concerning fundamentalism I've already covered above. There's plenty of evidence that evolution isn't true, and that the Bible is inspired because it correlates <sup>with</sup> and predicts history in many places. The second part, about accepting "Mr. Armstrong's" "brand of fundamentalism," is based on the view that traditional Christianity made some serious wrong turns doctrinally in its early centuries. I have given traditional Christians their chances to prove their doctrines true, but they have come up empty every time. I once deliberately bought the book Jehovah of the Watchtower by Dr. Walter Martin to see if orthodoxy could prove souls are eternally tortured or are immortal. In this book, Dr. Martin systematically attacks the Jehovah's Witnesses for denying eternal torment and the immortality of the soul, which is what my church believes. Orthodoxy failed miserably here, as far as I am concerned. Their arguments proved to be pathetically weak, especially if they were pitted against such a book as (which I read later) the Seventh-day Adventist effort Here and Hereafter by Uriah Smith. I have read quite a few assaults on my church's doctrine, and orthodoxy keeps coming up empty, in various books, tracts, and magazines. Hence, I'm not only certain fundamentalism is true,

but that my own deviant brand is, because I have read the other sides arguments on both of these issues, and they have failed to persuade me. There's been no lack of true open-mindedness on my part. They've had their chances.

My college education never had much influence on my fundamental values and beliefs. Most of these were set by the end of high school. College increased my knowledge, and also showed me how much I didn't know. Dr. Walsh in the philosophy department was particularly valuable in pointing out the latter point to me. His great knowledge of history and philosophy on the one side, and science on the other, showed me how much I didn't know, especially of the latter. My fundamental beliefs were formed almost entirely out of the framework of formal education. Indeed often they were formed while at war with my formal education intellectually, even if I normally got good grades.

I've had a long career in expressing my views to others. My first letter to the editor was published when I was in ninth grade. For a while I was one of the resident conservatives who kept writing into the Jackson Citizen Patriot expressing my views, and later I switched to an almost exclusively Christian apologetic emphasis. I've included some of copies of these letters to give you a feel for my style. Only one of the letters I ever wrote to the Citizen Patriot was ever turned down for publication. I would appear about three times a year. I also have had my share of letters printed in the State News. When I was out in Yellowstone National Park I even got one published in the Billings (Montana) Gazette. I also engaged in the much more lengthy project of creating a virtual book that refuted inaccuracies about my church's doctrine, which I then sent out (at great personal expense) to various anti-cult groups. Its basic format was to quote various misstatements of my church's doctrines found in various books, tracts, magazine articles, etc. that attacked my church, then I would say

is this true, and then quote sections from my church's books, booklets, magazines, etc. showing their statements of our doctrine were in error. This virtual book <sup>not</sup> did require much effort intellectually, for all I really did was copy what others said in their writings, assemble them together, and comment on them. And why do I go through the effort of writing all these letters and try to influence others in print, or even in class by answering or commenting on what some professor was saying? "The uncontested absurdities of today are the accepted slogans of tomorrow" *-Ayn Rand*.

I aspire to two roles in the future, one modest, and one rather grandiose. The fairly modest goal is to become a high school history teacher, which is why I am attending MSU now. I graduated in 1988 with a dual major--marketing and philosophy. This seemingly schizophrenic choice of a dual major was due to two influences. The philosophy major was entirely the work of having read Ayn Rand, and so becoming interested in the subject. The marketing major was out of a desire to become a retail store manager, which was a desire I had had a long time. But while spending a long hunt in <sup>trying to</sup> find a job after graduation that matched my education, I came up empty. A four-dollar-an-hour crew member job at Hardee's was the end result of months of searching. I came to the conclusion that I had chosen the wrong occupation to be in, especially after working as a cashier at Hardee's in a setting not too dissimilar to that of a retail store. My mother's comments and a career decision course at JCC during this time also helped me to see my error.

So I decided to become a history teacher, which was an idea I had had at the back of my mind due to an incident at MSU before I had graduated in 1988. The incident was standing outside a professor's English history class before my economics class started 30 minutes later, and suddenly thinking, "I should do what this man is doing right now." But since it was my junior year, spring term 1987, I felt committed to the academic program I was in, and so didn't change it. At this time I wrote to my brother Brian a letter telling him to become a history teacher, for that was the subject he truly

loved, but he chose to GMI to become an industrial engineer instead. I told him that since he wasn't in his junior year yet, it was still possible to switch, and that job satisfaction was more important than money. As it turned out I was the one who acted on this advice--several years later. When I took a cognate in the college of arts and letters that was required for my philosophy major, I made sure I took it in history. I suspected I might be back one day to become a history teacher--and my "suspicion" has since proven to be reality.

The more grandiose objective is to be an intellectual defender for my church writing as a laymember in my free time. Teachers have plenty of this in the summer time. I've long since noticed since coming into my church most of the people in it haven't studied much in the way of Christian apologetics. Whether raised in the church or newcomers, their study of the creation-evolution controversy or of how the Bible and history correlated wasn't very strong. For instance, one man I know in the Church who attended MSU one time as a grad student for about four years was immensely intelligent. He maintained a <sup>straight</sup> 4.0 average throughout all four years of undergraduate education and all of his graduate education except for one course he got a 3.5 in. He even majored in and studied biology and zoology. Yet, I know he read almost nothing by creationist scientists besides what little the Church had put out, and he had definite leanings towards fideism. I knew more about how to refute evolution scientifically--and I was the humanities/business major! The general condition of most others in the Church wasn't too much different. Few really knew anything about Christian apologetics or how to really refute the atheists and agnostics.

So since then I have had the vision of being a kind of intellectual bodyguard for others in my church, and to some degree fundamentalists outside of it. For when I write letters to the editor, I certainly am not writing them so that other people in my church could read them, for there are too few of us to have this as a major motive. I see my job as fending off the



the skeptics for them, and intellectually refute the arguments of atheists, agnostics, and other assorted anti-Christians. Hence, my first major project after I graduate from MSU (God willing) is to write a long, systematic critique of the philosophy of Ayn Rand from a rationalistic, fundamentalist Christian perspective. As much as I like the way she refutes the philosophical skeptics who say you can be certain of nothing\*, and her economics and politics, her atheism and her attacks on Christian altruism should not be allowed to go unanswered. When she says morality should consist only of seeking your own self-interest so long as you don't begin the use of force against someone else, she is attacking the foundations of Christianity. She knew little of Christian apologetics, and doesn't even go through the bother in Atlas Shrugged of refuting the traditional arguments for God's existence. She took the secular foundation of Hume, Kant, and Darwin for granted publicly, when such a foundation can be leveled by an informed Christian apologist. I've already gathered most of the necessary materials, including her books, books by non-Randian atheists and anti-creationists, and many pro-Christian books on apologetics. The non-Randian atheists will serve as stand-ins for much of what Ayn Rand would say against belief in God. However, her attacks on Christian charity and altruism are nearly unique (outside of Nietzsche), and so pose a special problem since many Christian scholars spend their time refuting people like Bertrand Russell, who believe in altruism like we do. Hence, I see a need for some basic, original intellectual work in this area. The only <sup>book length</sup> assault by a Christian in print <sup>that attacks Ayn Rand's philosophy</sup> is written from a fideist view that seems to think if you can refute reason, you can refute Ayn Rand. But this man by doing this is really only spreading skepticism instead, and undermines Christianity when he argues Rand's defenses of (for instance) the certainty of the outside real world are false, and that we can't be certain of anything we see. (I reply, does this apply to when we see and read the Bible we can't be sure it exists?) I also have other planned books in store, including one

\*I could argue for Ayn Rand's approaches to gaining certainty in many areas of epistemology and metaphysics, which are unimaginably great heresies in most philosophy departments. But this paper is way, way, way too long already.

that will go through a bunch of anti-creationist books and refute evolution.

I must qualify as one of the most unimaginably "politically incorrect" students at MSU, and I believe in all sorts of heresies, including fundamentalism, laissez-faire capitalism, and many of the other assorted deviances of the far right. But before thinking I am completely crazy, examine some of the evidence I've cited, and give it some thought. Even if you reject them, they shouldn't be regarded as fundamentally irrational positions. A conservative and liberal should always approach each other with respect, no matter how much they think the other is wrong, because both sides have a respect for logic and evidence, but interpret it differently. But, let's not be hasty in rejecting what I have said for you may never have heard of it before, or heard of it defended the way I do so. As the Bible reminds us in Proverbs 18:13: "He who gives an answer before he hears, it is folly and shame to him."