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Freethinkers A History Of

American Secularism

Susan Jacoby

Freethinkers A History Of American Secularism Susan Jacoby

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City Council chambers — fittingly during the celebration of the 300th anniversary of San Antonio's founding — a historic event took place. City Council was called to order. Nick was introduced by ...

~~Commentary: Activist spoke for San Antonio's atheists~~

In newly independent America, there was a crazy quilt ... the Constitution," as Susan Jacoby has written in *Freethinkers*, her excellent history of American secularism. Among Madison's 15 ...

~~America's True History of Religious Tolerance~~

The decade of the 1850's produced a net immigration larger in relation to the existing population than any other

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decade in American history, and the excess ... materialists, and freethinkers. The ...

~~Refugees of Revolution: The German Forty-Eighters in America~~

As the years have passed and another generation of young radicals has settled into middle age, tenure, and pension calculations, one might have hoped that these freethinkers would ... turn in the last ...

~~The contradictions of Terry Eagleton~~

Surrounding yourself with sycophants while crushing freethinkers who might oppose ... On these shores, second, the customarily mild-mannered American Association of University Professors called ...

~~The Closing of the Chinese Mind~~

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Six Big Questions About Evolution by Spanish-American evolutionary biologist and philosopher ... sexuality, politics, and world history; wrote essays that challenged systems of social, political, or ...

~~Free thinkers versus assassins~~

Though many of his associates in the abolitionist movement were dissenters or freethinkers, he was an Anglican very much concerned with the fate of the church in America after the war of independence.

~~Memoirs of Granville Sharp, Esq.~~

After traveling to Germany, he eagerly embraced Historismus, a new, critical way of thinking about history and studying ... a broader modernist trend in American Protestant theological circles.

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~~People and Ideas: Confronting
Modernity/Progressive Era~~

The answer lies in what history has done to us ... by a cabal of twentieth-century liberals and freethinkers who replaced it with an un-American secular state. The rhetoric of the Christian ...

~~The Case Against Religious
Correctness~~

The controversy surrounding the book led to Büchner leaving his post at the University of Tübingen, but he went on to establish the German Freethinkers' League, the first German organisation for ...

~~Empirico-Philosophical Studies,
Intelligibly Rendered~~

While some might suspect that the

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~~American Secularism~~
Susan Jacoby
Broward Atheists are merely a cover for closeted Democrats to mingle with like-minded folk without revealing their political affiliations, the atheists themselves say ...

~~Broward County Atheists Weekly Meetup Group~~

“The Church of Saint Thomas Paine is a tour de force—an elegant, compelling, and beautifully textured account of American secularism’s religious history, from its nineteenth century origins to its ...

~~The Church of Saint Thomas Paine~~
nonfiction — an Oprah Winfrey for the Creatine-taking set or an Arnold Schwarzenegger for the Native American history buff, depending on the day. He also says he is not to be trusted as a ...

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~~Joe Rogan Is Too Big to Cancel~~

~~Susan Jacoby~~
In 1955, it was not unreasonable to believe that mass migration to the United States was a thing of the past. Following the restrictionist legislation of the 1920s, the flow of European migrants ...

~~The Future of Mass Migration~~

Among the accusations that figure in the investigation are charges that cadets who declined to attend chapel after dinner were marched back to their dormitories in a procession called the "heathen ...

An authoritative history of the vital role of secularist thinkers and activists in the United States, from a writer of

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"fierce intelligence and nimble, unfettered imagination" (The New York Times) At a time when the separation of church and state is under attack as never before, Freethinkers offers a powerful defense of the secularist heritage that gave Americans the first government in the world founded not on the authority of religion but on the bedrock of human reason. In impassioned, elegant prose, celebrated author Susan Jacoby paints a striking portrait of more than two hundred years of secularist activism, beginning with the fierce debate over the omission of God from the Constitution. Moving from nineteenth-century abolitionism and suffragism through the twentieth century's civil liberties, civil rights, and feminist movements, Freethinkers illuminates the neglected

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accomplishments of secularists who, allied with liberal and tolerant religious believers, have stood at the forefront of the battle for reforms opposed by reactionary forces in the past and today. Rich with such iconic figures as Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Clarence Darrow—as well as once-famous secularists such as Robert Green Ingersoll, "the Great Agnostic"—Freethinkers restores to history generations of dedicated humanists. It is they, Jacoby shows, who have led the struggle to uphold the combination of secular government and religious liberty that is the glory of the American system.

Black Freethinkers is the first study to offer a comprehensive historical treatment of African American

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freethought (including atheism, agnosticism, and secular humanism) from the nineteenth century to the present.

The first comprehensive biography of Elihu Palmer tells the life story of a freethinker who was at the heart of the early United States' protracted contest over religious freedom and free speech. When the United States was new, a lapsed minister named Elihu Palmer shared with his fellow Americans the radical idea that virtue required no religious foundation. A better source for morality, he said, could be found in the natural world: the interconnected web of life that inspired compassion for all living things. Religions that deny these universal connections should be discarded, he insisted. For this, his Christian critics

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denounced him as a heretic whose ideas endangered the country. Although his publications and speaking tours made him one of the most infamous American freethinkers in his day, Elihu Palmer has been largely forgotten. No cache of his personal papers exists and his book has been long out of print. Yet his story merits telling, Kirsten Fischer argues, and not only for the dramatic account of a man who lost his eyesight before the age of thirty and still became a book author, newspaper editor, and itinerant public speaker. Even more intriguing is his encounter with a cosmology that envisioned the universe as interconnected, alive with sensation, and everywhere infused with a divine life force. Palmer's "heresy" tested the nation's recently proclaimed commitment to freedom of

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religion and of speech. In this he was not alone. Fischer reveals that Palmer engaged in person and in print with an array of freethinkers—some famous, others now obscure. The flourishing of diverse religious opinion struck some of his contemporaries as foundational to a healthy democracy while others believed that only a strong Christian faith could support democratic self-governance. This first comprehensive biography of Palmer draws on extensive archival research to tell the life story of a freethinker who was at the heart of the new nation's protracted contest over religious freedom and free speech—a debate that continues to resonate today.

A biography that restores America's foremost 19th-century champion of reason and secularism to the still

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contested 21st-century public square.

Susan Jacoby

A cultural history of the last forty years, *The Age of American Unreason* focuses on the convergence of social forces—usually treated as separate entities—that has created a perfect storm of anti-rationalism. These include the upsurge of religious fundamentalism, with more political power today than ever before; the failure of public education to create an informed citizenry; and the triumph of video over print culture. Sparing neither the right nor the left, Jacoby asserts that Americans today have embraced a universe of “junk thought” that makes almost no effort to separate fact from opinion.

A much-maligned minority throughout American history, atheists have been

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cast as a threat to the nation's moral fabric, barred from holding public office, and branded as irreligious misfits in a nation chosen by God. Yet village atheists—as these godless freethinkers came to be known by the close of the nineteenth century—were also hailed for their gutsy dissent from stultifying pieties and for posing a necessary secularist challenge to the entanglements of church and state. In *Village Atheists*, Leigh Eric Schmidt explores the complex cultural terrain that unbelievers have long had to navigate in their fight to secure equal rights and liberties in American public life. He rebuilds the history of American secularism from the ground up, giving flesh and blood to these outspoken infidels. *Village Atheists* demonstrates that the secularist vision for the United States proved to be

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anything but triumphant in a country where faith and citizenship were—and still are—closely interwoven.

In a groundbreaking historical work that focuses on the long, tense convergence of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam with an uncompromising secular perspective, Susan Jacoby illuminates the social and economic forces that have shaped individual faith and the voluntary conversion impulse that has changed the course of Western history--for better and for worse. Covering the triumph of Christianity over paganism in late antiquity, the Spanish Inquisition, John Calvin's dour theocracy, American plantations where African slaves had to accept their masters' religion--along with individual converts including Augustine of Hippo, John Donne, Edith

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Stein, Muhammad Ali, George W. Bush and Mike Pence--Strange Gods makes a powerful case that nothing has been more important in struggle for reason than the right to believe in the God of one's choice or to reject belief in God altogether.

In this book, we have hand-picked the most sophisticated, unanticipated, absorbing (if not at times crackpot!), original and musing book reviews of "Freethinkers: A History of American Secularism." Don't say we didn't warn you: these reviews are known to shock with their unconventionality or intimacy. Some may be startled by their biting sincerity; others may be spellbound by their unbridled flights of fantasy. Don't buy this book if: 1. You don't have nerves of steel. 2. You expect to get pregnant in the next five

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minutes. 3. You've heard it all.

Susan Jacoby

Books on Whittaker Chambers and Alger Hiss abound, as countless scholars have labored to uncover the facts behind Chambers's shocking accusation before the House Committee on Un-American Activities in the summer of 1948, that Alger Hiss, a former rising star in the State Department, had been a Communist and engaged in espionage. In this work, the author turns her attention to the Hiss case, including his trial and imprisonment for perjury, as a mirror of shifting American political views and passions.

The author of the best-selling *The Age of American Unreason* presents an impassioned critique of modern practices by pharmaceutical

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companies, lifestyle gurus and scientific businessmen who are promoting morally questionable and expensive illusions of thriving longevity. Reprint.

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