

The Nones And The True Believers

How They Became So

John W. Ritenbaugh

Given 29-Jun-13; Sermon #1165c

I believe that it was at the very end of two commentaries ago that I called the Nones "true believers." I am here today because I do not believe that they fit it quite in the way that I was thinking at the time. They do fit it, but it is in an unusual way.

The philosopher who wrote the book *The True Believers* was Eric Hoffer. Mr. Hoffer himself is an anomaly when compared with other philosophers. The normal way that a philosopher arises is that he goes through extensive formal schooling, perhaps even in several different universities, where he comes in contact with other people who are of the same sort of mind.

That description does not fit Mr. Hoffer at all. Mr. Hoffer was born in 1902 and he died in 1983. However, when he was five years old, his mother was carrying him down a set of stairs and she fell. She was injured badly enough that about a year later she died from those injuries. Mr. Hoffer, though, was blinded immediately as a result of that fall. At age 15—this is 10 years later—suddenly his eyesight returned. He was concerned that it might once again leave him, so he began reading voraciously, just in case that he ever stopped being able to see again.

Well, he could read right up until the time that he died in 1983. But well into the 1930s, he lived life as a drifter, going from job to job and place to place, working in restaurants, also as a migrant field worker, and a gold prospector. However, after Pearl Harbor—we are up to 1941 now—he got a job on the docks of San Francisco as a stevedore, and he remained at that job for 25 years.

But all this while he was reading, voraciously. His Wikipedia biography did not list a single school that he spent time in as a student. He was self-educated. He called himself an atheist, but despite his atheism, he was quite sympathetic toward religion, and he called it a positive force in society.

He tried his hand at writing novels and was even published, but success was modest at the very best. However, in 1951, he produced a bombshell. It was called *The True Believer: Thoughts on the Nature of Mass Movements*. I was given this book in the early 1970s by a young member in the congregation that I was pastoring at the time. I produced three sermons of from material in the Bible, combined with Mr Hoffer's thoughts as to by whom and how mass movements are ignited and grow, as well as the kind of people attracted to them.

Christianity is considered a mass movement. So are communism and fascism. He treated the growth of Christianity without considering God—remember, he was an atheist. He treated it using the same reasoning as he did communism and fascism. And I think he really did pretty well analyzing them. But with Christianity and no access to God, he was very far off base. However, even in his analysis of the true religion being off base, in many of his analyses regarding this world's version of Christianity he was right on target.

Hoffer strongly suggested—now hear this—Hoffer strongly suggested in his book that revolutions do not arise among the poor and they do not arise among the wealthy. I bring this up because this nation

is in the throes of a bloodless revolution. Mr. Hoffer opines that both the wealthy and the poor conclude that they have too much to lose in what is going on, and their fear of loss is real to them and drives them to conservatism.

You might ask, "What do the poor have to lose?" The answer is "All, and they have so little to begin with." If they lose what little they possess, they are dead men (is the way they look at it), and so they try, with all their being, to hang on to the little that they have. So, they have a very strong tendency to hold back when an emotional swelling is taking place in a community.

Instead, Mr. Hoffer said, revolutions are almost always ignited amongst the well-educated middle- and upper-middle class people. The prime targets are university students. I thought the movie /production *Les Miserables* portrayed that failed revolution well. The heart and core was pictured in that movie as being occupied by university students, and that's what Hoffer says. All the way down through the ages, it was the well-educated university students who were ripe for revolution.

Once the students get it started, the poor people begin to join, and they become the cannon fodder, the shock troops, as it were, to overthrow the entrenched system. What motivation do they have to join after being so conservative before that? It might be called the impossible dream, but on occasions, it succeeds. It is the hope of gain. It is the hope of *personal* gain—not just gain as a generality, but *personal* gain; massive change of circumstances for the better that drives one to join what the founders of the movement plan. It is what they personally hope to achieve that lures them to give of themselves, to give whatever they put do possess, to make whatever sacrifices are necessary—even their lives.

The goal in the revolutionary's life is the cause, the generator of the motivation of their sometimes almost blind, unthinking enthusiasm to give of themselves. Adolf Hitler, Joseph Goebbels, Reinhard Heydrich, Herman Gehring, and others of the National Socialist Party were brilliant in their deception of the German people. So were Karl Marx, Angle, Trotsky, Kerensky and others in Russia as leading the Russian people to buy into their revolution against the Romanovs. They emphasized the hope of personal change for the better, and the cannon fodder bought into it. If you're just following the news, you will see this is happening in the United States.

How do the Nones fit into this scenario? Their motivation is a little bit different. Their motivation is intellectual and spiritual, and they bought into a mass movement, but the one that they bought into was brilliantly orchestrated by Satan.

I gave you quite a number of descriptors that polls are showing identify who the Nones are and what they bought into. They were set up only at best, weakly prepared at home. This is what set them up. When they were growing up as children, when the movement was underway in its beginning stages, parents were already preparing them through unsound child training practices in the home. Sound biblical teaching was already being neglected by most parents. When they got to college, they were ripe for the plucking. They had little or no spiritual defense for the mindless, anti-God attacks of the secular liberals already planted there in the persons of classroom instructors, and fellow students already volunteered to join this revolutionary army of secularists.

What did the people who became Nones believe that they had to gain? It was the hope of greater personal freedom. Liberty. One of their rallying cries is, "Christianity ruins everything." They really have bought into this bloodless revolution. They lunged at the hope of throwing off their inhibitions against sex outside of marriage, especially. Dormitories became bisexual. Christianity is so

confining. So what if you do get pregnant? Ah, they can throw off their inhibitions. There was always abortion, now that they have the liberty to murder (given by the State).

The revolution we are in the midst of is one that wants to overthrow the fear of God. It is still somewhat weakly entrenched in the minds of many professing Christians, but these people want to stamp it out completely. When that is accomplished, the end will begin full force because Israel will fall on a moment's notice.