

**Stephen Balch:** There are several things that incentivize self-hatred in the West. One of those things is the Western proclivity to Utopian thinking. This is very unusual. The notion that you can rebuild the world and make it perfect is largely a product of the Enlightenment—the Western Enlightenment; the notion that reason is a powerful force and can do just about everything. Before the Enlightenment, when people thought of a kind of ideal place to be, they imagined that this could only come about through God’s work, and it would be under a new dispensation—either in the afterlife or after God has returned to the world and, cleaned it up, created a whole new perfected Eden-like manner of life. But in the Enlightenment, these kinds of views got brought down to earth and became a project that people could conceivably do if they only had the right kind of thinking. And so, you have in the Western world all manner of ideologies that have grown up since then which promote this Heaven on Earth possibility. Marxism, in its various forms, certainly is the chief of these. But there are kind of tribal ideas; you know, the Nazis had a notion of racial Utopia that they could create, they don’t simply come in one particular form and they can be hostile to each other. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, Marxism, in a variety of new guises, has recovered itself. That is to say that you have efforts which would have shocked Marx. Marx would not have recognized these as part of his project. But, nonetheless, notions that, for example, the biological constraints that have forever in this view chained humanity are really artificial oppressive constructs that can be done away with if only we kind of thought about it well enough. And so you have this kind of sexual Utopia. Not only a Utopia of sexual self-expression, but a Utopia in which sexual categories can be freely molded to suit their user’s underlying desires. These are all kinds of Utopian, in my view certainly, fantastical notions that were taken out of the Pandora’s box via the Enlightenment. Another thing is simply the number of people we have out there who are free to simply spin these Utopian yarns. Poor societies can’t afford to have a lot of people who spend their time thinking, and talking, and preaching; they have some, and usually they are folks who are part of some religious establishment that has power but at the same time is regulated and has constraints on it as to what it can say. There haven’t been many religious establishments in the past that have sort of gone to political war against the political powers that be, but we live in a free society, too. So, we have lots and lots of people who have the education to think in Utopian terms and have the freedom to espouse Utopian ideologies, and who find that there is a kind of marketplace for it, that there are a lot of consumers who are interested for a variety of reasons in Utopian visions, who want to build movements around it, or for whom it makes them feel good or who can derive some personal moral stature from jumping on the Utopian bandwagon and being part of this great project of uplift. So, we have large numbers of people, as opposed to the past, who can traffic in ideas, and we have, in a free society, given them the freedom to do so. And they have found a variety of ways, some self-satisfying, some pecuniary rewarding or financially rewarding to, kind of, pursue these ideas, and to espouse and to transmit these ideas throughout society. So, you might think that in a free society, there would be a tendency for a discourse to become more and more sensible and bound to Earth—and while there certainly is sensible and bound to earth political and cultural discourse, the reality of it is that a lot of it becomes extraordinarily theoretical, abstract and, in my view, far-fetched. Now, freedom is a good thing, we don’t want to do away with freedom, but I think we have to understand that it has its negative side-effects, and this is one of them.

**Stephen Balch:** One of the pathologies, you might say, of Western intellectual culture is the opportunity that Western intellectuals have to do mischief for fun and profit. Now, obviously, most of them don't, but a large vocal segment do. They don't think of it themselves as mischief; they think of it themselves as sort of bringing enlightenment and compassion to the world, but they latch on to these broad-gauged Utopian critiques. And by doing so, they find for themselves audiences of people that have a whole variety of complaints and who these Utopian critiques can speak to in some way that that seems reasonable or even compelling. They can develop a certain moral status in society that is helpful in different kinds of careers. If you're a journalist for example, to be able to bring to your journalism a kind of crusading mentality in which you're speaking truth to power, and you're unearthing, or you're at least documenting all sorts of regnant evils. That, you know, makes you something more than just a police reporter or a person talking about the weather. It gives you a moral standing if you're a professor, and you bring to your classes what you think is a broad-gauge searching critique that will make the scales will fall from the eyes of your students. They will enjoy, in your class, the benefit of a great epiphany; they will suddenly see how they have been galled or victimized. If you see yourself as doing that, you generate a certain degree of passion. And if you do it successfully, you will also give yourself a certain kind of standing that goes beyond simply a person who knows a lot of facts or even who can interpret, in a more day-to-day way, the larger currents of history or society. You give yourself a special claim to regard. And you can even develop, you know, a career track that involves developing claim. You know, we have, in the Academy, all sorts of fields that have, as part of their name, studies: you know, Ethnic Studies, Women Studies, Peace Studies, Critical White Studies. Now, there are some people in these fields who do genuine scholarship, but I want to paint with a broad brush. But a lot of the people in these fields think of themselves as having a mission, a mission to do good. It's not cynical; it's not as if they are putting something over on other people—that's not how they regard it. They regard it as uplift and insight. But if you do it well, you can do it to your advantage; you can create whole professional communities; you can generate income streams for those communities. You can advance, personally, within that particular profession; be it within the Academy, or journalism, or philanthropy, or the ministry—our churches, too, have kind of taken this on. So, what you have is an opportunity to do well by seemingly doing good. But in my view, by generally doing a good deal of harm.