



THE SECULAR HUMANIST PRESS

Freethought Journal of the Humanists of Washington

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Winter 2006-07

NOW WHAT?

by Rob Moitoza

By the time you read this article, the U.S. Congress will be back in session and Democrats will be in charge of the House and Senate. A few weeks ago I asked a friend of mine if he thought we'd be celebrating or drowning our sorrows after the midterm elections. He said he wasn't sure he'd be celebrating either way, because now we have to wait and see what the Democrats are going to do. He makes a good point. Will Democrats cave in to administration pressures, or will they act too aggressively and blow the whole thing? Will they clean up the ethics and corruption, or will they make deals with the same corporate lobbyists and become just as corrupt as the people they replaced? We really don't know. But one thing we do know... If we can separate ourselves from the horror long enough to see this whole thing as one big movie, in which we are a part, it is a heck of an exciting time to be alive.

We are at a great turning point in history. This is, without a doubt, the most important era I have experienced in my lifetime. Many of us believe that if Republicans had won the election it may have been the end of democracy as we know it. As more and more deals were being made with oil companies, and more and more of our money was going overseas to fight wars for corporate profit, it all looked pretty bleak. Many of us believe we were on the brink of fascism. I have hesitated to use that term, because it is one of those words that creates instant anger. Many believe that the U.S. could never become anything even close to a fascist nation. However, Mussolini himself defined fascism as the merging of corporation and state. That certainly sounds like what we have under the current administration. Huge government deals are being cut to give breaks to giant corporations while we, the people, keep paying for it. We have a vice president who is still unwilling to release information on secret energy policy meetings he had with major oil companies. This is not what I'd call a "government of, by, and for the people." It is fascism. But, whatever you choose to call it, it needs to be put back on the path toward some semblance of honesty and justice on behalf of the American people. This era, in which few rich aristocrats own it all and all the rest of us are left holding the bag, must end.

So, how will Democrats approach this? My first reaction was, "Impeach the bastards now and let's get on with it." However, I am now seeing that maybe that's not the best way to

go. If Democrats open up investigations, it may become abundantly clear to the American people that they have been duped. At that point Democrats may not have to impeach these guys. Several things could happen. First, the people could demand Bush's resignation. Of course, the likelihood of G.W. resigning, even if all the evidence was out there, is slim indeed. Second, the American people, themselves, could demand impeachment. This also, would be a long road, and I'm not at all sure the American people want another impeachment proceeding. Finally, the administration could be brought up on criminal charges regarding falsifying information, violating the United States Constitution, etc. Then what? Who knows? Maybe Republicans themselves will be the ones who demand Bush's resignation or start impeachment proceedings. Wouldn't that be the final irony?

Many people are now coming out against "staying the course" in this Iraq war debacle. The latest, former president Gerald Ford, said he believed the Bush administration had made a big mistake by invading Iraq. Unfortunately, he didn't have the guts to say that when he might have had some influence on the current president. Instead he cut a deal with, journalist, Bob Woodward to assure that his views would not be aired until after his death. Thanks a lot, Gerald!

In addition, the recent "Iraq Study Group," commissioned by the president himself, has come out with a scathing assessment of the Iraq war. Among their conclusions, "Sustained increases in U.S. troop levels would not solve the fundamental cause of violence in Iraq..." Statements such as

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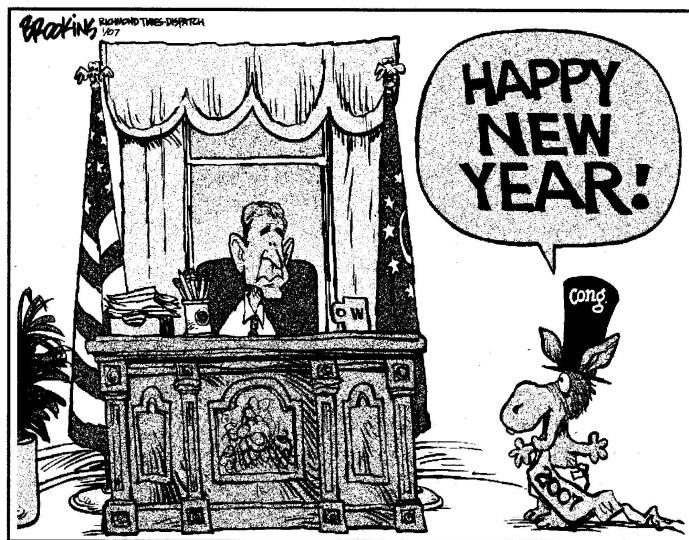
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SECULAR HUMANISM is a rational, non-theistic, naturalistic philosophy which supports intellectual freedom, free inquiry, self-responsibility, and scientific progress for the benefit of humankind. When applied to everyday decision-making, Secular Humanism provides a foundation for ethical conduct and human compassion without the need of salvation or supernatural guidance.

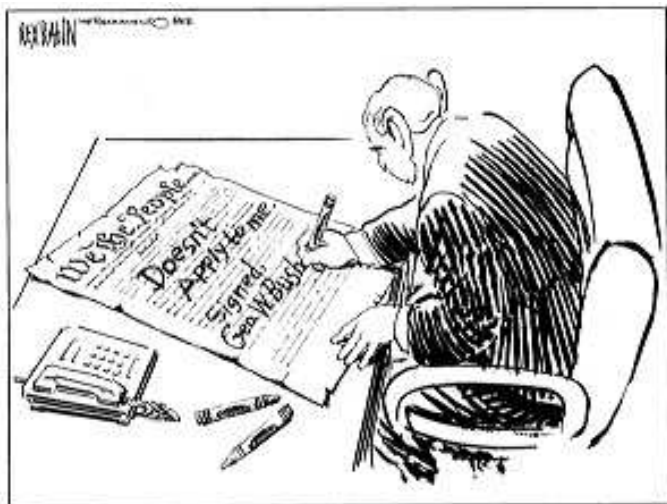
these have kindled instant damnation of the commission by right wing pundits and talk show hosts. (Funny, I never thought of commission co-chairs James Baker or Lee Hamilton as "liberal progressives." In fact, these same guys were heavily involved in the Iran-Contra scandals back in the Reagan era. Now, they are being chastised by their own buddies for their gloomy, but realistic, assessment of the Iraq war.) It also appears that George Bush is on the verge of ignoring the commission and ordering more troops into Iraq despite their findings. Anything less than a "win" seems to be unacceptable to Bush and his dwindling fan club. Of course, this begs the question, "What is a win?" If it means the creation of a stable and peaceful democracy in Iraq, these guys are on another planet because it ain't gonna happen! And if it does, when and at what cost? The U.S. cannot fund this war for fifty years. We are already on the verge of bankruptcy. Plus the fact that we have now lost more lives in this war than died in the Twin Towers on September 11, not to mention upwards of possibly as many as 100,000 injured men and women... not to mention the hundreds of thousands of innocent Iraqis that are now dead, and thousands fleeing the country. Is no cost too much for these Bush ideologues? If our entire military gets wiped out, but there is a democratic government formed in Iraq, would that be considered a "win"? How about if the entire U.S. population is wiped out, but there is peace in the middle East? Is that a "win"? In my opinion we have to get off the "win/lose" scenario and start finding ways where all sides "win", otherwise I see no positive outcome in any of this. The idea of a "win" is sheer fantasy. Here is the reality.

Right now we are in a terrible position in the world. Where we could have been a shining example to the world, we have become the most despised nation in history. Where we could have led the world toward peace, we instead chose aggression and war. Middle Eastern countries, who might have been at least been willing to negotiate with the U.S., are now increasingly mobilizing against us. It is hard to imagine how a president could have handled things any worse. With all the brilliant minds in the U.S., how could we possibly have ended up with a lunatic for a president? What is most discouraging to me is that so much time, money, lives, and energy has been wasted at a time when so many things need to be accomplished. I believe that most of the problems we are facing in the world today could be solved relatively easily if we would only put our energies in the right direction. For example, there are many

viable solutions to the current energy crisis. There are many companies with alternative energy systems ready to go right now. We could have them tomorrow. So, what is the hold up? Greedy politicians and oil companies are not willing to let go of even a small portion of their profits in order to get these new ideas up and running. I believe that with a minimum of effort we could solve problems like global warming, world hunger, disease, etc. We need only to put some of our great minds and resources to work in that direction. But, we cannot begin to solve any of these problems when we have leaders who are only concerned with their own wealth and power at the expense of everyone and everything else. Let's hope that Democrats will not sell us out. Anything is possible, but it will take men and women of great moral courage and vision in order to create a positive and peaceful world. Let's hope for the best. As the old song said, "This could be the start of something big."



"THE BEST HOLIDAY PRESENTS FOR MY FAMILY, OUR NATION AND THE WORLD, WOULD BE FOR THE TROOPS TO SPEEDILY AND SAFELY EXIT FROM IRAQ AND FOR BUSHCO TO BE HELD ACCOUNTABLE FOR THEIR CRIMES AGAINST OUR CONSTITUTION AND HUMANITY. THESE GIFTS, HOWEVER, WILL NOT BE REALIZED UNLESS THE GRASSROOTS COMMUNITY WHO PUT THE DEMOCRATS BACK IN POWER REDOUBLE OUR EFFORTS FOR PEACE AND ACCOUNTABILITY." CINDY SHEEHAN



The *Secular Humanist Press* is published quarterly by the Humanists of Washington, an independent, non-profit, educational association with mailing address of P.O. Box 17201, Seattle, WA, 98127. Our phone is (206) 527-8518 and email is humanists@comcast.net. Letters, articles, etc. should be mailed or emailed to the editors at the above addresses. All are more likely to be published if they are of moderate length. Views expressed herein are those of the editors and bylined writers and not necessarily the positions of the Humanists of Washington, nor do they represent the opinions of all Secular Humanists. Reprinting of original material herein is granted to Secular Humanist, Atheist, freethought, and rationalist nonprofit groups so long as proper acknowledgment of author and publication is included. Subscription rate (included in membership) is \$15.00 per year (for four quarterly issues).

The *Secular Humanist Press* is edited and produced by Barbara Dority and Jim Rybock.

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

FRIDAY, JANUARY 26, 2007, 7:30 – 9:30 PM Annual Business and Elections Meeting Plus an Open Discussion

It's that time again to come out and participate in HOW's internal processes. Our bi-annual election of officers will occur at his meeting which will be held, as usual, at the Phinney Neighborhood Center upstairs in room #6 (see below for directions.).

After our business is completed, we're going to try something new. We'll have an open discussion (loosely moderated by HOW treasurer Jim Rybock) about whatever is of most concern to us at the time. Who knows where we'll end up? Come and find out.

UPCOMING 2007 MEETING DATES (topics to be announced)

- APRIL 27
- JULY 27
- OCTOBER 26

Directions to Phinney Neighborhood Center, located at 6532 Phinney Ave. N. in Seattle: From I-5, exit at 50th and travel west for 1.5 miles. At the Woodland Park Zoo, angle right onto Phinney Avenue N. and proceed about 1 mile. A large light blue building with dark blue trim will be on the right. Street parking is usually available. You may also park in the large fenced parking lot on the north side of the building.

BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION AND READING March 24, 2007, 2 - 4 PM

On Saturday afternoon on the 24th of March, the Greenlake Public Library will help poet, HOW member and Greenlake resident Bill Witherup celebrate his 72nd birthday. Bill will read selections from *Men at Work* (1990), *Down Wind, Down River: New and Selected Poems* (2000) and his manuscript in progress *The Poet As Hornet*. Members of The Gene Debs Labor Ensemble will read and perform texts from *American Working-Class Literature: An Anthology* (Oxford 2006): writings, poetry, and songs by Upton Sinclair, Langston Hughes, Tillie Olsen, Kenneth Patchen, Woody Guthrie, and Eugene V. Debs. The Cajun band Jamais Trop Tard will be there, as will other musicians. The cultural historian Fred Whitehead had this to say in a review of *Down Wind, Down River*: "... Shelley said poets are 'unacknowledged legislators of the world.' In any real Republic of Letters on this continent, Bill Witherup would be a Senator." Admission is free, but copies of Witherup's books will be for sale.

SECULAR SEATTLE

Secular Seattle is a social group sponsored by the Humanists of Washington to provide a venue for bringing together Secular Humanists, Atheists, and others unencumbered by religion. Our purpose is to provide an opportunity for people of like mind to meet and have fun together. Secular Seattle events are open to the public. There is no charge; participants pay only for their own restaurant orders.

Secular Seattle's Yahoo Group website is located at [http://](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/SecularSeattle)

groups.yahoo.com/group/SecularSeattle. This site is open to the public. It includes a calendar of upcoming HOW events and a convenient way to sign up to receive email reminders of these events. HOW members, SHP subscribers, and non-members alike are welcome at all listed events. Please email the moderator at tiffany_ann_27@yahoo.com if you have any questions or would like to add an event.

Secular Seattle Second Thursday Dinners: Please join us for discussion of current events from a Humanist perspective, or just to visit with like-minded skeptics. Check out the Secular Seattle calendar at the Yahoo Group above or contact Jerry (see below) for the time and location of the next dinner.

We also have many other events (game nights, dancing, hiking, bicycling, etc.). Check our full calendar of events at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/SecularSeattle>. You may also contact Jerry Schiffelbein at 425-402-9036 or email him at jerryschiffelbein@msn.com.

- The Board of Directors of the Humanists of Washington meets at least quarterly. Members may obtain dates, places, and times by leaving a message on the HOW answering machine at 527-8518. An officer will call you back.
- If you misplace this journal or want to check the calendar of events, call 527-8518 to hear our 24-hour recording of upcoming events.
- To find out more about HOW and view the latest version of the *Secular Humanist Press*, go to our website at www.humanistsofWashington.org or email us at humanists@comcast.net.
- NOTICE: The deadline date for submissions to the Spring 2007 SHP is March 1st.

NORTHWEST FREETHOUGHT COALITION

The Northwest Freethought Coalition (NWFC) is an informal group representing various Freethought, Atheist, Agnostic, Humanist, Naturalist and other Secular groups in the Pacific Northwest. The coalition is planning a series of special events, each of which will be sponsored by one or more NWFC member organizations. The Winter Solstice Potluck, held on December 16, 2006 and co-sponsored by the UU Humanists and HOW, was one of those events. Information on NWFC events scheduled for the first half of 2007 follows.

Darwin Day, February 11

The first NWFC event of the year will be Darwin Day, to be sponsored by the Ethical Culture Society and co-hosted by Seattle Atheists and Humanists of North Puget Sound. It will include a variety of activities and will be held from 3 to 6 pm on Sunday, February 11 at the Tallmadge-Hamilton House, 5225 15th Ave. NE in Seattle. For details, go to: www.ethicalculturesociety.org.

FREETHINKER: A Person who rejects authority and dogma, forming opinions about religion on the basis of reason and rational inquiry independently of tradition, authority, or established belief.

American Heritage Dictionary, Second College Edition

Happy Birthday Dr. Freud, May 8

The Secular Jewish Circle will host a film about Freud in May as a special movie event on their calendar. The target date is May 8, 2007. Time and location to be announced.

Celebrating Freedom, July 4

For the third year, NWFC will sponsor a July 4 picnic hosted by all member groups and held at Cottage Lake Park.

UNIVERSITY UNITARIAN HUMANISTS

The UU Humanists meet at the University Unitarian Church (6556 35th Avenue N.E. in Seattle) from 7 - 9PM on the fourth Thursday of each month. The usual meeting format is a 40-minute presentation by a speaker (or speakers) followed by 30-35 minutes of discussion, or to have a topic introduced briefly by a discussion leader, who then moderates an open and free-wheeling discussion for about an hour. Either format may be followed by further informal discussion over coffee or tea until 9PM for those who wish to stay. To be added to the newsletter list, call Jeanette Merki at (425) 821-4605.

Meetings are held in the Emerson Room (last room on the right, downstairs as you enter from the parking lot). All are welcome.

What is the Place of Humanism in Liberal Religion Thursday, January 25, 2007

In the 1930s the 1st Humanist Manifesto was created by a group that included a fair number of UU ministers; now it seems there is less emphasis on Humanism in the Unitarian Universalist denomination. The Rev. Jon Luopa, Sr. Minister of University Unitarian Church will discuss what the future looks like for Humanists in Unitarian Universalist circles—is it a crisis or an opportunity?

Religion is a Mental Illness Thursday, February 22, 2007

No form of religion is recognized by the American Psychiatric Association as a psychological disorder—nor is it ever likely to be. Yet that is undeniably what it is. Barbara Dority, President of the Humanists of Washington, will present the case for religion as mental illness with the expert assistance of Albert Ellis -- distinguished psychotherapist, Humanist, and author -- who wrote, "Religion is, on almost every conceivable count, directly opposed to the goals of mental health....The close connection between religion and mental illness is inevitable..."

A Humanist Shares Some Thoughts & Questions Thursday, March 22, 2007

Rudy Hillinga, one of our new board members has led a remarkable life. He will share some stories that illustrate why he came to be a Humanist and why this philosophy sustains him. He will then lead us in a discussion, as he mulls over questions about religion and Humanism.

FREETHINKERS UNITED NETWORK

Join us for First Friday discussion group and dinner at the Maple Leaf Chinese Restaurant in Bellevue. We gather at 7:30pm.

Join us for Dim Sum Sundays, 11am, every third month on

the 3rd Sunday. We are also seeking actors and improv characters for our not yet aired cable show, "The Naked Atheist." See calendar at yahoo groups for updates on these and for other events. By joining the yahoo grouplist, you will receive automatic e-mail reminders of events.

For more information on FUN, go to www.freethinkersunitednetwork.com or contact Wendy Britton at wendita99@hotmail.com or 425-269-9108

HUMANISTS OF NORTH PUGET SOUND

The Humanists of North Puget Sound (HNPS) holds general membership meetings on every Third Sunday. They convene from 11am to 1pm at the Farmhouse Inn, 13724 LaConner Whitney Road in Mount Vernon. Come out and enjoy a good meal and social fellowship with like minded gents and ladies. HNPS posts their upcoming events on their web page at www.HumanistsNPS.com

ETHICAL CULTURE SOCIETY OF PUGET SOUND

The Ethical Culture Society of Puget Sound (ECS) meets to discuss and celebrate ethical and humanist living. ECS meetings are held on the First and Third Sunday each month only (not every Sunday) at the Tallmadge Hamilton House in the University District, located at 5225 15th Avenue, NE, Seattle 98105. Doors open at 10:00am and meeting begins at 10:30am. Meetings end approximately at noon.

The email address for information concerning ECS is: info@EthicalCultureSociety.org.

JOIN THE DARWIN PARTY by Graham

[Editors' note: The following is the content of a flyer created by Graham for leaving on the windshields of automobiles displaying the Darwin Fish. We have his permission to print it here and extend his invitation to like-minded readers, especially those who may be feeling a bit isolated in the Olympia area and find it difficult to make it to HOW activities and meetings.]

THE DARWIN PARTY has lunch at 11:30am every Friday at Anthony's Home Port in Olympia. In honor of the foot-fish displayed on your car (or some other praiseworthy quality of mind or character), you are invited. It is no host, no dues, no fees. The world's problems are solved for the day. Jokes may be exchanged. (When an actual joke is not available, a quotation from Congress or the clergy may be substituted.)

Leave a message at 360-866-1286 by Thursday evening of your intention to try to drop in so we can save you a space. Should your work or other commitments make it difficult for you to break bread with like-minded people, do call, drop a card, or email to say hello anyway. Address: Real World Service, Suite 502, 3403 Steamboat Island Road, Olympia, WA 98502. Email: therealworld@comcast.net.

LIBERAL: One who has, expresses, or follows views or policies that favor civil liberties, democratic reforms, social progress, tolerance, generosity, and the freedom of individuals to act or express themselves in a manner of their own choosing.

American Heritage Dictionary, Second College Edition

SOCIETY FOR SENSIBLE EXPLANATIONS

Do you have a skeptical opinion about paranormal claims or pseudo-science and can't find anyone with whom you can intelligently discuss it? This is your chance! Society for Sensible Explanations offers an opportunity to connect with others who share a skeptical point of view on various topics. Although the group does not meet on a regular basis, Tim Kammer, President of SSE, keeps a mailing list for notifying skeptics about topics and events of interest. For more information, go to www.seattleskeptics.org. To subscribe, contact Tim at timk@cablespeed.com.

HUMANIST MEDITATION

Are you interested in being more mindful of yourself and your environment? Come practice meditation grounded in human nature. We discuss techniques, sit for half an hour, and listen to a reading. We are meeting Wednesdays from 7:30-8:30pm in the theatre on the 4th floor of the Good Shepherd Center in Wallingford located at 4649 Sunnyside Avenue North. Beginners welcome.

For more information, contact Michael Waterston by phone at (206)779-1128 or email him at michaelwaterston@gmail.com.

HUMANISTS IN PRINT: SHARING YOUR PUBLISHED LETTERS

[Editors' note: We solicit copies of the printed letters of HOW members, subscribers, and friends for inclusion in this section. Space preference will be given to letters by members.]

Much proof that Hitler and friends had religion

[The following letter by Matt Barry was printed in the Seattle P-I on November 30, 2006.]

Cathy Young (Nov. 28) correctly noted the country's religious divide, but in a bizarre attempt to demonize American secularists by association, she repeated the myth that Nazis were "non-religious." I guess if you repeat something enough times, people will believe it. However, the evidence that Adolf Hitler and his soldiers were theists (specifically Christian) is voluminous.

Hitler's goal of exterminating Jews was fueled by the centuries-old teaching of the Catholic Church (in turn based on the New Testament) that Jews were the killers of Christ. In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler wrote, "I believe I am acting today in the spirit of the Almighty Creator: by resisting the Jew I am fighting for the Lord's work." He criticized the "skulduggery" of "atheistical Jewish parties" and complained that Jews, unlike his Christian Aryans, didn't believe in an afterlife.

The Catholic Church viewed Hitler as a member in good standing. The pope described Hitler's aggression against Russia's communists as "high-minded gallantry in defense of the foundations of Christian culture." Nine years after the anti-Semitic "Mein Kampf" was published, the pope signed a concordat with Hitler and required all German bishops to swear allegiance to the Reich.

Finally, Nazis wore "Gott Mit Uns" ("God With Us") on their belt buckles. Enough said.

"IF WE BELIEVE ABSURDITIES, WE SHALL COMMIT ATROCITIES."
VOLTAIRE

Seattle Times, 10/13/06

Another predictable round of American gun owners murdering school kids, and we're told schools will check their safety measures. So, there will be more ludicrous badges dangling from teachers' necks, and all visitors with at least a hundred rounds of ammo will be asked politely to check in at the main office before they start killing people.

Wonderfully well-meaning as these ideas are, I just don't think they're gonna stop any red-blooded American gun owner with a gun in hand and murder in mind. So, I humbly propose a different idea: Get rid of the guns.

Can't be done? As a matter of fact, it has been done, in a modern, urban, industrial society. While school shootings are so common as to be barely newsworthy in this country, they never happen in Japan.

—Brian Templeton, Des Moines

Seattle P-I, 11/30/06

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Matthew J. Barry
Issaquah

PRINTED LETTERS (Yes, this page is all Matt's!)

King County Journal, 4/21/06

MEDVED

Man-made fantasy vs. science

Michael Medved says astronomers should stop avoiding the obvious: Only the God mentioned in the Book of Genesis is capable of creating the universe. Au contraire. The Invisible Pink Universe-Creating Unicorn is also capable of creating universes. After all, it says that right in its name. See the Book of Pointy Horn, Chapter 3, which I just wrote a few minutes ago.

Silly, you say? Sure it is. So are fables about a snake that talks and a boat that carries all types of animals (including two mosquitos?). Humans have created all sorts of myths to explain the currently unexplainable. Yet Medved thinks such man-made fantasies, written by primitive and superstitious goat-herders thousands of years ago, should form the backbone of modern scientific knowledge. He thinks scientists should yell "God did it!" anytime they don't understand something.

But scientists know that replacing the three words "I don't know" with the three letters "God" is meaningless. Yelling "The Unicorn did it!" is just as useless. Scientists explore and explain the natural, not the supernatural. That Medved doesn't understand the basic purpose of science is no surprise, considering that he's a fervent supporter of the religious and unscientific nonsense known as intelligent design.

Matthew J. Barry
Issaquah

King County Journal, 7/26/06

MEDVED

Graduation is for everyone

Yes, Michael Medved, public high school graduations no longer have sections of the ceremony devoted to the majority of students who are religious. We also don't have parts of the ceremony devoted to the majority of students who are white. Or the majority who are heterosexual. Instead of dividing the audience and making minorities feel like outsiders, we now devote the entire graduation ceremony to all students, without regard to race, sexual orientation, religious belief (or lack thereof), shoe size or any other irrelevant factor. What a concept.

Matthew J. Barry
Issaquah

King County Journal, 6/17/06

PHARMACISTS

Same logic used by racists

Some letter writers have supported the "right" of pharmacists to refuse to provide services to certain people (those seeking birth control, for example). One writer said a pharmacist doing so "hasn't violated your rights because refusing to contract is not a rights violation."

The same logic was used by racists before civil rights laws. A restaurant is a private business, they said, and the owner doesn't have to serve blacks if he doesn't want to. A landlord doesn't have to rent to Jews if he doesn't like Jews. Those businessmen haven't "violated your rights because refusing to contract is not a rights violation." So said the racists.

Society created laws to stop such repugnant practices, and we should do the same to stop sanctimonious pharmacists from withholding services from certain customers, pushing their beliefs on other people and potentially hindering customers' efforts to acquire necessary and doctor-approved medicines.

Matthew J. Barry
Issaquah

Los Angeles Times, 10/29/06

Public beaches no place for *eruv*s

Re "Making Sabbath a day at the beach," Oct. 25

Orthodox Jews believe it's wrong to push strollers on Saturdays. But many don't want to live by their own rules, so they create *eruv* — rule-free areas that are marked by wire. They can build all the *eruv*s they want on their own private property, but they have no right to litter public property with miles of wires that endanger birds and ruin views.

The right to practice one's religion is limited when it negatively affects other people and the environment. Not only should the California Coastal Commission reject the request to build *eruv*s on public beaches, but *eruv*s in Hollywood and elsewhere should be removed.

MATTHEW J. BARRY
Issaquah, Wash.

King County Journal, 11/17/06

SCHOOLS

Vouchers aren't the answer

A letter writer opportunistically used recent school shootings to push for \$8,000 vouchers for private schools. First, he claimed private schools are safer than public schools because "alienated youth are less likely to drift into isolation" at smaller private schools.

Alienated youth? The school shooters this year in Pennsylvania (at a private — not public — Amish school), Colorado, Montreal, and Vermont were 32, 53, 25 and 27 years old, respectively. Vouchers and smaller class sizes would not have stopped those murderous adults.

The writer misleadingly ignored the fact that private schools can reject a troubled applicant even if he has an \$8,000 voucher in his hand. Public schools must accept everyone. It's not a level playing field, yet the writer still wants to take public money from public schools and hand it to rich private schools.

Even the writer's main point about school violence is groundless. He cited a National Center for Education Statistics study, but the following quotes from that study demonstrate that the sky is not falling: "Data show that the percentage of students being victimized at school has declined over recent years." Also, "youth ages 5-19 were at least 70 times more likely to be murdered away from school than at school."

The writer's histrionics about school safety are a red herring. Voucher supporters simply want taxpayers to foot the bill so their kids can go to elite private schools.

Matthew J. Barry
Issaquah

UNPUBLISHED LETTERS

[Editors' note: We solicit copies of your unpublished letters to newspapers and other media on topics of interest to our readers. Space preference will be given to letters written by HOW members.]

Justice for Sale

[Rob Moitoza sent this letter to the *Seattle Times* on January 1, 2007.]

So, out of all the important issues coming before the U.S. Supreme court, the most important issue for Chief Justice John Roberts is getting a pay raise for himself! ("Chief justice calls for higher pay for judges," *Seattle Times*, Monday, January 1, 2007) The poor guy is only making \$212,000 a year plus benefits and whatever investments he has. That's about six times what the average American makes in a year. But has Roberts come out in favor of raising the minimum wage to even survival level for the average American? Not that I know of. One encouraging note from him though: "The dramatic erosion of judicial compensation will inevitably result in a decline in the quality of persons willing to accept a lifetime appointment as a federal judge." Hopefully this means he will soon step down from the Supreme Court and we can get someone in there who cares about justice for the American people instead of profits for himself.

Payback

[Rob Moitoza sent this letter to the *Seattle Times* in response to an October 5, 2006 editorial titled "Foley's actions were gross, but where's the perspective".]

To a large extent I agree with your article regarding Rep. Mark Foley's actions. It does seem ridiculous. However, you asked for some perspective. So, here's why I think this is such a big issue.

1. Republicans have built their entire party on this "family values" campaign. Then, lo and behold, they are the very ones preying on children and corrupting family values. That is inexcusable and the height of hypocrisy! The list of sexual "indiscretions" by members of the GOP is huge!

2. Republicans impeached a president over sexual play between two consenting adults. Now, these same bastards are trying to protect a man who is a sexual predator. Sure, it was only emails, but these are under age kids, not consenting adults. And even if they did consent, would you like this man to contact YOUR child? Further, these guys love to distort the truth with wordplay. These are not "overly friendly" emails. There is nothing "friendly" about sexual predators! These are the same arguments used to justify the rape of a woman. Things like "She was asking for it" just don't fly! No one asks to be assaulted, and no one knowingly asks to be taken advantage of for someone else's sexual jollies . . . unless they are prostitutes. These kids were not prostitutes!

3. The idea that the GOP would try to blame the homosexual community for any of this is outrageous. If I were gay I'd be ready to set fire to the bastard's house! Fact: 98% of child molesters are STRAIGHT MALES. I have many gay friends and NONE would engage in pedophile activities. Many are parents themselves . . . and very good ones. In fact, they've done a lot better than I, or many of my straight friends, have done. These Republicans are sickos!

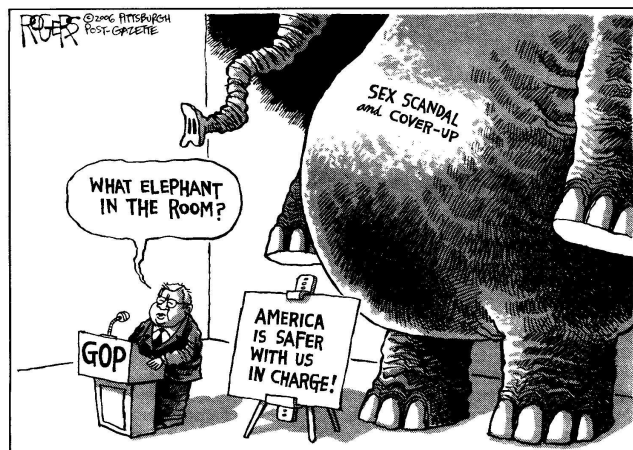
4. Republicans never take responsibility for anything. This

is what makes me the most angry. When I was an alcoholic I had to ADMIT IT and then do many years of therapy to get back on the right track. I admitted I was powerless over alcohol and did a whole lot of recovery work around it. These guys just hide behind it. By the way, using alcohol as an excuse for pedophilia is sickening as well. I know a lot of alcoholics, too, and none of them are pedophiles. The two are not related. I never thought I'd say this, but it's almost an insult to alcoholics!

5. Republicans are always telling us how much they believe in the Lord. Where did Jesus say to take advantage of underage children? These are not "Christians." That's another thing they hide behind. Boy! Expose these guys for their crimes and suddenly they are all great believers in Christ! Give me a break!

6. Honesty. We have a president that lied us into war. We have congressmen that ran campaigns against gambling casinos and then bilked those same casinos out of millions of dollars. Now, we have a guy who actually crusaded against sexual predators on the internet and, lo and behold, he was one of them! Aren't you tired of this? Can't we get a little honesty back into our government, for God sakes?

7. And, lastly, here's the biggest reason why this is important. Quite simply, Americans are obsessed with sex. You're right, there are way more important things to be concerned with right now. However, lying us into a war didn't get the president impeached. Tapping our emails and phone conversations in direct violation of the United States Constitution didn't seem to upset anyone. Torturing people and sending them to illegal prisons in violation of the Geneva Convention didn't get rid of this regime. Getting us into a national debt that we may never recover from doesn't seem to bother anyone. But, boy, let someone do something sexual and all Hell breaks loose. So, if this is what it takes to bring these bastards down I say, "So be it." Sure, it's ridiculous. So is the whole God damned administration. It's more than ridiculous . . . it's criminal! But, unfortunately, all Americans care about is sex. So let the party that was going to "bring morality back to America" go down due to their own immoral behavior. Somehow, it just seems right. Payback is a bitch.



PRESIDENT'S COLUMN by Barbara Dority

[Editors' note: Barbara Dority's recent column in the Faith & Values section of the *Seattle Times* is reprinted on the following page. Emails received by HOW in response to that column follow.]

SATURDAY, JANUARY 13, 2007

Faith & Values

The Seattle Times

REMEMBERING A MODEL HUMANIST

From time to time, The Seattle Times hosts guest columnists on the Faith & Values Page.

Today, we re-introduce Barbara Dority, a Humanist.

Giovanni Costigan died in 1990.

Five years earlier, on his 80th birthday, former Seattle Mayor

Charles Royer declared that day, Feb. 15, Giovanni Costigan Day in Seattle.

As my annual commemoration approaches, I find myself reflecting anew on the life of this singularly

remarkable man whom I was deeply privileged to call my friend.

Costigan was the embodiment of Humanism.

Far from losing their power and relevance, his teachings are made more essential than ever by the many critical issues threatening our world today.

After graduating from Oxford in 1926, Costigan came to the U.S. in 1930 to earn his doctorate. He then embarked upon a 50-year career as a professor of history at the University of Washington, a career that would inspire generations of young people, imbuing them with his commitment to the highest moral and ethical ideals.

His legacy lives on in the

countless hearts and minds of everyone he touched.

He taught his students that present and future generations must learn from history so that mistakes are not repeated. He taught by making history come alive and by giving his students modern parallels, and he inspired young people to make a difference by involving themselves in the betterment of society.

He promoted the use of peaceful means to resolve international conflicts, and he was a fighter for progressive social causes, as well as an outspoken critic of American involvement in Southeast Asia and Central America.

Costigan proudly proclaimed himself a Humanist. Of his many awards, he most treasured his 1983 Pioneer Award from the American Humanist Association. With others of like mind, he believed that this life is the only life we humans will ever have.

Costigan was a dedicated and uncompromising seeker of truth, no matter how bad it was, no matter how much people didn't want to hear it, no matter what the consequences to himself for speaking it.

"It is one's own moral duty to speak for the truth," he said, "even if no one hears you. At least you have not surrendered to the lie, and that is something: to keep one's self-respect."

The appearance of the small-framed man with the shock of curly white hair could be deceiving. Make no mistake, Costigan was fierce in the face of demagoguery and lies — yet, even then, he never abandoned his signature civility.

ty.

In 1971, in a much-heralded event, in a packed house at the UW, he debated William F. Buckley Jr., well-known leader of the conservative movement and an anti-communist who strongly defended Sen. Joe McCarthy's crusade against Communism.

The outcome of the debate was accurately reflected in his subsequent comment to the media: "Perhaps those who are too young do not remember how many helpless victims my opponent has hounded and persecuted throughout the years. I felt a modest demolition job was called for."

Costigan was heartbroken by the inhumanity around the world. Yet he retained an almost childlike wonder and joy in life.

Once, when asked his advice to the young, Giovanni immediately responded, "Carpe diem! — Seize the moment!" Indeed, living directly from his heart, Costigan was fully alive every day of his life.

At my home two years before his death, he read for our guests some chosen verses from one of his favorite poetry books, "The Rubaiyat," by Omar Khayyam:

*"Oh come with old Khayyam,
and leave the Wise*

*To talk; one thing is certain,
that Life flies;*

*The flower that once was
blown, forever dies.*

"One moment in annihilation's waste,

*One Moment of the well of
Life to taste,*

*The stars are setting and the
Caravan starts*

*For the Dawn of ... Nothing!
Oh, make haste!"*

"These two verses," he commented, "present a true view of life." Still, he did not despair. He smiled and urged us to "seize every joyous moment together, on this night and all nights."

Costigan was the wisest, humblest and most truthful person I ever knew.

A more principled, loving and gentle human being could not be imagined. With grace and dignity, he served as beloved teacher, mentor, friend and daily inspiration.

In the sweetness of his character and the nobility of his Humanist principles, I found the embodiment of my personal philosophy and was inspired to my life's work.

These many years later, I still miss my good and gentle friend.

But it is always a joy to remember his remarkable life as a champion of peace and justice.

On Feb. 15, may we reflect upon his oft-quoted admonishment from Bertrand Russell — his "Humanist credo."

"Remember your humanity, and forget the rest."



RICH HANSEN

*UW history
professor
Giovanni
Costigan*



Barbara Dority is president of the Humanists of Washington and executive director of the Washington Coalition Against Censorship. She lives in Ballard with her husband, four cats and one bird.

Thank You

Thank you for Barbara Dority's excellent article about Giovanni Costigan, made more interesting because she knew him as a friend rather than an interviewer. His name appeared frequently in the news for many years but I was never made aware of his humanist inclination.

It does indicate that a life of value, responsibility and morality can be led without the guidelines of an established religion, and I appreciate learning about that. Thanks for another thought-provoking article.

Annette Case

Thank You

Thank you for your article about Dr. Costigan. I was fortunate to have heard him speak several times at the UW in the 70s. He was such an impressive, articulate scholar. I remember thinking how different our world would be if we had world leaders with even a fragment of his charisma and humanity.

Thanks again for your well written article.

Marilyn Wood

Thank You

Thank you for your article in the *Seattle Times* of Jan. 13. It sure brought back a lot of good memories.

I was a fifth year senior (English Literature) when I was encouraged to enroll in Professor Costigan's English History class. Working my way through college and taking 15 credit hours left me little time for frivolous adventures, but my friends

tell me "you gotta hear this guy talk". OK, so I drop a class needed to graduate. It's been nearly 5 years after all. My dad thinks I should be in Vietnam by now. (This was never going to happen.) I enroll in Professor Costigan's "Early English History" class.

I had never seen Professor Costigan before I entered his classroom. I sit in the back of the room – I used to be shy. Enter a diminutive, curly grey haired, gnome of a guy who grabs my attention with a booming, gravely, voice announcing what will be expected of us all. I like this person immediately.

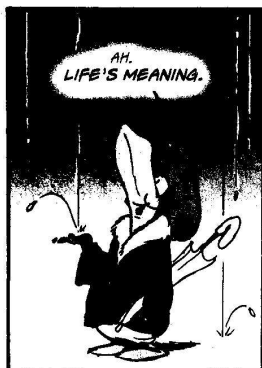
Professor Costigan's command of the English language impressed me immensely. This man spoke poetry with even simple sentences. Brief and compact, every word was full of meaning, and, these same words stimulated your imagination. I think I took a "D" in this class. Uncommon for me, but, as I one day told him, "I wasn't there to learn history- I didn't have time to do the work." I was there to absorb his wisdom, his humanity and his rare sense of what mean to be a part of this earth. I did not tell him that. I wish I had. He was simply too big for me to tell him that. I was afraid. But, in earnest, I learned more from this man than I did from any other. He was a wonderful teacher. He was an example for what we should become/be. He is remembered by many. You are lucky to have been his friend.

This snowy January 13, I still remember that funny little man on his bicycle riding over brick pathways, during spring, cherry blossoms everywhere. Like I said -- good memories! Again, thanks for the article in the *Times*.

John Sleighter

OPUS

by Berkeley Breathed



"RELIGION IS BASED . . . MAINLY ON FEAR . . . FEAR OF THE MYSTERIOUS, FEAR OF DEFEAT, FEAR OF DEATH. FEAR IS THE PARENT OF CRUELTY, AND THEREFORE IT IS NO WONDER IF CRUELTY AND RELIGION HAVE GONE HAND IN HAND. . . MY OWN VIEW ON RELIGION IS THAT OF LUCRETIUS. I REGARD IT AS A DISEASE BORN OF FEAR AND AS A SOURCE OF UNTOLD MISERY TO THE HUMAN RACE." BERTRAND RUSSELL

HAIL MARY

by John Lee

"WHERE WILL THEY GO WHO DIE IN MORTAL SIN? THEY WHO DIE IN MORTAL SIN WILL GO TO HELL FOR ALL ETERNITY."
CATHOLIC SCHOOL, 1ST GRADE, 1936

Irish, they were all Irish, the priests at the Catholic grammar school I attended as a child. They had names like Timmons, Crotty, Sullivan, Molloy, Hendricks (his mother was Irish), and Murphy. They were the children of the thousands of Irish immigrants who poured through Ellis Island in the early part of the century and settled in cities like Pittsburgh, Erie, Rochester, and my hometown, Buffalo.

Those brave souls brought with them the Celtic determination to offer at least one of their children to the service of Holy Mother, the Church. They also brought with them the primal Irish belief that mortal sin and sex go hand in hand. When it came to sex and sin, the French and Italians were fairly indifferent. But not the Irish -- where crimes against God and sins of the flesh were concerned they simply could not to be outdone.

"Bless me father for I confess that I have sinned in thought, word, and deed. It has been one week since my last confession. I have used God's name in vain several times, I have had impure thoughts, and was impure with myself, ahh, several times. I was angry with my brother. I ask forgiveness for these, and all the sins of my past life."

It is 1942. I am 13 years old. I am in the confessional box at St. Margaret's Holy Roman Catholic Church on Hertel Avenue in Buffalo, NY. I would rather be at Percy's Restaurant eating a cheeseburger, hoping Mary Lou Scanlin (the current object of my impure thoughts) will walk through the door. I would rather be at the North Park Theatre watching Laurel and Hardy. I would rather be anywhere but putting my newly discovered sexual life on the line to Father Murphy, who sits behind the screen. (I wonder if he has impure thoughts about Mary Lou Scanlin's mother.)

There is method in my confession. I always couch my "impurities" between the venial sins of profanity and anger in hopes that the priest will let me off easily. But he doesn't. Oh no!!! It's the usual sermon about my Heavenly Father and the Holy Mother of God and how they want me to keep my soul clean and pure. "When these impure thoughts come to your mind my son, say a Hail Mary and offer your sacrifice up to the holy souls in Purgatory. Now for your penance say five Hail Mary's, make a good Act of Contrition and go and sin no more." More often than not the priest's holy words are spoken in a silken Irish brogue.

Each spring in the month of May (the lusty month of May), it was traditional for the school to hold what was called a Retreat. We dreaded them. All the boys and girls of the 6th, 7th and 8th grades were herded into the church for what constituted the Catholic view of sex education -- sex as it

related to mortal sin. Because of the nature of the subject the boys retreat was on Wednesday and the girls, separately, on Thursday. We, the boys, wondered early on why the girls had to be spoken to because as my friend Dutch said, "How can they sin? I seen pictures and there's nothing down there." However when I spoke to my older brother about this he assured me, "Oh yea, there's something down there."

The Retreat began with the service of Benediction where the priest invoked the presence of the Holy Spirit. There was a lot of Latin mumbling and song and plenty of incense. Then we got down to the business at hand (so to speak). This is where the Retreat Master was introduced. It was never the parish priest. Oh no, they brought in the heavy hitters. He was usually a Monsignor adorned in his purple robes and cap -- think Monsignor Fulton J. Sheen -- and you can bet he was Irish. He would begin by addressing us as, "Lads"; not boys, "Lads." He would draw us in with some light humor and talk of sports, usually about "those wonderful lads from Notre Dame."

Then he would warm to his subject. "Now lads, you have reached an age where your youthful bodies are going through dramatic changes. You are being physically prepared for that sacred domain of manhood when you will someday marry and become the instrument of God's holy plan to create the miracle of birth and help propagate the world." There are faintly audible snickers at the images his words create in our young and impressive minds.

"But be warned lads. Those stainless bodies can now become the Devil's playground. The Devil and all his evil spirits who roam the world seeking the ruin of your immortal souls will tempt you to perform unthinkable acts. Your idle hands become his tools for the destruction of your purity. You are to fight these temptations as if in constant battle and become members of God's Army and soldiers of Jesus Christ." At this point the Monsignor pauses, his eyes search ours and as if he is speaking to each one of us personally he drops the bomb.

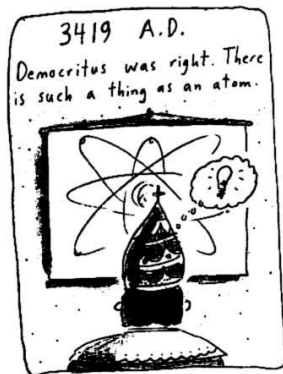
"For know this lads; hearken to my words. That part of your body that you taint with the evil of sin will burn in Hell for all ETERNITY." There are no snickers. Instead there is thunderous roar of silence as he allows us to sit in frozen terror as we each, individually, contemplate the image of our member, our erected member, a bright red, blistered torch of flames for all ETERNITY.

He has our full attention. "Now lads, there is one more critical piece of knowledge you must cleave unto your very souls. ETERNITY. We cannot in our feeble human minds understand what God has in store for those who do not follow the path of purity. Let me give you just a glimpse of what ETERNITY is all about."

"Close your eyes lads for a few moments and picture, if you will, a bird, a wee bird, a wee small bird perched on the steeple of this very sacred house of God. Now imagine that this wee, small bird has been given a sacred task. He is to leave his perch and fly east to the great Atlantic Ocean. He continues his journey and, over a very long period of time, crosses the rolling, mutinous waves of that vast sea until he reaches the shores of Africa. Once there he directs his flight until he arrives at the silent, raw, savage, splendor of the great and glorious Sahara Desert."

"Once there the wee small bird takes time to rest. Lads, have I properly conveyed to you the passage of time in this grand endeavor? Once the bird has nourished itself it prepares

UPCOMING VATICAN ANNOUNCEMENTS



n. chent

for the return journey, but not before it picks up one, single, shimmering, golden grain of sand in its tiny beak. With its precious cargo it flies westward back across the great Atlantic, struggling against the prevailing easterly winds, until it is directly over the waters of our own beautiful Lake Erie. Once there, it opens its tiny beak and drops the grain of sand."

In the most poetic Celtic tones he continues to describe the "wee bird's" sacred odyssey. Over millions and millions of years that poor bird flies back and forth, back and forth over the Atlantic until, one by one, it has taken every grain of sand from the Sahara. "Listen well lads. When that bird, that wee small bird, after millions of years of flights, finally deposits that last single grain of sand into our own Lake Erie, that lads will not even be the first moment of ETERNITY." And that, of course, is how long that part of our bodies will be a genital mass of flames.

The Monsignor concludes his message with another reminder of the power of the Hail Mary. "When Satan tempts you lads, invoke the blessing of Christ's blessed mother and pray the Hail Mary." He further suggests cold showers or long walks when the evil spirits are upon us. He then grants us, by the power vested in him from almighty God, full absolution from all the sins of our past life. We leave the church, awash in the cloying scent of incense, cleansed of all past sins, fortified in the knowledge that we are part of God's Holy Army and soldiers of Jesus Christ. Our very loins girded for battle with Satan and his evil spirits with the power of the Hail Mary.

Now in this, a new millennium, as I recall these events, I don't know whether to laugh or cry. What dreadful pictures they put into our young, innocent minds, all in the name of God. And yet, it is a testament to the awesome power of our human sexuality that very likely found me, my pal Dutch, and yes, Mary Lou Scanlin, in the confessional line the very next Saturday, just three days after the Retreat, to invoke that plea, "Bless me Father, for I have sinned." And, as I waited in prayerful silence I like to think I might have furtively glanced at Mary Lou in her soft, pink angora sweater and thought, "Jeez, will you just look at those . . . Hail Mary full of grace . . ."

[John is from Bellingham and can be reached at jjlee64@comcast.net]

"RELIGIONS ARE ALL ALIKE — FOUNDED UPON FABLES AND MYTHOLOGIES." THOMAS JEFFERSON

THE DANGER OF RELIGION AND NATIONALISM TO AMERICA TODAY

by Dr. Adrian Liston

There are signs everywhere that segments of America are becoming increasingly hostile towards Muslims. The hostility was deeply embedded into the American psyche by the religion of those individuals who attacked the United States on September the 11th. These attacks highlighted two of the dangers of religion. The first is the obvious one -- religion can induce people to commit horrendous actions, because it places the authority of a God over that of human morality. To the extent that the terrorists were guided by faith, religion does indeed have much to answer for. The second

danger of religion is less obvious and more insidious.

Religion is used as a boundary between in-groups and out-groups. The terrorists were not directly harmed by the United States, rather they identified themselves as part of an in-group, Islam, which they perceived as under attack. Likewise, the targets were not those directly responsible for the United States foreign policy, but rather those people who self-identified as the in-group, Americans, who included those in power. In effect, religion and nationalism neatly divided the world into "us" and "them," and 3000 innocents tragically died.

It is so important for us to not fall into this trap of using in-groups and out-groups to vent rage. If we move from anger towards terrorists who identify themselves as Muslim to anger towards all who identify themselves as Muslim, we plunge into a war which will not cease. Israel and Palestine, two countries thrown into conflict by inept distribution of land by the great powers, demonstrate this principle all too well. The self-identifiers are clear, Jewish vs. Muslim, Israeli vs. Palestinians. An Israeli sees their country under attack by suicide bombers who are Muslims and Palestinian. Their anger is directed at all who they perceive as being part of these in-groups, and injustices are done; people are deprived of land and water and missiles kill innocents. Those who identify themselves as Muslims and Palestinians blame all those who are Jewish or Israeli, and a rocket or suicide attack can be non-specifically aimed into Israel. The cycle of conflict gets deeper. The conflict also gets wider, non-Palestinians Muslims pick up the anti-Israeli hatred, Israel-aligned Westerners blame all Muslims. The conflict causes internal fractures, the Deputy Prime Minister of Israel, Avigdor Lieberman, advocates stripping citizenship from those who are both Israeli and Muslim.

Is this happening in America today? Have religious lines been drawn to distinguish "us" and "them" groups, thereby allowing the fear of a few extremists to find vent in hostility towards all those who identify with that religion? There are dangerous signs that this is indeed happening. At the level of the government, Guantanamo Bay is dangerously skirting the edge of the U.S. Constitution. One of the great clauses of the Constitution is that it guarantees that all those within U.S. jurisdiction are granted all the rights and protections of the Constitution, with only the right to vote being reserved for citizens. Yet Guantanamo inmates have not been granted access to a fair and speedy trial. This possible Constitutional violation

has created barely a murmur, with many citizens willing to assume that the government will act in good faith and only hold those who deserve it. Of course, the important question, besides the personal rights of those imprisoned, is how can we know the government is holding those who are guilty without judicial oversight to analyze the evidence?

Of 775 detainees who have been brought to Guantanamo, 340 have been released and another 110 have been labeled as ready for release. In the government's own assessment, half of all the prisoners, some kept in isolation for years, are either innocent or pose no significant threat. In light of this, should we wonder about the basis on which the government is committing violations of human rights and the Constitution? Should we consider the case of Khalid El-Masri, a German arrested while on holiday in Macedonia? El-Masri had the misfortune to have the same name as an al-Qaeda operative, and he spent two months in a CIA prison in Afghanistan, during which time he claims he was tortured. The CIA finally released El-Masri and has admitted wrongful imprisonment, but no apology or compensation has occurred and there have been active efforts to keep the news profile of this case low. Or perhaps we should consider the case of Brandon Mayfield? An American Muslim lawyer who was arrested as a suspect for the Madrid attacks based on a partial fingerprint match. He was held for two weeks before the FBI reanalyzed the evidence and found it to be lacking. In this case an apology and compensation ensued, and most tellingly the FBI admitted that Mayfield's religion biased the investigation, overriding the poor quality of the fingerprint match. Truly religion has become a factor for discrimination in the current Administration.

Is it only the government at fault? There are symptoms of a growing hostility in the American people, not directed at those who pose a threat to America, but more broadly to all those in the same religious in-group. Six Imams were removed from a flight after some passengers felt threatened by their prayer. Raed Jarrar was forced to cover up his shirt (with Arabic writing on it) at JFK airport. It is likely in both cases that the people in question deliberately pushed the boundary to draw controversy, but that does not excuse the response in either case. Or take the case of Congressman-elect Keith Ellison. The first Muslim elected to government, he will be formally sworn in under the Constitution like all Representatives. Like many Representatives, he will choose to follow this with a non-formal photo-op where he swears an oath on a book he considers holy. For a number of Americans, the use of the Koran instead of the Bible in a photo-op is creating outrage. The American Family Association is lobbying to ban the use of any book other than the Bible, Dennis Prager led an attack on Keith Ellison, which garnered a surprising level of support considering even a simple level of understanding of American history demonstrates that the United States was not founded on Christianity, but rather on secular enlightenment. A journalist had the audacity to ask Keith Ellison to prove that he was not an enemy of the United States.

This discrimination against groups based merely on their religion does not only fuel hostility in Muslim countries, it threatens to rip America apart from within. When Jerry Klein suggested on his talkshow that all Muslims in the United States should be identified with a crescent-shape tattoo or a distinctive arm band, his phone-lines jammed with responses. Many were

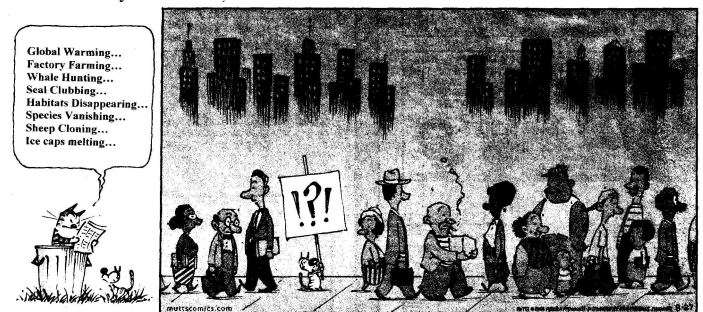
offended at the very suggestion, yet a disturbing number were vocally supportive and went even further stating: "What good is identifying them? You have to set up encampments like during World War Two with the Japanese and Germans." Klein deliberately manipulated his audience to create controversy, and in all likelihood carefully selected respondents who fuelled it further. However these are not isolated views. A Gallup Poll taken soon after found that 40% of Americans admitted to at least some prejudice against Muslims. Forty percent favored requiring American Muslims to carry a special ID. One third believed that American Muslims were sympathetic to al-Qaeda, and 22% said they would not want to live next door to a Muslim.

The subtle threat of religion is clear – America is starting to fracture down religious lines, where people can despise each other to the point of violating their rights, simply due to their religion. On the global scale both religion and nationalism create boundaries, drawing artificial lines allowing extremists on both sides to say "you are either with us or you are against us." The "why" behind this is no mystery. Most religions teach that their adherents are superior in the eyes of an absolute power. Nationalism too teaches that members of your own country are worth more than foreigners. How many Rwandans is one American worth? During the 1994 genocide, U.S. Lieutenant General Daniel Schroeder, Commander of the joint task force on Rwanda, said "one American causality is worth about 85,000 Rwandan dead."

In a world where the richest two percent of adults own half the world's wealth and the poorest fifty percent of adults own one percent of the world's wealth (the latest figures from the World Institute for Development Economics Research), we need to stop evaluating people in terms of whether they share a religion or nationality with us and start treating each human being as being intrinsically equal. The insidious "us" and "them" mentality propagated by religion and nationalism is a xenophobic remnant which degrades us all.

"SAY WHAT YOU WILL ABOUT THE SWEET MIRACLE OF UNQUESTIONING FAITH, I CONSIDER A CAPACITY FOR IT TERRIFYING AND ABSOLUTELY VILE." KURT VONNEGUT

MUTTS/ by Patrick McDonnell



WHERE ARE THE CONSERVATIVES' HEROES? by Brian Templeton

Steve Allen used to ask a somewhat unfair question: "Where are the conservatives' heroes?"

He pointed out that with the exception of Edmund Burke, the greatest figures of Western Civilization have all been liberals, often persecuted by conservatives even to the point of

execution: Socrates and Jesus, for example. The greatest thinkers and scientists have often been suppressed by conservatives: Copernicus, Galileo, and Darwin. Those who called for freedom of conscience were burned at the stake: Bruno and Servetus.

Our nation was built upon liberal principles which had been violently opposed by conservatives for millennia: democracy, freedom of expression, freedom of and from religion.

Our Founding Fathers were rational men of the Enlightenment. They believed in the most liberal idea of all, that we should be guided not by mythology and superstition, but by reason and evidence.

This idea is still opposed by many conservatives even into modern times. Pope Benedict XVI called the Enlightenment one of the greatest evils ever to befall mankind. Apparently, some want to return to that glorious time of stretching on the rack and burning at the stake. Those were the days.

Ours was the first nation on Earth to specifically separate church and state in its Constitution. The two great intellectual giants of the time, Paine and Jefferson, despised Christianity and ridiculed it every chance they had. Even Lincoln rejected Christianity.

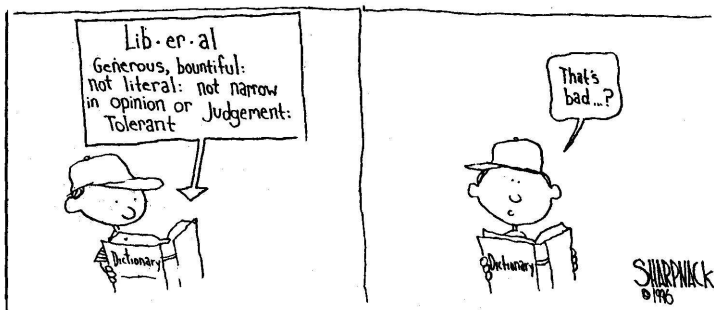
Remember, conservatives fought against Washington in the Revolutionary War. Their standard bearer was the traitor Benedict Arnold. In the Civil War, they fought to keep Negroes in chains. For a hundred years afterwards, conservatives enforced racial segregation. It was liberals who gave us civil rights and voting for all, regardless of race or sex.

Our greatest Presidents have been liberals: Washington, Adams, Jefferson, Madison, Jackson, Honest Abe, Teddy, Wilson, FDR, Truman. With rare exception, conservative Presidents have been distinguished only by their mediocrity: Bush, father and son. Or corruption: Harding and Nixon.

It has often been said that a conservative is someone who praises past liberals while condemning current ones. When Ronald Reagan was asked about his favorite presidents, he named FDR and Truman, both vilified by the conservatives of their time.

And yet, Steverino was not completely fair. For conservatives do have an important role. While all great ideas have been liberal ideas, not all liberal ideas have been great. So, it's the duty of conservatives to say no when liberals propose a bad idea. Sadly, bad ideas are never in short supply from all sides.

So, two and a half cheers for liberals, but a half cheer for conservatives too. We need both.



"IT APPEARS TO ME (WHETHER RIGHTLY OR WRONGLY) THAT DIRECT ARGUMENTS AGAINST CHRISTIANITY AND THEISM PRODUCE HARDLY ANY EFFECT ON THE PUBLIC; AND FREEDOM OF THOUGHT IS BEST PROMOTED BY THE GRADUAL ILLUMINATION OF MEN'S MINDS WHICH FOLLOWS FROM THE ADVANCE OF SCIENCE." CHARLES DARWIN

EYE FOR EYE! **HOW OMNI-EXCELLENT IS THAT?** by G. Richard Bozarth

Fundamentalist Christians often defend their support for the death penalty by citing the Bible to prove their imaginary three-part deity supports the death penalty as it is currently practiced in the U.S. The quote is almost always the "eye for eye" commandment in the Old Testament. If a person actually reads what precedes the commandments (there are two), what she will learn isn't much like what modern Fundamentalist Christians preach.

In Exodus 21:22-25, the commandment is linked directly and exclusively to causing a pregnant woman to miscarry during one specific activity, which is "when men come to blows." If miscarriage is the only thing that happens, and the man who causes it is not her master, then he "must pay the compensation demanded of him by the woman's master; he shall hand it over it over, after arbitration." However, "should she die, you shall give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, stroke for stroke." The excessive language obviously is intended to communicate how heinous the ancient Jews thought this particular kind of homicide was. The words of the commandment are easy to understand and are explicitly linked to the specific crime to be punished by death. Nothing in the language allows the specific crime described to be interpreted as a metaphor for homicide in general, or the specific type of homicide that is today called murder.

The first obvious thing about the commandment is this: the crime it punishes is one of many Old Testament capital crimes that have been made obsolete by cultural evolution. Today a pregnant woman who dies after a miscarriage caused by her being somehow entangled with brawling men would not be called a murder victim. If one or more of men were charged with a crime, it would be something like negligent homicide, and wouldn't be punished with the death penalty. Would even the most passionate fundamentalist Christian disagree? Would any fundamentalist Christian want to have the death penalty inflicted on him if he, during a fist fight, accidentally caused a pregnant woman to miscarry and she died because of it? I'm very confident none of them would, and I'm equally confident reading Exodus 21:22-25 to him would not change his mind. They never practice their imaginary three-part deity's commandments as literally as they like to pretend they do.

The "eye for eye" commandment is repeated in Deuteronomy 19:16-21 in the same over-the-top way that appeals to those thoroughly corrupted by religionism's detrimental moral influence: "You are to show no pity. Life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot." However, once again it is linked to a specific crime. The crime is falsely accusing a man of rebellion. If the judges who "make a careful inquiry" determine that "the witness who accused his brother is a lying witness, you must deal with him as he would have dealt with his brother." How is rebellion punished? By

death, and again the excessive language in the concluding verse obviously is intended to communicate the heinousness of the crime, and how savagely the punishment must be inflicted. These words are also easily understood and extremely specific. The crime is clearly not intended to be a metaphor for crime in general or the specific crime of direct murder or some other kind of homicide.

In those ancient good old days, when rebellion was punished by the death penalty, to falsely accuse a person of rebellion was attempting to indirectly murder the person. It's important to know that the crime of rebellion was not limited to an attempt to overthrow the government. Merely resisting authority was the crime of rebellion, and it included parental authority. Parents could formally charge sons who refused to obey them with rebellion, and to punish that crime "all his fellow citizens shall stone him to death" (Deuteronomy 21:18-21).

Here are two more crimes in the Bible that are no longer punished by the death penalty. Nobody in the U.S. today is given the death penalty if convicted of falsely accusing another person of a capital crime. Cops and prosecutors who do it quite often get "punished" only with bad PR when their attempts to get the government to murder an innocent person fail. If a Fundamentalist Christian committed that crime, would he insist on being punished with the death penalty because he believes his imaginary three-part deity commanded that punishment for the crime? It's possible. After all, it's possible to win some state's lottery!

Rebellion is a crime today only in specific circumstances. Armed rebellion against the government is a crime in all nations, but in the U.S. it is recognized in our Declaration of Independence that citizens have a right "to alter or abolish" a government that no longer protects, preserves, and defends the rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness to ensure they are unalienable. Would any Fundamentalist Christian in the U.S. hold up his Bible and insist that our Founders should have been punished for the crime of rebellion in the way the Bible insists it must be? I'm very, very confident none of them would. Armed rebellion is moral and often necessary when the government is tyrannical, or when a nation is occupied by a foreign conqueror who wants to establish a new government the foreign conqueror likes.

Rebellion in the form of resistance to authority is also recognized to be moral and necessary when authority is immoral or wrong. When resistance to authority involves breaking the law, if the rebel does not commit homicide, the punishment today is never the death penalty. How many antiabortion Fundamentalist Christians would want to be punished by the death penalty when they are convicted of committing the crime of vandalism, which they believe their particular rebellion against authority justifies? The answer is most likely "None".

The "eye for eye" justification for the death penalty as it is practiced today in the U.S. is extremely lame because the Bible is loaded with crimes to be punished by death that are not death penalty crimes today. Exodus 21:15 ("Anyone who strikes his father or mother must die") and Exodus 22:19 ("Anyone who has intercourse with an animal must die") are good examples. Domestic violence inflicted on parents by their children is never a capital crime if the violence does not end in homicide. Bestiality usually is a crime in the U.S. today, but not a capital one, or even a serious one. How many cops, even

Fundamentalist Christian ones, would leave a doughnut shop if a snitch told them she knew a woman who was her dog's lover and they were getting it on right now in her apartment?

The Bible is harsh on adultery. It is forbidden in the Old and New Testaments, and in Leviticus it must be punished by death (20:10). It's not a crime in the U.S. today, and how many Fundamentalist Christians, who commit adultery as often as the rest of U.S. citizens do, would be willing to have the federal and state governments inflict the death penalty on them after being caught committing adultery? I'm guessing none of them would, and they wouldn't change their minds if some person more fundamentalist than them reminded them that it was the will of the imaginary three-part deity they worship. In Leviticus blasphemy is a death penalty crime (24:16). It is not a crime in the U.S. today, though I'm sure whole herds of Fundamentalist Christians would like that commandment to regain its former status as a law in the U.S.

Modern Christians, including the Fundamentalists, have rejected so many commandments that they are obviously inclined to obey their holy book's commandments only if they personally approve of them, which makes recommending any of them to be laws in the U.S. today merely because they are in the Bible an extremely lame argument. To do it, they must ignore this obvious logical conclusion: if it is OK to ignore one Old Testament commandment, it is OK to ignore all of them. Or, to put it another way, if it is OK for them to go through those ancient commandments and reject all of them except those they believe are still appropriate for modern First World civilization, then it is OK for the rest of us to do the same with them, and the commandments needing to be rejected the most are the death penalty ones.

The death penalty is so thoroughly immoral that no book could be holy enough to make it moral. Basing support of the death penalty on the Old Testament's eye-for-eye commandments is theologically lame and morally unacceptable. When Fundamentalist Christians insist they do it because they want to obey their imaginary three-part deity, they are just demonstrating one way religionism's detrimental moral influence turns them into hypocrites, and why there must be a high and wide wall separating government and religionism.



"I CANNOT IMAGINE A GOD WHO REWARDS AND PUNISHES THE OBJECTS OF HIS CREATION, WHOSE PURPOSES ARE MODELED AFTER OUR OWN -- A GOD, IN SHORT, WHO IS BUT A REFLECTION OF HUMAN FRAILTY. NEITHER CAN I BELIEVE THAT THE INDIVIDUAL SURVIVES THE DEATH OF HIS BODY, ALTHOUGH FEEBLE SOULS HARBOR SUCH THOUGHTS THROUGH FEAR OR RIDICULOUS EGOTISM." EINSTEIN

RIGHT-TO-DIE UPDATES

by Midge Levy, Co-President

Compassion & Choices of Washington State

Right-to-die supporters have historically tended to be middle aged and elderly people concerned about how they will die. Others contact us due to their involvement with terminally ill family members and/or friends; they also tend to be from older age groups.

However the Washington State office of Compassion & Choices receives a number of enquiries from young people about our mission, sometimes related to a family situation but also prompted by their interest in human rights and pro-choice issues. The tragic cases of Nancy Cruzan and Terry Schiavo are dramatic illustrations of the need for young people to document their wishes, and these situations have prompted contacts from the younger generation.

We would like to promote interest and understanding about our purpose and function among younger people and therefore decided to offer an essay prize following the National Humanist model.

We would appreciate readers of the *SHP* sharing the following information about our essay contest with young family members and friends, since we would like to maximize the numbers of submissions. We are hopeful that essay writers will be inspired to undertake some research about the history and development of the right-to-die movement and discuss their views about it at home and at school.

Compassion & Choices of WA Essay Contest Rules

Essays should address one of the following topics: "Why is there a Right to Die?"; "Should the Right to Die be legalized?" Entrants may also submit an essay on a topic of their choice.

Essays will be accepted in two age categories: Under 18, and 18-24. Prizes will be awarded in each category as follows: 1st prize, \$1,000; 2nd prize, \$500.

Essays should not exceed 5,000 words and should be typed and double spaced, with pages numbered, on white 8½" by 11" paper. Handwritten essays will not be accepted. Essays should be submitted with a separate cover sheet containing name, address, category (under 18 or 18-24), Phone number and/or email address, title of essay. The essay's first page should contain the title of the essay but not the entrant's name. Essays should be sent to the following address: Compassion & Choices of Washington; PO Box 61369; Seattle, WA 98141; Attn: Outreach Committee.

Source materials should be clearly identified. All writing must be original, with the exception of quotes, which should be clearly marked as such.

The deadline for entries is February 28, 2007. Essays submitted after that date will not be accepted.

Students under 18 must submit a signed parental release form along with their essays. Release forms can be requested by calling the C&C office at 206-256-1636 or 1-877-222-2816 toll-free. Release forms can also be downloaded from the website www.candcofwa.org.

All essays submitted become the property of Compassion & Choices of Washington and may be displayed in newsletters or other publications and on our website, www.candcofwa.org. Submitted essays will not be returned.

"I CANNOT BELIEVE IN THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL.... NO, ALL THIS TALK OF AN EXISTENCE FOR US, AS INDIVIDUALS, BEYOND THE GRAVE IS WRONG. IT IS BORN OF OUR TENACITY OF LIFE — OUR DESIRE TO GO ON LIVING ... OUR DREAD OF COMING TO AN END."
 THOMAS EDISON

WHY LIBERALS ARE ANGRY

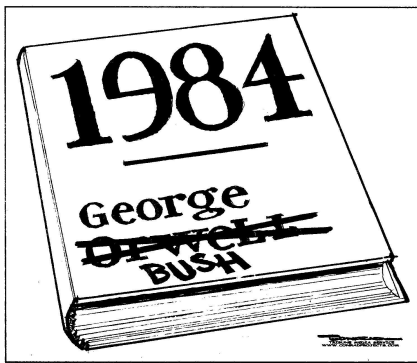
by Rob Moitoza

Lately some of my conservative friends have been calling me "a hateful liberal." Why they would think that about me, after all these years, is mind-boggling. I've never hated anyone in my whole life and I don't intend to start now. But if you ask me, "Are you angry?", you're damned right I am! And for very good reasons!

But before I get into why I'm angry, let me explain the difference between anger and hate. Let's suppose you have children and one of your kids acts up in school and is sent home. Are you angry? Most likely! Do you hate your child? Of course not! In fact, it is because you love your child that you want him to do well in school and not get sent home. Well, this is exactly how I feel about my country right now. I am angry that my country is not living up to the ideals that I grew up believing in. When my country wages undeclared wars on other countries in violation of the United States Constitution, killing MY kids, and bankrupting MY country . . . all on false pretenses . . . I am angry! These actions are not worthy of the country that I love. And people who would allow their leaders to do this to their country are the ones who hate their country . . . not me!

After the 9-11 attack on the Trade Towers, America had a golden opportunity. The entire world came out in solidarity with us. There were even vigils supporting the U.S. in Iran, of all places! Remember that? We were at a great turning point in history. We could choose the path of peace on earth and goodwill toward men, or we could choose "shock and awe." The rest, of course, is history. We chose to attack a country which had absolutely nothing to do with the 9-11 attack, had never attacked us, and had actually kept their neighbor and arch enemy, Iran, at bay. Now, just five years later, we are hated around the world, Iran has elected a radical right winger as their president, North Korea is testing missiles, and many nations around the world consider the United States to be the number one terrorist nation on the planet. And I'm not supposed to be angry?

As the number of our dead soldiers approaches the same number killed in the Trade Towers and thousands more are maimed and brain-dead -- not to mention the thousands of Iraqi men women and children that have been killed in this undeclared war -- I'm supposed to just sit here and say "Oh, that's fine, go ahead"? No! It is my duty, as laid out in the Declaration of Independence, to do what I can to overthrow this maniacal regime before they destroy the country that I love, not to mention the world. I want my nation to be a nation revered, not a nation feared. I want my nation to be a moral leader, not a nation that tortures and degrades people worldwide. My conservative friends will say "Well, they behead our people. What we do doesn't even compare to that." That's exactly the point! Do you want it to compare? Do you want to be just like those you call your enemy? George W. Bush seems to think that the way to defeat terrorists is to become a terrorist. What ever happened to "Do unto others as you would have them do



unto you?" My Christian friends didn't seem to get that one. In fact, the writings of Osama Bin Laden ("Messages to the World", Verso Press 2005) are remarkably similar to those of our own right wing Christian leaders over here. They both condemn homosexuality. They both condemn abortion. They both want to oppress women. They both shun science and human knowledge. They both think their God is the only God, their religion is the only religion, and their people are the only people. These religions are really just two sides of the same coin. Where is the love? Where is the peace on earth? So, one beheads people and the other uses a high tech weapon. Either way . . . you're dead! So much for "Thou shalt not kill". So much for the teachings of Jesus, Mohammed, Gandhi and every other religious leader. And I'm not supposed to be angry? I'm furious!

Maybe the United States has never really lived up to its ideals. After all, we slaughtered the native American. We drove the Spanish out of the country. We dropped nuclear bombs on Japan. Maybe I'm naive. One of my friends asked me why I'm so loyal to the U.S. anyway. He thought, "It's better to be a global citizen". Forget this "nationalism" that seems only to destroy others. When I thought about that, my mind jumped all the way back to grammar school. I really believed the stuff they taught me in history and civics classes. Stuff about "the land of the free, and the home of the brave." It all sounded so noble. I realized that I just want to be proud of my nation again. Is that too much to ask? I want a true government "of, by and for the people", not a nation ruled by rich oil company executives and greedy politicians who couldn't care less about anything but their own wealth and power. We now have a government that wants to get into every aspect of our private lives and yet wants to keep everything they do secret from us. That is no longer a "government of, by, and for the people" now is it? That's why I'm angry.

A few years ago, when Clinton was in office, a Republican friend called me up drunk and screamed at me that he wanted the government out of his life. Now, thanks to the Bush administration, we have the most invasive government in American History. Under the Patriot Act the government can now get into all aspects of our private lives including our bank accounts, our medical records -- all without a court warrant and in direct violation of Article Four of our Constitution. With all this, you'd think my friend would be leading the charge for impeachment. But, no, he is still voting for these guys that are doing the exact opposite of what he said he wanted.

How can I have respect for politicians who keep raising their own inflated salaries year after year at tax payers' expense, but won't even raise the minimum wage of the average

American citizen past \$5.25 an hour? How dare they?! I'm not supposed to be angry? And how about their great government health care packages, that we pay for while we either get none or pay exorbitant prices to private companies to get? And those of us who served in the military are now seeing even our veteran's benefits being slashed by this corrupt government. So much for "Supporting our troops." Most of these guys never even served in the military. They just wave the flag and pretend to be patriotic. I have more patriotism in my little finger than the entire Bush administration combined.

Remember when the Republicans were the "Law and Order" party? Now, they do everything they can to get around the law. A federal judge recently ruled that Bush had violated the Constitution with his wire tapping program. Is that not an impeachable offense? Apparently not. Only sex gets a president impeached. I'm angry! Why have we allowed presidents to circumvent the law by bypassing the War Powers Act and getting us into so many illegal wars? It clearly states in the constitution that only congress shall declare war, yet from Viet Nam to Iraq, Congress has abrogated its responsibility. This provision was put into the Constitution for a reason... SO THAT THE PRESIDENT COULD NOT DECLARE WAR! Yet, time after time it has been violated. And I'm supposed to sit here and say, "Oh, that's fine."? NO! I'M PISSED! My Constitution is being subverted by the very people that are sworn to uphold it. That is unconscionable.

Remember when Republicans represented "family values" and "morality"? Now, former congressman Mark Foley, a man who vehemently passed laws against sexual predators over the internet, turns out to be one of them! And the same guys who impeached a president for sexual flirtations with a consenting adult are now defending this guy! In fact, I have a huge list of Republicans who have been busted for a whole range of sexual misconduct and illegal acts. Those who talk the most about morality seem to be the ones most prone to violate it. That makes me angry!

Remember when Republicans represented smaller government? They have now instituted the largest government in history -- even doling out millions to Christian churches -- in clear violation of the separation of church and state. They used to call us "tax and spend liberals." Well, these guys just spend and spend and spend. And when we're broke, they put it on the credit card. Meanwhile, those of us who try to be responsible with our finances are forced into bankruptcy and then they pass laws to make even that impossible! So, it's fine for them to bankrupt the government, but if you and I are even a month or two late on our house payment, the bank forecloses! And still they won't tax their friends who are making millions and millions of dollars, the people who could afford it the most. And I'm not supposed to be angry? I never voted for "feudalism," did you?

Remember when one of our nation's great mottos was "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free."

Now, we are building walls to keep these masses out.

Remember when we would never resort to first strikes on other nations?

Now it is national policy.

Remember when we treasured and protected our environment?

Now we destroy it just to make more money.
Remember, remember, remember!
Yes, I'm angry. I want my country back!



"EVERY MIND MUST MAKE ITS CHOICE BETWEEN TRUTH AND REPOSE.
IT CANNOT HAVE BOTH." RALPH WALDO EMERSON

I'M JUST AN ATOM BUM by Bill Witherup

I'm just an atom bum.
I drink plutonium.
I have a bad liver
So I piss in your river.
I'm just an atom bum.

I'm just an atom bum.
My brother is Jesus Christ Lord.
Though born in a stable
We are both unstable.
We will work for room and board.

"RELIGION IS A BYPRODUCT OF FEAR. FOR MUCH OF HUMAN HISTORY, IT MAY HAVE BEEN A NECESSARY EVIL, BUT WHY WAS IT MORE EVIL THAN NECESSARY? ISN'T KILLING PEOPLE IN THE NAME OF GOD A PRETTY GOOD DEFINITION OF INSANITY?"
ARTHUR C. CLARKE

FROM THE CITY BY THE BAY Freethought Events in San Francisco by Lenny Maughan

The month of October presented two well-attended freethought events in San Francisco: The Freedom From Religion Foundation's annual convention and a speech by Richard Dawkins.

Since 1978, the Freedom From Religion Foundation has been working to keep state and church separate and to educate the public about the views of nontheists. On October 6, 2006, the FFRF held its twenty-ninth annual convention in San Francisco.

With 505 registered attendees, it was a big crowd -- but not too big to prevent meeting everybody, including the speakers. (It was a pleasure meeting Julia Sweeney, who speaks Saturday.) The two featured speakers on Friday are Richard Sloan and Sam Harris. Dr. Sloan studies allegations of the health benefits of prayer and faith, and points out the methodological failures and ethical problems of attempts to merge medicine with religion. His new book is called *Blind Faith: The Unholy Alliance of Religion and Medicine*. Mr. Harris is the author of *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason* and the new book *Letter to a Christian Nation*. *The End of Faith* is becoming a very popular book, as it is becoming more and more obvious that the more religion we have -- the more "fundamental" it gets -- the more problems we all have.

The convention continued Saturday, starting with a "Nonprayer Breakfast" and a "Moment of Bedlam" in which we made as much noise as possible for a few seconds (to the delight of both adults and kids in attendance, and to the confusion of the hotel staff). After breakfast, welcoming remarks were made by FFRF Co-Presidents Annie Laurie Gaylor and Dan Barker. This is one unique leadership team: Gaylor makes more introductions than Barker, because he entertains us with his piano playing and singing. Mr. Barker is also the author of the classic *Losing Faith in Faith: From Preacher to Atheist*, which has inspired many to unshackle themselves from religion.

Honors were given to the morning's speakers: Philip Paulson received the "Atheist in Foxhole" award for his federal challenge of a religious cross on state land in San Diego. *Paulson v. City of San Diego* has been ruled in his favor, but the city keeps putting up legal roadblocks. The "Freethought Heroine" award went to Dr. Wafa Sultan, a former Muslim who riveted the Islamic world with her outspoken Al-Jazeera TV debates with a Muslim cleric. She now lives in California, free of the religious oppression she experienced in her native Syria. Lastly, Denver Post editorial cartoonist Mike Keefe won the "Freethought in the Media: Tell It Like It Is" award.

After lunch, we heard Salon.com's Michelle Goldberg weigh in on the rise of Christian nationalism. This is the topic of her first book, *Kingdom Coming*. Attorney and former Air Force JAG Mikey Weinstein delivered a passionate speech about how we must not keep silent about the creeping evangelism in the military. (Amusingly, the outside roar of the "Fleet Week" Blue Angels provided the soundtrack to his speech.) His new book is *With God on Our Side: One Man's War Against an Evangelical Coup in America's Military*.

A booksigning (with sold-out books and long lines)

preceded the banquet dinner and a drawing for “clean” money - \$2 raffle tickets bought a chance to win various denominations of pre- “In God We Trust” US currency.

The most anticipated speaker was Spokane native Julia Sweeney, of Saturday Night Live (and “It’s Pat!”) fame. These days, she has found a niche in performing critically acclaimed monologues. Tonight, after being presented the “Emperor Has No Clothes” award, she performed her latest monologue, “Letting Go of God.” For about two hours, she told of her long personal journey from devout Catholic to matured atheist. She is very well-read and well-traveled, and her “spiritual journey” involves, among other things, Santa Claus, nuns, the Galapagos Islands, Buddhist temples, and Deepak Chopra. It begins and ends with Mormon boys. The whole monologue is deep, heartfelt and funny too.

By all measures, this was a successful convention. It’s nice to know that America is growing more secular, and that more people are talking about Freedom From Religion!

Evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins may well be the next Carl Sagan. Like the late, great Sagan, Dawkins writes popular science books and is increasingly seen on TV. Unlike Sagan, he’s not coy about his atheism. And that’s only helping his popularity. His newest book *The God Delusion* is a New York Times best seller and is the #2 selling book on Amazon.com. In its cover story this month, *Wired* magazine calls Dawkins “the leading light of the New Atheism movement.”

I heard Dawkins speak at San Francisco’s Palace of Fine Arts Theater on Monday, October 30. From the applause, the laughter, and the questions-from-the-audience segment, it seemed as if every one of the 1000+ attendees were atheists. Could this be the start of a bold new coming-out-of-the-closet movement?



“I HAVE FOUND IT AN AMUSING STRATEGY, WHEN ASKED WHETHER I AM AN ATHEIST, TO POINT OUT THAT THE QUESTIONER IS ALSO AN ATHEIST WHEN CONSIDERING ZEUS, APOLLO, AMON RA, MITHRAS, BAAL, THOR, WOTAN, THE GOLDEN CALF AND THE FLYING SPAGHETTI MONSTER. I JUST GO ONE GOD FURTHER” RICHARD DAWKINS

PRO-CHOICE UPDATES The Woman in the Red Smock by Marcy Bloom

Often your life can be transformed by people you have never met.

In 1962, when I was eleven years old, a Phoenix, Arizona woman named Sherri Finkbine was denied the ability to have an abortion in her hometown even after discovering that her fetus was likely to be seriously deformed. Mrs. Finkbine (there was no Ms. yet) had taken the medication thalidomide to alleviate her nausea before learning that the drug had been linked to serious fetal deformities in Europe. After being denied an abortion in Arizona, she flew to Sweden. I clearly remember the headlines: “Tearful Sherri off to Sweden.” She and her family received death threats, the press hounded her, and when she returned home, the headlines blared: “Abortion mother returns home.”

I wasn’t sure what an abortion mother was. But I did understand that the fetus she was carrying was very sick, that she was very sad and upset, and that this operation called an abortion could only be obtained far away.

I didn’t understand why her own doctors at home couldn’t help her. I was eleven years old and I was also very upset.

Fast forward to 1977. I was 25 years-old, had been working for seven years at one of New York City’s first women’s clinics that provided abortions, and it was truly an exhilarating time. The women’s movement was hot. NY had legalized abortion in 1970 and three years later Roe vs. Wade had legalized abortion throughout the country.

Before Roe, however, women from all over the US—and beyond—were coming to NY for safe abortions. One of my jobs was to go the airport and find the women flying in to bring them to the clinic. I was the woman with the brown curly hair in the red smock and the women usually spotted me before I found them. Driving through the streets of Queens into Manhattan, we all talked in the car and it was truly a consciousness-raising session. “Why are you here? Where are you from? Do you have any kids? Who knows you are here? How did it happen? Did he leave you? Are you scared?” I saw first-hand the tremendous and empowering good of legal abortion. I felt honored that these women allowed me a glimpse into their complex lives.

When I heard about the death of Rosie Jimenez on October 3rd, 1977, I was stunned and upset. I was also outraged. I didn’t get it. Rosie Jimenez was a 27-year-old Chicana college student living in McAllen, Texas, the young mother of a five-year-old daughter, and the first known victim of the Hyde Amendment. The Hyde Amendment, which is still in effect, killed Rosie when it denied her state Medicaid funding for a safe abortion. She gambled with her life, sought out a much cheaper, but unsafe, abortion, and died in agony from a massive infection that shut her body down.

I was naively shocked and upset. Why was this woman dead? What happened to fairness and equality? She was poor, so why didn’t Medicaid pay for her abortion, which, after all, was a legal and safe medical procedure? Legal abortion was supposed to end the days of desperate back-alley abortions and images of coat hangers and lye douches. Women were going to be able to exercise their reproductive rights and choose the

course of their lives. They weren't supposed to die any more, or be hurt and maimed. What happened to Roe vs. Wade's bright and exciting promise for women's lives?

Today, more than thirty-three years later, much has happened and we're still asking this cogent question. We have seen the rise of religious fundamentalism domestically and internationally, the conservative political backlash against feminism and women's rights, and Roe vs. Wade has been ravaged. Abortion remains legal but very difficult to obtain especially for women who are young, poor, and marginalized—those who always get the shaft in society. More than 3700 women have abortions in the U.S. alone everyday—approximately 1.2 million women a year. The need for the preservation of women's health care services and our right to choose remains as compelling as ever.

Although my professional career in reproductive rights has now spanned more than 36 years, I was again shocked when I heard of the death of Yasmina Bojorge on November 3rd, 2006. Although I no longer view myself as naïve or easily shocked, I couldn't quite comprehend why this woman was allowed to die. Yasmina was the first victim of Nicaragua's recent abortion ban that removed *even risk to the life of the woman* as a reason for an abortion. Despite in-utero fetal demise, Yasmina was denied a life-saving therapeutic abortion, died in agony, and her two-year-old son is now without a mother. Once every 10 minutes a woman dies somewhere in the world because she was prohibited by discriminatory laws from obtaining a safe abortion. Yasmina, like Rosie, died because of oppressive laws and sexist attitudes that contribute to the devaluing of women and the stigma of abortion. These tragedies are heart-breaking in any circumstance, but all the more so because they are so preventable.

Sherri, Rosie, Yasmina—you don't know me, but I know you, at least a little. I am sad and shocked that you suffered so much. I promise you won't be forgotten.

I am the woman in the red smock. I'm sorry I couldn't come for you at the airport.

HERO OR TRAITOR?

by Rob Moitoza

Although the media has portrayed former president Gerald Ford as a hero, there is a large segment of us out here who don't remember him that way at all. The way I see it he betrayed the American people on at least two occasions that we know of, and maybe even more that we still don't know about. The first betrayal was when he pardoned ousted president Richard M. Nixon. I think the reason many of us were so upset about that incident is that if it had happened to any of the rest of us we would have been serving the rest of our lives behind bars. It would seem that the president, the leader of the land, should be held to at least as high a standard as its citizens. But neither of these men took responsibility for their actions. Maybe if Nixon had to spend the rest of his life behind bars, George Bush would have thought twice about tapping our telephones or getting us into another illegal war. But since none of them have ever been held accountable, the abuses are still going on unabated.

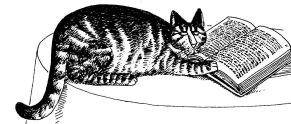
The second betrayal by Ford was being against the Iraq war and then hiding that fact from the American people in a secret agreement with Bob Woodward. Maybe if Ford had made his opinions known to this administration sooner, we would not be in the mess we now find ourselves in.



No. I don't see this man as a hero. I see him as a man who once again betrayed the American people by protecting his friends in the Republican Party instead of putting the American people's interests first. Moral courage? Hardly.

I was always taught that respect had to be earned. From Richard Nixon to Gerald Ford to George W. Bush . . . none are worthy of one bit of my respect. When any of these so called "leaders" decide to tell the truth and stand up for honesty and integrity and the interests of the American people, then I will respect them. Until then, they are not worthy of this great country that I love.

SOME GOOD BOOKS



Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq by Michael R. Gordon & Gen. Bernard E. Trainor reviewed by G. Richard Bozarth

Cobra II does not offer something new for Iraq news junkies (a group I belong to). What it offers is more depth and detail than the average print or electronic news story offers. (By the way, *Cobra II* was the code name for the Iraq War during its planning, and had been recommended because Cobra was "the code name of the first large-scale Third Army operation in World War II led by George Patton, the Normandy breakout.")

W. Bush began his presidency wanting to reform the U.S. military so it could fight wars against small, much weaker nations quicker, cheaper, and with a much smaller force than was used in the Gulf War. Donald Rumsfeld was the man W. Bush selected to reform the military. On 9/11 Al-Qaeda gave W. Bush the opportunity to test his and Rumsfeld's ideas about war.

Rumsfeld believed the U.S. military was trapped in unimaginative, old fashioned theories of war that made generals want to go to war only with excessively overwhelming force, which took enormous amounts of time to muster prior to invasion and cost enormous amounts of money. Like W. Bush, he wanted to reform the military into a weapon an aggressive President could use quickly and a lot less expensively. If successful, the President would have a

weapon that would intimidate more militarily weak "rogue" nations. And, like W. Bush, he scorned keeping troops in the defeated nation to engage in a nation-building occupation. Quick in, quick win, quick out, and on to the next regime change, that was the future for the U.S. military W. Bush and Rumsfeld wanted to make real, therefore "the Iraq War would be like a thunderstorm: a short, violent episode that swept away the enemy but would not entail a burdensome, long-term troop commitment."

The pre-war chapters were the most interesting to me. Afghanistan, for example, was a small-scale test of the Rumsfeld Hypothesis of War. Unfortunately for the U.S., Afghanistan in 2002 and early 2003 did look like the kind of quick victory followed by minimum occupation that he and W. Bush believed were possible. Of course, now we know the Afghanistan War had not been won. This was not obvious when preparing for the invasion of Iraq, so the illusion of victory in Afghanistan made W. Bush and Rumsfeld believe they could win in Iraq just as quickly and just as cheaply in dollars and lives as they thought they had won in Afghanistan.

Gordon and Trainor cover extensively the planning for the Iraq War. I had not realized it took about eighteen months to produce a war plan that made Rumsfeld and W. Bush happy. Rumsfeld engaged in abusive micromanagement to ensure his vision of the military's future became the reality of the Iraq War. Many generals resisted because they knew Rumsfeld was asking them to plan for a disaster. They weren't concerned about defeating Iraq's military and capturing Baghdad. Would a professional world champion sports team worry about defeating a high school team? Their worry was about securing the victory after Hussein was killed, captured, or chased out of Baghdad. They knew up front Rumsfeld's neo-con fantasies about war would deny them enough troops to guarantee the battlefield victory would become complete victory. Rumsfeld eventually found generals who would say "Yes, sir!" to him instead of trying to get him to give up his Napoleonic delusions and neo-con fantasies.

When W. Bush and his Gang began selling the Iraq War to U.S. citizens, their most effective tactic was terrifying U.S. citizens by frequently declaring that Iraq had WMD that Hussein might give to al-Qaeda or other terrorists groups to use in the U.S., or might directly use against the U.S. It worked, of course. Since it was so important to winning the majority support the Iraq War had when it began, G & T discuss the WMD fraud. They persuaded me that W. Bush, Rumsfeld, and the rest of the Gang did not lie about believing in Iraq's WMD. The lie was about the quality of the evidence supporting the existence of WMD in Iraq. B2G's belief in Iraq's WMD was like their fundamentalist religious belief. It was not to be questioned. Evidence rarely influences fundamentalist beliefs, so all the evidence that the intelligence on Iraq's WMD was inadequate to support their existence was simply ignored. Their lie was not telling U.S. citizens that the evidence was insufficient, and they told it because they knew how people who were not committed believers would interpret the insufficient evidence.

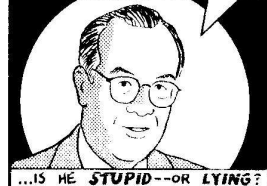
THIS MODERN WORLD

IT'S THE ETERNAL QUESTION:
ARE THEY...

STUPID OR LYING?

WHEN DAVID BROOKS SUGGESTS THAT IT IS TINFOIL-HAT LUNACY TO BELIEVE THAT THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION MANIPULATED PRE-WAR INTELLIGENCE...

CRAZY CONSPIRACY THEORISTS! HA HA! NEXT THING YOU KNOW, THEY'LL SUGGEST THAT REPUBLICAN TALKING POINTS ARE SOMEHOW COORDINATED!

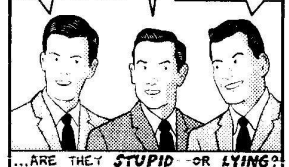


by TOM TOMORROW

WHEN PARTISAN APOLOGISTS CONTINUE TO CONFLATE KNOWLEDGE OF VALERIE PLAME'S EXISTENCE WITH KNOWLEDGE OF HER STATUS AS A CIA OPERATIVE...

EVERYONE KNEW JOE WILSON HAD A WIFE!

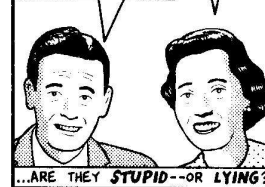
WHY, SHE IS MENTIONED IN WHO'S WHO! DOESN'T SOUND VERY COVERT TO ME!



WHEN WAR SUPPORTERS PRETEND THAT WMD'S WERE BARELY MENTIONED IN THE RUNUP TO WAR...

JUST, UH, TRUST US ON THIS ONE, OKAY?

NO NEED TO WASTE YOUR IMPORTANT TIME GOOGLING IT OR ANYTHING.



WHEN RIGHT-WING PUNDITS PROFESS BEWILDERMENT AT THE ATTENTION PAID TO EVER-INCREASING NUMBERS OF U.S. WAR DEAD...

MORE PEOPLE DIED IN THE CIVIL WAR--BUT YOU DON'T SEE THE M.S.M. MAKING A BIG DEAL ABOUT THEM!

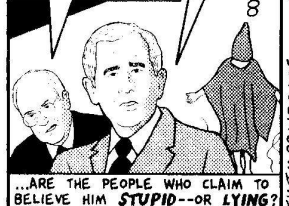
COMPARED TO THE TOTAL NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO HAVE EVER DIED, THIS IS A STATISTICAL DROP IN THE BUCKET!



AND WHEN GEORGE W. BUSH BLITHELY DECLARES:

"ANY ACTIVITY WE CONDUCT IS WITHIN THE LAW! WE DO NOT TORTURE!"

AND WE CERTAINLY DON'T NEED TO BAN THE TORTURE THAT ISN'T HAPPENING ANYWAY!



The chapters about the invasion from start to the capture of Baghdad are mostly traditional military history. What's interesting is how the invasion revealed the massive inadequacy of U.S. intelligence about Iraq, which was wrong about nearly everything. The worst intelligence failure was totally misunderstanding the Fedayeen, a paramilitary force created by Hussein to be the initial quick-reaction force to fight against rebellion. Recall that shortly after the Gulf War the Shiites in southern Iraq began a rebellion that Hussein eventually defeated. He feared another rebellion. The Fedayeen would be the first to fight, containing the rebellion until Republican Guard units could get to the battlefield. The Fedayeen wore civilian clothes, were dispersed all over Iraq in small units, and their weapons (pistols, rifles, machine guns, rifle-propelled grenades, etc.) were kept in an enormous number of caches all over Iraq. As the invasion got closer to happening, more and more arms caches were created.

The Fedayeen were known to exist, but U.S. intelligence failed to understand their significance and their willingness to fight, thus gave them no respect. When the invasion started, they became the fiercest fighters, and their tactics were classic guerrilla tactics. If the Fedayeen had been given better weapons training, they could have inflicted a lot more death and destruction on U.S. units. The surprised generals on the battlefield wanted to slow down the invasion to deal with the Fedayeen, but General Tommy Franks, who had Rumsfeld riding his butt hard, refused to accept the Fedayeen as a serious threat. The Fedayeen, who included in their ranks numerous foreign fighters who came to Iraq to defend Islam against the Great Satan, later became the insurgents who turned Iraq into a quagmire.

Baghdad fell and for a short period of time it was possible to believe victory had been won. However, the capture of the

city did not produce a surrender, and now we know the most courageous and determined Iraqi fighters intended never to surrender. G & T do not stress enough how foolish it was to believe a victory had been won when no surrender had taken place. They do stress that the U.S. force in Iraq was too small to prevent the Fedayeen from transforming the war into a vicious guerrilla war. W. Bush and Rumsfeld are the two who must bear the burden of responsibility for this tragedy.

The chapters about the occupation are few and end just after W. Bush's reelection. The fantasy occupation, which was going to be only a few months and would not be what W. Bush and Rumsfeld condemn as nation building, never happened. Guerilla war began, and Iraq's tunnel has become terribly long and the light at the end of it is now horribly dim. Forced to engage in nation building, B2G began mucking that up with the kind of incompetence that is now recognized as one of defining qualities of the Bush 2 White House. If there had been any chance — even one as small as the average state lottery offers — to make their fantasies come true, that chance died when W. Bush and Rumsfeld selected the entirely wrong man to be their proconsul in Iraq. G & T don't get too seriously into the occupation, but do show how L. Paul Bremer immediately began mucking up in classic B2G style, making a tragedy more tragic. Every fantasy B2G had about Iraq has been replaced by its opposite nightmare.

Cobra II is a book I highly recommend. However, I have to make this warning: if the Iraq War depresses you, this book will make you more depressed; if it makes you angry, this book will increase your anger; and, if you think W. Bush is most likely the worst President in U.S. history, this book will remove "most likely" from your thinking. It is bitter irony that the appropriate quote to end this review comes from Saddam Hussein, found in the "Notes" where G & T included part of "Open letter from Saddam Hussein to the American people and the western peoples and their governments", dated 15 September 2001: "America needs wisdom, not power. It has used power, along with the West, to its extreme extent, only to find out later that it doesn't achieve what they wanted. Will the rulers of America try wisdom just for once so that their people can live in security and stability?"

"APPARENTLY SOME OF US CANNOT SEE THAT THE ONLY FUTURE FOR AMERICA IS ONE THAT CHERISHES THE FREEDOMS WON IN THE PAST, IN WHICH WE VANQUISH BAD IDEAS WITH BETTER ONES, AND FIGHT FOR LIBERTY BY HAVING MORE LIBERTY, NOT LESS."

KEITH OLBERMANN

Letter to a Christian Nation by Sam Harris reviewed by Jim Rybock

As you may well be aware, this is one of a recent flurry of books -- including Richard Dawkins's *The God Delusion* and Daniel Dennett's *Breaking the Spell* -- daring to confront religion head-on. Unlike the others, it is relatively short and succinct, only 96 pages and in small book format. It can be read in an hour. In these days of little free time, that is a good thing.

Of course, if you want more depth and detail, try Harris' first book, *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror and the Future of Reason*. It was a best seller and award winner in 2005 and is

chock full of references and footnotes.

The purpose of this current book is to arm secularists against Christian opposition by responding to many of the arguments that Christians have put forward. What I especially like about it (as well as his first book) is that Harris is not afraid to pull punches. He tells it like it is, without worrying about political correctness or offending religious sensitivities. In fact, although his focus is on the fundamentalists, he holds liberal religionists accountable for not using their critical thinking skills and for not speaking out vehemently against religious extremists.

He starts this book by observing that it is not possible for both the religionist and atheist position to be true -- only one can be right, and the other must be wrong. He challenges Christians by pointing out that they who say Islam and the Koran cannot possibly be true are taking the same position as Harris takes against all religions. Like Richard Dawkins, Harris merely believes in one less religion.

Harris identifies some of the many short-comings of the Bible, such as its horrible advice to kill people (including your own children if necessary) who don't adhere to its religious dogma. He also points out some of the deficiencies of the Ten Commandments.

Regarding the pernicious effects of religion, Harris writes:

Indeed, religion allows people to imagine that their concerns are moral when they are highly immoral -- that is, when pressing these concerns inflicts unnecessary and appalling suffering on innocent human beings.

He destroys the fallacy that atheists are not moral and offers this view:

Atheism is not a philosophy; it is not even a view of the world; it is simply an admission of the obvious. In fact, 'atheism' is a term that should not even exist. No one ever needs to identify himself as a 'non-astrologer' or a 'non-alchemist.' We do not have words for people who doubt that Elvis is still alive or that aliens have traversed the galaxy only to molest ranchers and their cattle. Atheism is nothing more than the noises reasonable people make in the presence of unjustified religious beliefs. An atheist is simply a person who believes that the 260 million Americans (87 percent of the population) claiming to 'never doubt the existence of God' should be obliged to present evidence for his existence -- and, indeed, for his benevolence, given the relentless destruction of innocent human beings we witness in the world each day.

He demonstrates that, although countries like Norway, Canada, Sweden, Switzerland, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom are among the least religious societies on earth, they are also the healthiest. And they give a much larger percentage of their wealth to charities than the highly religious U.S. In the U.S. -- which is unique in the level of its religious adherence among developed nations -- the degree of religiosity (or redness) in one's state is generally correlated with the frequency of violent crime. So how does this support the claim that religious people are more moral?

Like Dawkins, he refutes claims that science cannot evaluate religious claims:

The core of science is not controlled experiment or mathematical modeling; it is intellectual honesty. It is time we acknowledged a basic feature of human discourse: when

considering the truth of a proposition, one is either engaged in honest appraisal of the evidence and logical arguments, or one isn't. Religion is the one area of our lives where people imagine that some other standard of intellectual integrity applies.

Regarding the so-called debate about evolution:

How the process of evolution got started is still a mystery, but that does not in the least suggest that a deity is likely to be lurking at the bottom of it all. Any honest reading of the biblical account of creation suggests that God created all animals and plants as we now see them. There is no question that the Bible is wrong about this.

How history will judge this society:

*If we ever do transcend our religious bewilderment, we will look back upon this period in human history with horror and amazement. How could it have been possible for people to believe such things in the twenty-first century? How could it be that they allowed their societies to become so dangerously fragmented by empty notions about God and Paradise? The truth is, some of your most cherished beliefs are as embarrassing as those that sent the last slave ship sailing to America as late as 1859 (the same year that Darwin published *The Origin of Species*).*

And in conclusion, he says to Christians:

Nonbelievers like myself stand beside you, dumbstruck by the Muslim hordes who chant death to whole nations of the living. But we stand dumbstruck by you as well -- by your denial of tangible reality, by the suffering you create in service to your religious myths, and by your attachment to an imaginary God.

"DON'T HIDE THE FACT THAT YOU ARE AN ATHEIST. IT COMES AS A GREAT BUT HEALTHY SURPRISE TO MANY RELIGIOUS PEOPLE THAT ATHEISTS DO NOT HAVE HORNS OR CARRY BOMBS. IT IS OF THE UTMOST IMPORTANCE THAT ATHEISTS REGULARLY CHALLENGE THE ABSURD FALLACY THAT INTEGRITY AND MORALITY ARE A RELIGIOUS MONOPOLY." CHARLES CHEVES

THE SOCIALIST FUTURE by Eugene Debs

*[Fred Whitehead first condensed Eugene V. Debs' "Speech Of Acceptance", as the Socialist Party candidate for the 1912 Presidential elections, to 1,400 words for an insert as part of a fund-raising mailer for the Eugene V. Debs Labor Ensemble. Whitehead retitled the speech: "The Socialist Future." I have kept his title, but cut the speech even further. The original speech is five and one half pages, and is found in *The Writings and Speeches of Eugene V. Debs*, edited by Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. The Hermitage Press, 1948. The other parties referred to in the speech are the Democratic Party, The Bull Moose Party, and the Republican Party. Both the Democrats and the Bull Moose parties siphoned off ideas from the Socialists and pretended to be progressive parties. Had Gene Debs won the 1912 election rather than Woodrow Wilson, the United States would not now be promoting American exceptionalism and hubris over all the planet. - Bill Witherup]*

The Socialist party is fundamentally different from all other parties. It came in the process of evolution and grows with the growth of the forces which created it. Its spirit is militant and its aim is revolutionary.

The world's workers have always been and still are the world's slaves. They have borne all the burdens of the race and built all

the monuments along the track of civilization; they have produced all the world's wealth and supported all the world's governments.

The workers in the mills and factories, in the mines and on the farms and railways never had a party of their own until the Socialist Party was organized. They divided their votes between the parties of their masters.

But the awakening came. Class rule became more and more oppressive and wage slavery more and more galling. It dawned upon them that society was divided into two classes - capitalists and workers, exploiters and producers.

When they ventured to protest they were discharged and found themselves blacklisted; when they went out on strike they were suppressed by the soldiers and sent to jail.

The very suffering they were forced to endure quickened their senses. They rubbed the age-long sleep from their eyes. They had long felt the brutalizing effect of class rule. They said, "We are brothers, we are comrades," and they saw themselves multiplied by millions.

And now, behold! The International Socialist movement spreads out over all the nations of the earth. They are no longer on their knees.

And this is how the Socialist party came to be born. It was quickened into life in the bitter struggle of the world's enslaved workers.

Is it strange that the workers are loyal to such a party, that they proudly stand beneath its blazing banners and fearlessly proclaim its conquering principles?

We do not plead for votes; the workers give them freely the hour they understand.

But we need to destroy the prejudice that still exists and dispel the darkness that still prevails in the working-class world.

Before the unified hosts of labor all the despotic governments on earth are powerless and all resistance vain.

The appeal of the Socialist party is to all useful people of the nation, all who work with brain and muscle to produce the nation's wealth and who promote its progress and conserve its civilization.

There are no boundary lines to separate race from race, sex from sex, or creed from creed in the Socialist party.

Every human being is entitled to sunlight and air, to what his labor produces, and to an equal chance with every other human being to unfold and ripen and give to the world the riches of his mind and soul.

Economic slavery is the world's greatest curse today. Poverty and misery, prostitution, insanity, and crime are its inevitable results.

The Socialist party is the one party which stands squarely and uncompromisingly for the abolition of industrial slavery.

So long as the nation's resources and productive and distributive machinery are the private property of a privileged class the masses will be at their mercy, poverty will be their lot and life will be shorn of all that raises it above the brute level.

It is vain to hope for material relief upon the prevailing system of capitalism. All the reforms that are proposed by the three capitalist parties, even if carried out in good faith, would still leave the working class in industrial slavery.

It is foolish and self-destructive for workingmen to turn to Republican, Democratic, and Progressive parties on election day.

Capitalism is rushing blindly to its impending doom. All the signs portend the inevitable breakdown of the existing order.

Poverty, high prices, unemployment, child slavery, widespread misery and haggard want in a land bursting with abundance; prostitution and insanity, suicide and crime, these in tragic numbers tell the tragic story of capitalism.

It is to abolish this monstrous system and the misery and crime which flow from it in a direful and threatening stream that the Socialist party was organized and now makes its appeal to the intelligence and conscience of the people.

The Socialist party's mission is not only to destroy capitalist despotism but to establish industrial and social democracy.

Standing as it does for the emancipation of the working class from wage-slavery, for the equal rights and opportunities of all men and women, for the abolition of child labor and the conservation of all childhood, for social self-rule and the equal freedom of all, the Socialist party is the party of progress, the party of the future, and its triumph will signalize the birth of a new civilization and the dawn of a happier day for all humanity.

CUT & RUN, THE ONLY BRAVE THING TO DO

Michael Moore

November 26, 2006

Tomorrow marks the day that we will have been in Iraq longer than we were in all of World War II.

That's right. We were able to defeat all of Nazi Germany, Mussolini, and the entire Japanese empire in LESS time than it's taken the world's only superpower to secure the road from the airport to downtown Baghdad.

And we haven't even done THAT. After 1,347 days, in the same time it took us to take us to sweep across North Africa, storm the beaches of Italy, conquer the South Pacific, and liberate all of Western Europe, we cannot, after over 3 and 1/2 years, even take over a single highway and protect ourselves from a homemade device of two tin cans placed in a pothole. No wonder the cab fare from the airport into Baghdad is now running around \$35,000 for the 25-minute ride. And that doesn't even include a friggin' helmet.

Is this utter failure the fault of our troops? Hardly. That's because no amount of troops or choppers or democracy shot out of the barrel of a gun is ever going to "win" the war in Iraq. It is a lost war, lost because it never had a right to be won, lost because it was started by men who have never been to war, men who hide behind others sent to fight and die.

Let's listen to what the Iraqi people are saying, according to a recent poll conducted by the University of Maryland:

71% of all Iraqis now want the U.S. out of Iraq.

61% of all Iraqis SUPPORT insurgent attacks on U.S. troops.

Yes, the vast majority of Iraqi citizens believe that our soldiers should be killed and maimed! So what the hell are we still doing there? Talk about not getting the hint.

There are many ways to liberate a country. Usually the residents of that country rise up and liberate themselves. That's how we did it. You can also do it through nonviolent, mass civil disobedience. That's how India did it. You can get the world to boycott a regime until they are so ostracized they capitulate.

That's how South Africa did it. Or you can just wait them out and, sooner or later, the king's legions simply leave (sometimes just because they're too cold). That's how Canada did it.

The one way that DOESN'T work is to invade a country and tell the people, "We are here to liberate you!" -- when they have done NOTHING to liberate themselves. Where were all the suicide bombers when Saddam was oppressing them? Where were the insurgents planting bombs along the roadside as the evildoer Saddam's convoy passed them by? I guess ol' Saddam was a cruel despot -- but not cruel enough for thousands to risk their necks. "Oh no, Mike, they couldn't do that! Saddam would have had them killed!" Really? You don't think King George had any of the colonial insurgents killed? You don't think Patrick Henry or Tom Paine were afraid? That didn't stop them. When tens of thousands aren't willing to shed their own blood to remove a dictator, that should be the first clue that they aren't going to be willing participants when you decide you're going to do the liberating for them.

A country can HELP another people overthrow a tyrant (that's what the French did for us in our revolution), but after you help them, you leave. Immediately. The French didn't stay and tell us how to set up our government. They didn't say, "we're not leaving because we want your natural resources." They left us to our own devices and it took us six years before we had an election. And then we had a bloody civil war. That's what happens, and history is full of these examples. The French didn't say, "Oh, we better stay in America, otherwise they're going to kill each other over that slavery issue!"

The only way a war of liberation has a chance of succeeding is if the oppressed people being liberated have their own citizens behind them -- and a group of Washingtons, Jeffersons, Franklins, Gandhis and Mandellas leading them. Where are these beacons of liberty in Iraq? This is a joke and it's been a joke since the beginning. Yes, the joke's been on us, but with 655,000 Iraqis now dead as a result of our invasion (source: [Johns Hopkins University](#)), I guess the cruel joke is on them. At least they've been liberated, permanently.

So I don't want to hear another word about sending more troops (wake up, America, John McCain is bonkers), or "redeploying" them, or waiting four months to begin the "phase-out." There is only one solution and it is this: Leave. Now. Start tonight. Get out of there as fast as we can. As much as people of good heart and conscience don't want to believe this, as much as it kills us to accept defeat, there is nothing we can do to undo the damage we have done. What's happened has happened. If you were to drive drunk down the road and you killed a child, there would be nothing you could do to bring that child back to life. If you invade and destroy a country, plunging it into a civil war, there isn't much you can do 'til the smoke settles and blood is mopped up. Then maybe you can atone for the atrocity you have committed and help the living come back to a better life.

The Soviet Union got out of Afghanistan in 36 weeks. They did so and suffered hardly any losses as they left. They realized the mistake they had made and removed their troops. A civil war ensued. The bad guys won. Later, we overthrew the bad guys and everybody lived happily ever after. See! It all works out in the end!

The responsibility to end this war now falls upon the Democrats. Congress controls the purse strings and the Constitution says only Congress can declare war. Mr. Reid and Ms. Pelosi now hold the power to put an end to this madness.

Failure to do so will bring the wrath of the voters. We aren't kidding around, Democrats, and if you don't believe us, just go ahead and continue this war another month. We will fight you harder than we did the Republicans. The [opening page of my website](#) has a photo of Nancy Pelosi and Harry Reid, each made up by a collage of photos of the American soldiers who have died in Bush's War. But it is now about to become the Bush/Democratic Party War unless swift action is taken.

This is what we demand:

1. Bring the troops home now. Not six months from now. NOW. Quit looking for a way to win. We can't win. We've lost. Sometimes you lose. This is one of those times. Be brave and admit it.

2. Apologize to our soldiers and make amends. Tell them we are sorry they were used to fight a war that had NOTHING to do with our national security. We must commit to taking care of them so that they suffer as little as possible. The mentally and physically maimed must get the best care and significant financial compensation. The families of the deceased deserve the biggest apology and they must be taken care of for the rest of their lives.

3. We must atone for the atrocity we have perpetuated on the people of Iraq. There are few evils worse than waging a war based on a lie, invading another country because you want what they have buried under the ground. Now many more will die. Their blood is on our hands, regardless for whom we voted. If you pay taxes, you have contributed to the three billion dollars a week now being spent to drive Iraq into the hellhole it's become. When the civil war is over, we will have to help rebuild Iraq. We can receive no redemption until we have atoned.

In closing, there is one final thing I know. We Americans are better than what has been done in our name. A majority of us were upset and angry after 9/11 and we lost our minds. We didn't think straight and we never looked at a map. Because we are kept stupid through our pathetic education system and our lazy media, we knew nothing of history. We didn't know that WE were the ones funding and arming Saddam for many years, including those when he massacred the Kurds. He was our guy. We didn't know what a Sunni or a Shiite was, never even heard the words. Eighty percent of our young adults (according to National Geographic) were not able to find Iraq on the map. Our leaders played off our stupidity, manipulated us with lies, and scared us to death.

But at our core we are a good people. We may be slow learners, but that "Mission Accomplished" banner struck us as odd, and soon we began to ask some questions. Then we began to get smart. By this past November 7th, we got mad and tried to right our wrongs. The majority now know the truth. The majority now feel a deep sadness and guilt and a hope that somehow we can make make it all right again.

Unfortunately, we can't. So we will accept the consequences of our actions and do our best to be there should the Iraqi people ever dare to seek our help in the future. We ask for their forgiveness.

We demand the Democrats listen to us and get out of Iraq now.

Yours,

Michael Moore, www.michaelmoore.com, mmflint@aol.com



FOND FAREWELLS

"REGRET FOR THE THINGS WE DID CAN BE TEMPERED BY TIME; IT IS REGRET FOR THE THINGS WE DID NOT DO THAT IS INCONSOLABLE."
 SYDNEY J. HARRIS

Farewell Dear Godfather by Rob Moitoza

On Christmas Day, 2006, soul icon James Brown passed away after being admitted to the hospital with pneumonia. This passing has a very special significance for me personally.

As a musician, no other artist had a greater influence on me than James Brown. I grew up in the hills of Marin County, California. There was a soul radio station located across the bay, in Oakland, called "KDIA." While most of my peers were listening to the "Beach Boys" on another station, I was always tuned into East Bay Soul. I remember the first time I heard "Prisoner of Love." I became an instant James Brown fan. At that time he was urging kids to stay in school and I joined his "Don't be a Drop Out" fan club. I still have memorabilia from that era. I remember the first time I ever saw James "live." He was performing at the "Sands Ballroom," a beautiful old ballroom in Oakland. In those days he only had two small "University" horns for a P.A. system, but I had never seen such a powerful show. My friends and I stood right at the front of the stage and watched the set. A few years later that ballroom burned down. After that James would come to the Oakland Auditorium, a larger but acoustically inferior place. Still, the shows were great. I remember seeing his revue when it included several opening acts. People like Marvin Gaye, Stevie Wonder, and Aretha Franklin could be on the bill and once James came on I'd almost forget they had performed. That's how great James was. It was during this time in the early sixties that I started my own high school band with Bill Champlin and Tim Cain called "The Opposite Six." I had a pre-8 track car stereo system. We would listen to the entire "James Brown at the Apollo Theater" album on the way to the gig, just to get warmed up.

A few years later, as I was just about to go into the Navy, I saw a young 4'10" blonde girl singing the entire James Brown at the Apollo Theatre album with a band called "The New Generation." I was awestruck. Her name was Lydia Pense, and I vowed that when I got out of the service I would play bass in her band. That was the beginning of San Francisco soul band, "Cold Blood." Although I never recorded with the band, I remember performing many times at the Fillmore and Winterland auditoriums in San Francisco. It also put me in

touch with Oakland legends "Tower of Power," who later recorded my song "Bittersweet Soul Music" on their album "We Came to Play." In 1975 I rejoined my old band mates in "The Sons of Champlin" and we recorded "Loving Is Why." James' influence was still obvious in lots of that material such as Bill's "West End," "Whatcha Gonna Do," and my song "Doin' It For You." I owed it all to James, the man who reminded me that what ever I play "It's got to be funky!"

I always vowed that if James ever passed away I would go to his funeral. Unfortunately, my financial situation does not allow me to achieve that dream, but my spirit will certainly be there with him. The man gave me more than he will ever know. Long live James Brown, the greatest soul performer that ever lived.

"SPIRITED LIVING IS NOT THE SAME AS SPIRITUALITY. HUMANISTS WHO HAVE RICH EMOTIONAL LIVES UNDERSTAND THAT PROSE IS OFTEN INADEQUATE TO EXPRESS INTENSE FEELINGS OF JOY, WONDER, EXULTATION, AND HUMAN SOLIDARITY. SO THEY SURROUND THEMSELVES WITH POETRY OF THE ARTS, THE BEAUTY OF MUSIC, PAINTING, DANCE, THEATER, AND THE SPLENDORS OF NATURE. SOMETIMES THEY ARE PARTICIPANTS IN THESE ENDEAVORS. BUT IN ALL CASES, THEY AFFIRM THE VALUE AND GLORY OF THIS NATURAL WORLD OF LIFE -- AND DEATH."

RABBI SHERWIN WINE



TRIBUTES TO FUNDAMENTALIST FLATULENCE, EVANGELICAL EFFLUENCE, AND IMPLACABLE IGNORANCE

Fundamentalism (n) derives from two English words:
fund (= give cash) + amentalism (= without brains)

Top Ten Signs You're a Fundamentalist Christian submitted by Jerry Matchett

10 - You vigorously deny the existence of thousands of gods claimed by other religions, but feel outraged when someone denies the existence of yours.

9 - You feel insulted and "dehumanized" when scientists say that people evolved from other life forms, but you have no problem with the Biblical claim that we were created from dirt.

8 - You laugh at polytheists, but you have no problem believing in a Triune God.

7 - Your face turns purple when you hear of the "atrocities" attributed to Allah, but you don't even flinch when hearing about how God/Jehovah slaughtered all the babies of Egypt in "Exodus" and ordered the elimination of entire ethnic groups in "Joshua" including women, children, and trees!

6 - You laugh at Hindu beliefs that deify humans and Greek claims about gods sleeping with women, but you have no problem believing that the Holy Spirit impregnated Mary, who then gave birth to a man-god who got killed, came back to life and then ascended into the sky.

5 - You are willing to spend your life looking for little loopholes in the scientifically established age of Earth (few billion years), but you find nothing wrong with believing dates recorded by Bronze Age tribesmen sitting in their tents and guessing that Earth is a few generations old.

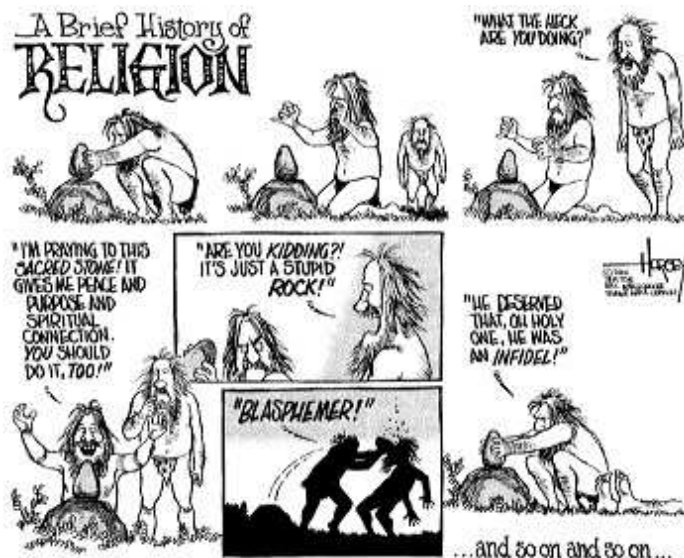
4 - You believe that the entire population of this planet

with the exception of those who share your beliefs -- though excluding those in all rival sects -- will spend Eternity in an infinite Hell of Suffering. And yet consider your religion the most "tolerant" and "loving."

3 - While modern science, history, geology, biology, and physics have failed to convince you otherwise, some idiot rolling around on the floor speaking in "tongues" may be all the evidence you need to "prove" Christianity.

2 - You define 0.01% as a "high success rate" when it comes to answered prayers. You consider that to be evidence that prayer works. And you think that the remaining 99.99% FAILURE was simply the will of God.

1 - You actually know a lot less than many atheists and agnostics do about the Bible, Christianity, and church history -- but still call yourself a Christian.



"FAITH MEANS NOT WANTING TO KNOW WHAT IS TRUE." NIETZSCHE

10 myths — and 10 Truths — about Atheism by Sam Harris

Several polls indicate that the term "atheism" has acquired such an extraordinary stigma in the United States that being an atheist is now a perfect impediment to a career in politics (in a way that being black, Muslim or homosexual is not). According to a recent Newsweek poll, only 37% of Americans would vote for an otherwise qualified atheist for president.

Atheists are often imagined to be intolerant, immoral, depressed, and blind to the beauty of nature and dogmatically closed to evidence of the supernatural.

Even John Locke, one of the great patriarchs of the Enlightenment, believed that atheism was "not at all to be tolerated" because, he said, "promises, covenants and oaths, which are the bonds of human societies, can have no hold upon an atheist."

That was more than 300 years ago. But in the United States today, little seems to have changed. A remarkable 87% of the population claims "never to doubt" the existence of God; fewer than 10% identify themselves as atheists -- and their reputation appears to be deteriorating.

Given that we know that atheists are often among the most intelligent and scientifically literate people in any society, it

seems important to deflate the myths that prevent them from playing a larger role in our national discourse.

1) Atheists believe that life is meaningless.

On the contrary, religious people often worry that life is meaningless and imagine that it can only be redeemed by the promise of eternal happiness beyond the grave. Atheists tend to be quite sure that life is precious. Life is imbued with meaning by being really and fully lived. Our relationships with those we love are meaningful now; they need not last forever to be made so. Atheists tend to find this fear of meaninglessness . . . well . . . meaningless.

2) Atheism is responsible for the greatest crimes in human history.

People of faith often claim that the crimes of Hitler, Stalin, Mao and Pol Pot were the inevitable product of unbelief. The problem with fascism and communism, however, is not that they are too critical of religion; the problem is that they are too much like religions. Such regimes are dogmatic to the core and generally give rise to personality cults that are indistinguishable from cults of religious hero worship. Auschwitz, the gulag and the killing fields were not examples of what happens when human beings reject religious dogma; they are examples of political, racial and nationalistic dogma run amok. There is no society in human history that ever suffered because its people became too reasonable.

3) Atheism is dogmatic.

Jews, Christians and Muslims claim that their scriptures are so prescient of humanity's needs that they could only have been written under the direction of an omniscient deity. An atheist is simply a person who has considered this claim, read the books and found the claim to be ridiculous. One doesn't have to take anything on faith, or be otherwise dogmatic, to reject unjustified religious beliefs. As the historian Stephen Henry Roberts (1901-71) once said: "I contend that we are both atheists. I just believe in one fewer god than you do. When you understand why you dismiss all the other possible gods, you will understand why I dismiss yours."

4) Atheists think everything in the universe arose by chance.

No one knows why the universe came into being. In fact, it is not entirely clear that we can coherently speak about the "beginning" or "creation" of the universe at all, as these ideas invoke the concept of time, and here we are talking about the origin of space-time itself.

The notion that atheists believe that everything was created by chance is also regularly thrown up as a criticism of Darwinian evolution. As Richard Dawkins explains in his marvelous book, "The God Delusion," this represents an utter misunderstanding of evolutionary theory. Although we don't know precisely how the Earth's early chemistry begat biology, we know that the diversity and complexity we see in the living world is not a product of mere chance. Evolution is a combination of chance mutation and natural selection. Darwin arrived at the phrase "natural selection" by analogy to the "artificial selection" performed by breeders of livestock. In both cases, selection exerts a highly non-random effect on the development of any species.

5) Atheism has no connection to science.

Although it is possible to be a scientist and still believe in God -- as some scientists seem to manage it -- there is no question that an engagement with scientific thinking tends to

erode, rather than support, religious faith. Taking the U.S. population as an example: Most polls show that about 90% of the general public believes in a personal God; yet 93% of the members of the National Academy of Sciences do not. This suggests that there are few modes of thinking less congenial to religious faith than science is.

6) Atheists are arrogant.

When scientists don't know something -- like why the universe came into being or how the first self-replicating molecules formed -- they admit it. Pretending to know things one doesn't know is a profound liability in science. And yet it is the life-blood of faith-based religion. One of the monumental ironies of religious discourse can be found in the frequency with which people of faith praise themselves for their humility, while claiming to know facts about cosmology, chemistry and biology that no scientist knows. When considering questions about the nature of the cosmos and our place within it, atheists tend to draw their opinions from science. This isn't arrogance; it is intellectual honesty.

7) Atheists are closed to spiritual experience.

There is nothing that prevents an atheist from experiencing love, ecstasy, rapture and awe; atheists can value these experiences and seek them regularly. What atheists don't tend to do is make unjustified (and unjustifiable) claims about the nature of reality on the basis of such experiences. There is no question that some Christians have transformed their lives for the better by reading the Bible and praying to Jesus. What does this prove? It proves that certain disciplines of attention and codes of conduct can have a profound effect upon the human mind. Do the positive experiences of Christians suggest that Jesus is the sole savior of humanity? Not even remotely -- because Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims and even atheists regularly have similar experiences.

There is, in fact, not a Christian on this Earth who can be certain that Jesus even wore a beard, much less that he was born of a virgin or rose from the dead. These are just not the sort of claims that spiritual experience can authenticate.

8) Atheists believe that there is nothing beyond human life and human understanding.

Atheists are free to admit the limits of human understanding in a way that religious people are not. It is obvious that we do not fully understand the universe; but it is even more obvious that neither the Bible nor the Koran reflects our best understanding of it. We do not know whether there is complex life elsewhere in the cosmos, but there might be. If there is, such beings could have developed an understanding of nature's laws that vastly exceeds our own. Atheists can freely entertain such possibilities. They also can admit that if brilliant extraterrestrials exist, the contents of the Bible and the Koran will be even less impressive to them than they are to human atheists.

From the atheist point of view, the world's religions utterly trivialize the real beauty and immensity of the universe. One doesn't have to accept anything on insufficient evidence to make such an observation.

9) Atheists ignore the fact that religion is extremely beneficial to society.

Those who emphasize the good effects of religion never seem to realize that such effects fail to demonstrate the truth of any religious doctrine. This is why we have terms such as "wishful thinking" and "self-deception." There is a profound

distinction between a consoling delusion and the truth.

In any case, the good effects of religion can surely be disputed. In most cases, it seems that religion gives people bad reasons to behave well, when good reasons are actually available. Ask yourself, which is more moral, helping the poor out of concern for their suffering, or doing so because you think the creator of the universe wants you to do it, will reward you for doing it or will punish you for not doing it?

10) Atheism provides no basis for morality.

If a person doesn't already understand that cruelty is wrong, he won't discover this by reading the Bible or the Koran -- as these books are bursting with celebrations of cruelty, both human and divine. We do not get our morality from religion. We decide what is good in our good books by recourse to moral intuitions that are (at some level) hard-wired in us and that have been refined by thousands of years of thinking about the causes and possibilities of human happiness.

We have made considerable moral progress over the years, and we didn't make this progress by reading the Bible or the Koran more closely. Both books condone the practice of slavery -- and yet every civilized human being now recognizes that slavery is an abomination. Whatever is good in scripture -- like the golden rule -- can be valued for its ethical wisdom without our believing that it was handed down to us by the creator of the universe.

"YOU SHOULD BE EXTREMELY PROUD THAT YOUR MENTAL PROCESSES ALLOW YOU TO THINK WITHOUT THE IMPEDIMENT OF SUPERSTITION, WHICH IS WHAT RELIGION IS. SPEAK UP WHENEVER YOU GET A CHANCE! CHALLENGE IGNORANCE! THE REASON RELIGIOUS PEOPLE INVENTED THE RULE THAT IT IS IMPOLITE TO ARGUE RELIGION IS THAT THEY ALWAYS LOSE THE ARGUMENT!"
 CHARLES CHEVES

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