



# THE SECULAR HUMANIST PRESS

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## AMERICA AT THE CROSSROADS: A DREAM REVISITED

by Rob Moitoza

The similarities between the 2008 presidential run and the 1968 presidential run are becoming more striking by the day. Both campaigns fostered hope and optimism for the American people. Both campaigns represented massive outpourings of youth and new voters. Both campaigns represented new hope for minorities and people of all races and creeds. And, at the same time, both campaigns were accompanied by illegally waged U.S. wars, unparalleled government corruption, and suppression of our civil liberties by the prevailing power structures.

In the Sixties we thought our hopes and dreams might finally be realized. We rallied and demonstrated. We thought our government might actually be "of, by and for the people" after all. We were naive. We believed what we were taught in history class about our "down trodden and huddled masses yearning to be free." We thought, "Surely our government will listen to us." For that we were clubbed, tear gassed, and jailed. When that didn't work, they shot us down on the campuses of San Francisco and Kent State. And then, at some point, we realized that we couldn't win against guns and hatred of this magnitude. Somehow we represented a threat to their wealth and power, neither of which we were ever the slightest bit interested in! We just didn't want to die in a war that was never declared. We simply wanted our constitutional rights. But when Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy were assassinated, we finally retreated back into the woodwork. We watched our government be taken over by scoundrels and liars such as Richard M. Nixon, Ronald Reagan, and the Bush crime family. The U.S. as we knew it disappeared. The dream had become a nightmare and a new era of government and corporate corruption began.

It has been forty years since those turbulent times, but the dream remains the same. All we wanted then, and now, was justice, equal rights for all citizens, and a voice in our own government. We have been denied that for all this time. But now we once again have some hope. We do not know what Barack Obama will do if elected. Many of us had been fans of

Dennis Kucinich or Ralph Nader, or others who we knew were true reformers. We knew they would challenge the corporations that have subverted our government for nothing more than their own wealth and power. They, of course, made sure that guys like Nader and Kucinich would never see the light of day. We don't know for sure that Barack Obama will live up to our hopes and dreams, but we like his attitude. We do know that John McCain, the leader of a party that represents only rich, white CEOs and "good old boys," will be disastrous. I fear it will be the end of the United States if he is elected.

So we are, once again, at a historic crossroads. We have been given another chance to see our dreams materialize and to see our government truly represent the people which it is pledged to serve. To say that this event is historic only because Barack Obama is part black, or that Hillary Clinton (now out of the race) was a woman, totally misses the point. This is easily proven by the addition of Sarah Palin to the GOP ticket. Here is a woman who would turn women's rights back 200 years. Remember, this party, which is now swooning over Palin, is the same party that defeated the Equal Rights Amendment, which would have given women equal pay for equal work, among other things. Meanwhile, Democratic running mate Joe Biden passed domestic abuse legislation that greatly advanced women's rights. So, it is not just the "symbol" that is important here. It is the substance of "change" that carries the weight. And we know that McCain and Palin are not interested in change . . . only folding money. And McCain is just a "whiter shade of Palin." Any "change" that they offer would



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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.

most certainly take us even further into a theocratic, corporate American state where anyone who disagrees is hauled off to jail without regard to the rule of law, the constitution, or anyone's civil rights.

We are already seeing it. Houses of citizens associated with peace groups were systematically raided at gun point during the Republican Convention in Minnesota. Computers were seized and people were arrested. There were also mass demonstrations at both conventions. However, unlike 1968, when Americans saw it all on network television, it was completely blacked out this time around. Americans didn't even know it was going on unless they had friends there or happened to be industrious enough to look it up on the internet. At the Democratic convention, demonstrators were at least allowed to march to the convention center and were met by representatives of the Obama campaign. That's a step in the right direction. At the GOP convention they were tear gassed and corralled by police, then arrested en masse. Even press people were arrested without cause. This is a complete violation of our United States constitution, which guarantees freedom of the press and our right to protest. Protesters were also accused of violence, but I'll wager that the "violent protesters" will turn out to be police provocateurs and GOP plants. Those in power will do anything to demonize and discredit the people . . . people who never wanted anything but a voice in their own government.

The crimes that have been committed by the current Bush Administration far exceed anything that was done by the Nixon White House. But they have learned how to better cover it up, evade the law, control the corporate press, and deceive the American people. They have become masters of deception and corruption, and the Democratic congress and the corporate media have aided and abetted them in this deception.

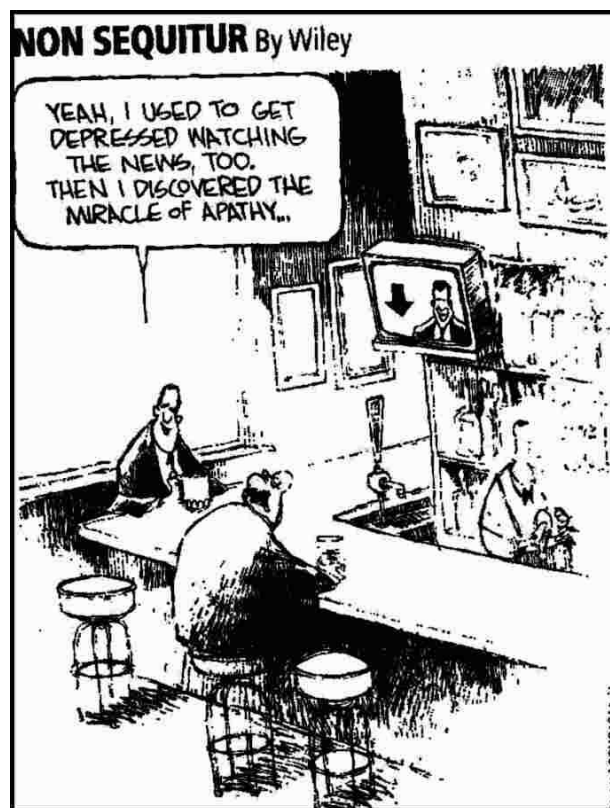
So, this is a truly historic time for America . . . not just because we may be electing the first "black president." That, in itself, would open doors and change attitudes toward the U.S. all around the world. But it is much more than that. Will we regain our "government of, by, and for the people," or will it continue to be owned by Exxon, Halliburton, Walmart, and Comcast to the financial ruin of the American people? Will we finally have a voice in our own government or, once again, be silenced by gunfire? I hope that, this time, justice, common decency and goodness will win out, and that the American Dream will finally be realized by all.

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"I SEE IN THE NEAR FUTURE A CRISIS APPROACHING THAT UNNERVES ME AND CAUSES ME TO TREMBLE FOR THE SAFETY OF MY COUNTRY...CORPORATIONS HAVE BEEN ENTHRONED AND AN ERA OF CORRUPTION IN HIGH PLACES WILL FOLLOW, AND THE MONEY OF THE COUNTRY WILL ENDEAVOR TO PROLONG ITS REIGN BY WORKING UPON THE PREJUDICES OF THE PEOPLE UNTIL ALL WEALTH IS AGGREGATED IN A FEW HANDS AND THE REPUBLIC IS DESTROYED. I FEEL AT THIS MOMENT MORE ANXIETY FOR THE SAFETY OF MY COUNTRY THAN EVER BEFORE, EVEN IN THE MIDST OF WAR."

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

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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](mailto: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

### SUNDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2008, 6 – 9 PM WINTER SOLSTICE POTLUCK DINNER

Humanists, Atheists, Brights, Ethical Culturists, Secular Jewish Circle members and other Freethinkers are invited to join the University Unitarian Humanists for a potluck co-hosted by the Humanists of Washington. This event will be held upstairs in Nathan Johnson Hall at University Unitarian Church, 6556 35<sup>th</sup> Ave. N. E., Seattle from 6:00 to 9:00 pm on Sunday, December 14<sup>th</sup>.

Bring your festive mood and food to share. Table service, coffee, and other beverages will be furnished. Questions? Call Jeanette Merki at (425) 821-4605.

### FRIDAY, JANUARY 23, 2009, 7:30 – 9:30 PM ANNUAL BUSINESS AND ELECTION MEETING

It's that time again to come out and participate in HOW's internal processes. We will be electing a new board to serve through 2010. This meeting will be held, as usual, at the Phinney Neighborhood Center upstairs in room #6.

**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.

### HOW SEEKS NEW BOARD MEMBERS

The Humanists of Washington will be electing officers and board members at large at its annual meeting on January 23, 2009 (see above). Some of the current officers are not able to run again for personal reasons, so this is a great time for members who have not yet served on the board to throw their names in the hat and, if elected, to help guide HOW during the coming two years. The board meets quarterly in the Seattle area, and no one is asked to give more time than they can manage between meetings. On the other hand, anyone with the time and motivation will find plenty of opportunity to implement new ideas for advancing the principles of Humanism and working with other freethought groups in the Northwest.

Any member in good standing who wishes to be considered or who has questions about board responsibilities should contact Barbara Dority at 206-784-6541 or [bdority@comcast.net](mailto:bdority@comcast.net).

### SECULAR SEATTLE

Secular Seattle is a social group sponsored by the Humanists of Washington to provide a venue for bringing together Secular Humanists, Atheists, Agnostics, Freethinkers, 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, movie tickets, etc.

Secular Seattle's Yahoo Group website is located at <http://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.greenleaf@gmail.com](mailto:tiffany.greenleaf@gmail.com) if you have any questions or would like to add an event.

We also have many other events (games, 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](mailto:jerryschiffelbein@msn.com).

### SEATTLE HUMANISM/SECULAR SEATTLE MEETUP GROUP

This is your chance to meet other local Humanists, people who believe in the basic goodness of human nature without supernaturalism. Sponsored by the Humanists of Washington and founded in January 2006, this Meetup currently has 165 members. Jerry Schiffelbein is the group organizer.

The group meets on the second Thursday, usually at 7 pm at a restaurant located in North Seattle (usually near the Northgate or Greenwood areas; please be sure to check the Meetup site for the current month's Meetup location). Join us for dinner and conversation and a chance to meet other Humanists, Atheists, Agnostics, Skeptics, and Freethinkers. Get current information online, including member profiles and photos, at <http://humanism.meetup.com/153/>, and be sure to RSVP so that we can reserve enough tables.

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- 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 (206) 527-8518. An officer will call you back.
  - If you misplace this journal or want to check the calendar of events, call (206) 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.humanistsofseattle.org](http://www.humanistsofseattle.org) or email us at [humanists@comcast.net](mailto:humanists@comcast.net).
  - NOTICE: The deadline date for submissions to the Winter 2008-09 *SHP* is December 1st.
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### UNIVERSITY UNITARIAN HUMANISTS

The meetings begin at 7:00 pm (unless otherwise noted) in the Knattvold Rm (1<sup>st</sup> room on the left as you enter from the parking lot) at University Unitarian Church, 6556 35<sup>th</sup> Ave. NE, Seattle, 98115. All are welcome.

### *Universal Declaration of Human Rights - 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary* Thursday, October 23, 2008

On December 10, 1948, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted and proclaimed this declaration. The pursuit of human rights is at the heart of the mission of the United Nations. Joan Lawson, national board member of the United Nations Assn.-USA & former president of the Seattle Chapter, will discuss highlights and insights of this increasingly important action.

**Dickens' Christmas Carol: A New Perspective****Thursday, November 20, 2008**

We're all familiar with *The Christmas Carol*, but few realize Charles Dickens wrote it as a protest against the so called "welfare reforms" of Britain in the 1840s. People had to prove they were deserving of it to receive help. Dickens' objections could just as well apply to recent welfare reforms in this country. Carl Schwartz, Unitarian and long time political and union activist, will present this program.

**FREETHINKERS UNITED NETWORK**

Join us for First Friday discussion group and dinner at the Maple Leaf Chinese Restaurant in Bellevue. We gather at 6:30pm.

For more information on FUN, go to [www.freethinkersunitednetwork.com](http://www.freethinkersunitednetwork.com) or contact Wendy Britton at [wendita99@hotmail.com](mailto:wendita99@hotmail.com) or 425-269-9108

Wendy is also forming American Atheists-WA@yahoogroups.com which will have monthly events on the calendar at [yahoogroups.com](http://yahoogroups.com). Stay tuned.

**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 upcoming events on their web page at [www.HumanistsNPS.com](http://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. Times and locations vary. Contact ECS at [info@EthicalCultureSociety.org](mailto:info@EthicalCultureSociety.org).

**EASTSIDE ATHEISTS/AGNOSTICS MEETUP GROUP**

Eastside Atheists/Agnostics started because of the long commute to the Seattle meetups. We enjoy a social meeting and share contact information about many local groups. Meetings are held at rotating locations on the third Wednesday of each month at 7pm.

For more information, see <http://atheists.meetup.com/500>. Meetings have been held in Kirkland, Bellevue, Redmond, Woodinville, and Issaquah. We will continue to rotate, looking for opportunities to meet new individuals on the Eastside. Email us at [atheists-500-announce@meetup.com](mailto:atheists-500-announce@meetup.com).

**Seattle Atheists Need 30 Volunteers on Sunday,  
Nov. 30th for the Seattle Marathon.**

Volunteering at a Seattle Marathon is a really fun experience — come and join us! Our shift is 6:30am-9:30am. Please go to this link and sign up as a volunteer for direct email

**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*

communications from the marathon organizers as to where to meet: <http://www.seattlemarathon.org/volunteer/volunteersignup.htm>

There is a huge list of things to sign up for. If you want to work with us at the waterstop do this: Sign up for "Aid Station/Waterstop" (which is way down the list, so scroll down a bit.)

VERY IMPORTANT!! Put this info in the notes section: "Aid Station #3 at mile 4 with Wendy Britton/Seattle Atheists in I-90 tunnel location."

We need 30 people, so feel free to invite your friends or send this to them so they can sign up too. If you need more info about this event, call Wendy at 425-269-9108. Volunteering is a lot of fun and this is the best waterstop in the whole marathon as it's in a covered area and it's early in the race so folks are all excited and hooting and hollering in the tunnel . . . good times!

Afterwards, we'll find a local restaurant for breakfast/brunch for those who want to stay and chat.

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"GOD WAS INVENTED TO EXPLAIN MYSTERY. GOD IS ALWAYS INVENTED TO EXPLAIN THOSE THINGS THAT YOU DO NOT UNDERSTAND. NOW, WHEN YOU FINALLY DISCOVER HOW SOMETHING WORKS, YOU GET SOME LAWS WHICH YOU'RE TAKING AWAY FROM GOD; YOU DON'T NEED HIM ANYMORE."

RICHARD FEYNMAN, NOBEL PRIZE-WINNING PHYSICIST

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**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](mailto:therealworld@comcast.net).

**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! The Society for

**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*

Sensible Explanations (SSE) 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](http://www.seattleskeptics.org). To subscribe, contact Tim at [timk@cablespeed.com](mailto: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 meet Wednesdays from 7:30-8:30pm in the theatre on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor of the Good Shepherd Center located at 4649 Sunnyside Avenue N. in Wallingford. Beginners welcome.

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

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*"THE FACT THAT AN OPINION HAS BEEN WIDELY HELD IS NO EVIDENCE THAT IT IS NOT UTTERLY ABSURD; INDEED, IN VIEW OF THE SILLINESS OF THE MAJORITY OF MANKIND, A WIDESPREAD BELIEF IS MORE LIKELY TO BE FOOLISH THAN SENSIBLE."* BERTRAND RUSSELL

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### HUMANISTS IN PRINT: SHARING YOUR PUBLISHED LETTERS

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

#### Disparaging Quips Unconscionable Seattle Post-Intelligencer, September 14, 2008

I cannot understand why huge numbers of people are not outraged by the disparagement of those who work diligently and endlessly to bring communities together to provide support for health and humanitarian services — to build community support for schools, for food banks and other essential needs. United Way, Red Cross, school bond committees and many other groups are dependent upon community organizers — thousands of volunteers — for their existence and for the health and quality of life in the communities where they live. It is tragic to hear politicians bring such ugliness into our lives.

Sam Dunlap, Olympia

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*"ONLY TWO THINGS ARE INFINITE -- THE UNIVERSE AND HUMAN STUPIDITY."* ALBERT EINSTEIN

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### 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.]*

#### Take Charge Leadership

*[Rob Moitoza sent the following letter to the Seattle Times on July 27, 2008.]*

Wednesday's *Times* (July 23) featured a full page ad for the "Get Motivated Business Seminar." Headlining the seminar will be General Colin Powell speaking on "Take Charge

Leadership." I wonder if he'll be talking about the "take charge leadership" he showed when he went along with Bush/Cheney's Iraq War plan without speaking up, or his "take charge leadership" when he decided not to run for president. Or maybe it was the "take charge leadership" he showed when he resigned from the Bush administration rather than challenge their policies.

I think It might be worth attending the workshop just to learn what not to do if you really want to be a leader.

#### Hypocrisy at its Finest

*[Richard Bozarth sent the following letter to the Austin American-Statesman on September 5, 2008.]*

The Republicans do not miss a chance to indulge in hypocrisy. Defending Palin, their claim now is that any kind of criticism is sexism and should be only condemned by all. If she's so weak that she cannot survive in the same harsh environment Obama and Biden accept as part of modern presidential campaigning, then Palin is even more unfit to be Vice President. What makes this hypocrisy is that Republicans did not think it was sexism to criticize Hillary Clinton as harshly and often as vilely as possible, beginning back in the early 1990s when she was the leader of the Clinton Administration's health-care reform effort. Going back farther to the vice presidential candidate Geraldine Ferraro we find Republicans attacking her without restraint — and none of them then thought it was sexist to do so. If attacking Palin's beliefs and deeds is sexism that should be condemned, then attacking Obama's beliefs and deeds must be racism, right? Obama has made it clear that his skin color should never exempt him from the harsh realities of modern presidential campaigning. Palin, if she has any kind of respectable character at all, should declare just as clearly that her gender should not be an exemption from what male candidates accept as normal political behavior. If she does not, then that is one more reason why she is unqualified to be the Vice President.

Topping normal Republican hypocrisy is the hypocrisy of the most conservative Republicans, the evangelical Christians. Before Palin's nomination, I would have said they would have been morally offended by an adolescent, unwed girl committing fornication and ending up pregnant because of it. Getting married after being caught would not in the past have exempted the girl and the girl's parents from being condemned for their lack of moral values. Isn't that why they insist that adolescents receive only abstinence-based sex education? Isn't that why they claim their moral values, if taught to adolescents, will prevent adolescent girls from fornicating and thus getting pregnant before marriage? If a parent fails to lead her children down the path of righteousness, is that parent a good parent? Until Palin's nomination, the answer would have been "No!". Now it's all changed. Somehow Palin's unwed, adolescent daughter's pregnancy has become an evangelical Christian virtue, and somehow Palin's uncritical acceptance of her daughter's failure to practice abstinence is a bright, shining example of evangelical Christian morality! I'm so sure they would have been just as understanding and as accepting and as proud of Bill and Hilliary if Chelsea had gotten pregnant when she was an unwed adolescent and her parents had reacted with the same happiness Palin exhibits!

If hypocrisy was a carcinogen, conservative Republicans in



general and evangelical Christians in particular would be dead or dying from cancer. The U.S. has suffered eight long years with these hypocrites in the White House. It does not need four more years of misery.



### Religious Immorality

[Paul Shelton sent the following letter regarding the Death with Dignity Initiative to the *Seattle Times* and other newspapers on September 5, 2008]

Being able to control one's manner of dying, and to employ professional assistance in doing so, is one's own business. Religious people have no argument based in earth-bound morality or in terms of practical concerns why laws should prevent this basic freedom. Those working hard to stop I-1000 are performing the greatest tragic mistake. While believing they are acting morally, they are committing a highly immoral act — acting in fact to curtail compassion, to quash individual freedom, and to force fear onto others. Such emotional and intellectual ignorance and thoughtlessness is unconscionable, but they are blinded to its reality by their nonsensical religious teachings.

### Perhaps It's The Water

[Philip Appleman sent the following letter to the *New York Times* on September 14, 2008.]

Your account of the pilgrimage of Pope Benedict XVI to the "healing shrine" of Lourdes ("Pope Visits Shrine at Lourdes," Sept. 14) includes a bit of context by mentioning the previous visit of Pope John Paul II (who died less than a year after visiting the healing shrine). For a fuller context, you might also have included the pilgrimage of Cardinal O Fiaich, Roman Catholic Primate of All Ireland, who, within hours of visiting the healing shrine, fell ill and died on the spot ("Cardinal...Dies on Pilgrimage," May 9, 1990).

"THE BIBLE IS FULL OF INTEREST. IT HAS NOBLE POETRY IN IT; AND SOME CLEVER FABLES; AND SOME BLOOD-DRENCHED HISTORY; AND SOME GOOD MORALS; AND A WEALTH OF OBSCENITY; AND UPWARDS OF A THOUSAND LIES." MARK TWAIN

## LETTERS to HOW

**EDITORIAL POLICY:** Alternative rational views or rebuttals from members and friends to articles, letters, or editorial comments presented herein should be no more than two single-spaced 8.5x11 sheets, must be signed, and must include a contact phone number. It is always our intention to edit for conciseness and clarity, not to alter your viewpoint in any way. Letters may also be edited to conform to space requirements. As this is a membership publication, space preference will be given to letters from members.

### Update from New York

The new *SHP* is full of good things, as always, especially the timely lead article.

Here's a thought. Your "Sites for Freethinkers" is a good idea, and would be even better with the addition of one of Paul Kurtz's many enterprises (CSH, e.g.), and especially one of my other favorites, the Freedom From Religion Foundation ([www.ffrf.org](http://www.ffrf.org)). For several years I've done a (monthly) poetry column for their "Freethought Today" tabloid, which has been fun.

Wish we were as mobile as we were in 1991, when we visited you in Seattle; be nice to see you again. On a cheerful note, I have two books in proof, a new satirical one called "Karma, Dharma, Pudding & Pie" (Norton) and a 25th anniversary reprint of "Darwin's Ark" (Ind.U.Pr.), both to be out in time for Darwin's 200th birthday on Feb. 12.

Thanks for keeping me on your mailing list!

Philip Appleman, East Hampton, NY

### Reading Between the Lines about Race

America may soon elect its first black president. Oh really? We all know, or should by now, that Barack Obama is the child of a black father and a white mother. We are not told if either is "pure", but that is generally assumed. This knowledge lets us know that Mr. Obama is at least half black and half white. Why then is he a black candidate? Why not a white candidate of mixed blood or an All-American candidate of mixed ancestry? Why don't some Whites choose to defend "white blood" wherever it is found and claim Barack as ours? He's just as white as he is black.

Stop and think. If a candidate in Kenya, where Barack's father was raised, were half white and half black, would the Kenyan press and the Kenyan people say they were about to elect their first white president? My guess is that they would still consider him a member of their race, but just of lighter tone.

A glimmer of the truth begins to dawn. The history of mulattos, specifically in America, along with a little knowledge of genetics, is very revealing. First, we know that mixing black and white will almost always produce a lighter skinned individual with the intrusion of features from both races into physiognomy and body form. (Notice I said "lighter skinned" individual. This means lighter than a native African. The implication is that the resulting cross breed is still black, but lighter. If I had said a "darker skinned" individual, it would have been referring to a white with darker skin, but still white. Such subtleties!) But sometimes, when mulattos who are

children of a "pure" mixed marriage have children, one quarter of offspring will appear totally white or totally black. In my lifetime, I have met one such person, and you may have, too. He was a fair-skinned redhead, as white appearing as any Englishman e'er was, springing from two mulatto parents. Regarding unseen features, I am not clear if genes are separated, but I suspect they are not. Thus, even a child of such a union, looking 100% northern European, has genes from his (recent) African ancestors within. (Geneticists among readers may feel free to please correct and enlighten me.)

There are many possible conclusions we might draw from a recognition of whether a race "defends" itself when it is found mixed with other racial blood, or "rejects" itself as tainted when it is found mixed with other racial blood. At least in America, history clearly reveals the logic that any African blood seeping into the veins of a white person forever defiled that person. Mulattos of any small genetic fraction were cast out as unwanted in the white culture. Is it any wonder then, that we so easily label Barack Obama as black? So what if Obama's mother was white. He is, in the white tradition, racially damaged goods and cannot ever be called white.

My own conclusion is that good reason exists to suspect that Barack Obama is not the first presidential candidate with African blood, but clearly he is the first who has some noticeably African features. Unfortunately, that percentage of Americans who see things in "black and white" and find it hard

to accept an African in the White House, cannot understand that Mr. Obama is as white as he is black, and his racial make-up becomes meaningless as a measure of what race or people some may think he personally favors. The only meaningful measure that hopefully will prevail with a large majority of Americans — the only essential quality we all should care about — is that Barack Obama is 100% purebred American.

Paul Shelton, Tukwila

### Human Behavior: Genetic, Cultural

Anti-science diatribes are the common fodder of religious fundamentalist groups or Seattle's notorious Discovery Institute, but I was astounded to see a lengthy one in *The Secular Humanist Press*. Has the world turned upside down?

Richard Bozarth's "Something Wrong, Not Quite Right" (Summer 2008) was an irrational attack on all of modern biological and evolutionary science. Vastly overstating the reality, he claims that evolutionary scientists hold that virtually all human behavior is genetic rather than cultural, and then sets up straw men in order to knock down his false charges. Please tell me that this was all an April Fool's joke.

Well, I guess not, since April has long passed. So let's go over what Bozarth says:

Pointing out the obvious that humans are rarely monogamous, he repeatedly implies that evolutionists claim

## THIS MODERN WORLD

**A FEW RECENT  
EXAMPLES OF  
AWESOMELY  
NON-RACIST  
POLITICAL  
DISCOURSE**

WHEN TALK RADIO HOSTS DRAW PARALLELS BETWEEN THE MIDWESTERN FLOODS AND HURRICANE KATRINA--  
YOU DIDN'T SEE **MIDWESTERNERS** WHINING FOR HELP, THE WAY THOSE PEOPLE IN **NEW ORLEANS** DID!  
WHATEVER COLOR THEY WERE. I DIDN'T EVEN NOTICE!  
--THEY'RE SIMPLY MAKING AN INTERESTING **OBSERVATION**--WHICH HAS **NOTHING** TO DO WITH **RACE**!

by TOM TOMORROW  
WHEN FOX NEWS USES A SLANG TERM SYNONYMOUS WITH "UNWED MOTHER" IN REFERENCE TO MICHELLE OBAMA--  
OBAMA'S BABY MAMA  
--IT'S NOTHING MORE THAN A SLY POP CULTURAL **REFERENCE**--WITH **NO RACISM INVOLVED**!

WHEN FOX ANCHORS SPECULATE ABOUT THE POSSIBLE MEANING OF AN INNOCUOUS HAND GESTURE--  
WAS IT A **TERRORIST FIST JAB**?  
A **GANG SIGN**? A SYMBOLIC REPRESENTATION OF THEIR **SECRET HATRED** FOR **WHITE PEOPLE**?  
--THEY'RE ONLY DOING THEIR **JOB**S AS THOROUGH, RESPONSIBLE, NON-RACIST **JOURNALISTS**!

WHEN A VENDOR AT THE TEXAS GOP CONVENTION SELLS THESE BUTTONS ALL WEEKEND--  
**If Obama  
Is President...  
will we still call it  
The  
White House?**  
--WELL, IT'S JUST A HARMLESS POST-RACIAL JOKE AND **LIBERALS** ARE THE **REAL RACISTS**. OR, UM, SOMETHING.

NO DOUBT **ABOUT IT**--WE LIVE IN AN **AWESOMELY COLORBLIND SOCIETY**!  
I BELIEVE WE SHOULD JUDGE OBAMA AND HIS WIFE BY THE **CONTENT** OF THEIR **CHARACTER**! \*  
FOR INSTANCE-- DOES MICHELLE HATE "WHITEY" OR NOT? AND WHAT'S UP WITH THAT **TER-RORIST FIST JAB**?  
INQUIRING NON-RACIST MINDS WANT TO **KNOW**!  
\*THE RIGHT'S FAVORITE M.L.K. QUOTE!

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they are. Of course, exactly the opposite is true. Virtually all evolutionists would hold that humans are not monogamous. They are “hardwired” (to use his term) for promiscuity.

He challenges us to name one human behavior that is immune to a sufficiently motivated human who wants to engage in the opposite. But note how he rigs the bet: If “sufficiently motivated”, people can do things that go against instinct. Religious fanatics have been known to handle poisonous snakes. But that is the rare exception. The great majority of us will not willingly put ourselves in harm’s way. We instinctively cling to life. We’re hardwired to do so.

Bozarth asks “Is there anything sillier than hypothesizing a universal moral code?”. Well, actually, there is. It’s to make a know-nothing attack on modern evolutionary science, which has shown again and again that there is a strong moral code evolutionarily programmed into humans. Moral codes across the millenniums and cultures are remarkably similar. One has to strain to find the differences, which are far more unusual than the similarities.

Even our closest primate cousins have moral codes which are rarely broken. Acts of sharing food and reciprocal altruism are far more common than acts of selfishness. This is to the evolutionary advantage of both the individual and group.

In another ludicrously inept attempt to rig a question to his advantage, Bozarth challenges us to keep track of the violent crimes on TV news for a year and then ask ourselves if humans have a hardwired instinct for not inflicting violence. But how very odd that he didn’t tell us to keep track of all those who didn’t commit violent crimes during that period. If he did, he would find that the vast majority of us have not committed violence. We’re evolutionarily hardwired for moral cooperation.

Bozarth mentions the leading scientist in the field, Steven Pinker, although only to make a cheap attack on him. While I would recommend that those who want to learn the reality of this field, not Bozarth’s misleading caricatures, start with Pinker’s books, here are some others that I find especially good:

- James Q Wilson: *The Moral Sense* (1993)
- Geoffrey F Miller: *The Mating Mind - How Sexual Choice Shaped The Evolution Of Human Nature* (2000)
- Michael Shermer: *The Science Of Good And Evil* (2004)

Science must always be subject to question and criticism in the free market of ideas. But Bozarth’s screed would set up a new anti-science fundamentalism. History shows that we’ve been down that path too many times before. We must not make that mistake again.

Brian Templeton, Des Moines

### Bozarth’s Reply

Templeton should reread “Something Wrong” because I wasn’t writing about evolutionary scientists. I was writing about those who call themselves evolutionary psychologists, who used to call themselves sociobiologists. Not the same species at all. I’ve read a lot about evolution by evolutionary scientists and rarely have their books and articles failed to be exquisitely convincing. Nothing I’ve read by the hypothesists of evolutionary psychology has been exquisitely convincing or even reasonably persuasive. Templeton is defending

evolutionary scientists from an attack that did not happen to them. What’s his next project? Hunting for Saddam’s WMD in Iraq? If a reader wants to read an author who agrees with me, I suggest *The Disinformation Cycle* by William Harwood.

By the way, two groups of people willingly put themselves in harm’s way 24/7/365. One group is called soldiers and there are millions of them all over the world who willingly get in harm’s way every day. Thousands of them suffer death and horrible injuries every year and still they do it. The other group is called drivers and there are billions of them on Earth. Every day they willingly put themselves in harms way and millions of them suffer death and horrible injuries every year and still they do it. Show me the hardwiring.

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*“I HAVE NEVER SEEN THE SLIGHTEST SCIENTIFIC PROOF OF THE RELIGIOUS THEORIES OF HEAVEN AND HELL, OF FUTURE LIFE FOR INDIVIDUALS, OR OF A PERSONAL GOD.” THOMAS EDISON*

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### I-1000 UPDATE

by Midge Levy, Co-President  
Compassion & Choices of Washington

Following 20 weeks of dedicated signature gathering, we are happy to report that the statewide Death with Dignity Initiative has qualified for the November 4 ballot. We needed 224,880 valid signatures from registered voters and delivered 317,000 signatures to the Secretary of State, over 170,000 of which were gathered by 2000 volunteers. Katherine Bragdon, experienced coordinator of the volunteer signature gatherers, stated that “This was a massive grassroots effort and it sends a clear message that I-1000 has tremendous public support. Of all the campaigns I have worked on this volunteer base was the most compassionate, wise, determined, spirited and talented.”

Now our efforts are geared to obtaining endorsements both from organizations and individuals. Once again we have attracted extraordinary volunteers to help us achieve our goals. A group of trained volunteer speakers travel round the state addressing a range of political, medical, academic, community and service groups. The demand for our speakers is escalating; several speakers have had two or more speaking engagements in one day. Our speakers have been well received in almost all areas. As this is a non-partisan issue, we have been endorsed by many of our legislators from both parties, three former governors including Gov Dan Evans, and former Secretary of State Ralph Munro. We have many editorial endorsements and medical groups behind I-1000, including the American Medical Women’s Association and the American Medical Student Association, despite the assertion from opponents that doctors do not support this law.

We are also making every effort to raise funds to pay for the media in the last few weeks of the campaign, knowing that TV coverage is the only way to reach large numbers of voters, which are essential to counteract the opposition. Meanwhile we benefit from extensive positive media such as the September 10th article by Michael Hood posted on the blog horsesass.org from which I would like to quote:

“Dad looked ready for space travel lying there in the ICU. Tubes and wires hooked him up to costly machines recording the metrics of his inevitable and upcoming demise. He didn’t have to do a thing as the robots were taking care of business: collapsing his lungs and filling them up; feeding and watering



him; transporting the leftovers through expensive hoses. . . . He wasn't in any pain, they said, but how could we know? What we had was a familiar piece of meat in suspended animation. It was like a mortuary viewing except that he was alive and we knew that only because the lines on the monitor were not flat. I don't want to go that way, he'd complained months earlier, get me a gun. No, we cried, the thought sickens us. My Dad died a bloodless, soulless death over which he had few choices — dignity wasn't one of them. It was somebody else's death, not his own."

Maryanne Vandervelde, guest columnist wrote in the August 25th *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* about her friend Amy who "fought three types of cancer over a 12 year period. During her last hospitalization she said 'no more' to painful treatments, fighting this monster that could not be tamed. She had a plan for help when she needed it: her sensitive, wise internist implied that she would prescribe the necessary pills. But two months later, when Amy asked, the answer was no, the law would not allow it. My friend died one of the most miserable deaths imaginable. Neither of the hospice workers was able to control Amy's pain. Everyone suffered as they watched Amy deteriorate. Fortunately we now have the possibility of something much better. Initiative 1000 gives us the option of having some say over end-of-life issues."

I urge all Humanists to vote YES! On 1-1000 on Nov 4.

### **Special Message from Dani Franco-Malone, Statewide Field Director for the YES! on 1000 Campaign**

As you know, this election is going to be a very close one, and it will take a huge effort from dedicated supporters like you to put end of life choices in the hands where they belong: the individual. Make no mistake — we have an uphill battle ahead of us. The good news is that there are numerous things you can do to help make sure we win.

**First**, and most important, we need help contacting voters. We have some incredible technologies available to us that will enable us to target our efforts and mobilize our supporters. In the upcoming weeks we will be relying on volunteers like you to identify our base of supporters. Volunteers are urgently needed to call registered voters, and ask them if they support Death with Dignity. These are extremely easy phone calls to make and they will be critically important when it comes time to remind our supporters to vote.

Volunteer shifts will begin on Monday, September 22, and will continue as the election approaches. Please consider signing up for a 1 to 2 hour shift. Volunteers are most needed from 5:30pm to 8:30pm. Calls will be made from our Seattle office, located in the University District. Scripts, phone lists, snacks, and drinks will be provided. Please contact Jessica (jessica@yeson1000.org or 206-633-2008) to sign up.

**Second**, we need volunteers to attend and table events, like debates, forums, and meetings. As an event volunteer, you can help by passing out materials, or even just being a supportive audience member. A list of events in King County is below, and a complete calendar of events is on our website at [www.yeson1000.org](http://www.yeson1000.org). Please email me (dani@yeson1000.org) if you would like to attend an event or let us know about one.

- Thursday, October 2, 7pm League of Women Voters Forum, First Baptist Church, 1111 Harvard

- Saturday, October 4, 9:30am-11:30am, American Association University Women, Highline Branch, Family Community Center, 4040 188th St. Suite 100, SeaTac
- Monday, October 13, 7-9 pm, Bellevue Presbyterian Church Forum, 10936 NE 24th Street, Bellevue

**Third**, we need volunteers to crowd canvass high traffic areas. This involves finding high traffic events, like Mariners games, fairs, and farmer's markets, and handing out Yes! on 1-1000 literature. Please contact me if you are interested.

### **Being an Atheist in America by Dr. Adrian Liston**

*[Dr. Liston added this note to the following submission: "I immigrated to America two and a half years ago from Australia, and have been an infrequent contributor to your newsletter for the past two years. I now only have a few months left in America, and have been contemplating the differences between religion and atheism in America and Australia, which I wish to share with your readers in my final contribution to your newsletter."]*

Before coming to America, I knew that religion was a far more powerful force here than it is in Australia. But what I didn't suspect was that atheism would also be so different between the two cultures. In Australia around 64% of the population, if pushed, would call themselves Christian and 31% would say they are not religious or wouldn't even bother answering. This isn't that different from the U.S., with 77% Christian and 14% not religious or not answering, especially after you take into account the different urban/rural balance.

The big difference is really in the attitude of the religious. In Australia, even the 64% who are notionally Christian poke gentle fun at the 7.5% of the population that goes to Church weekly, calling them "God Botherers," always pestering with their prayers, and they don't tend to make religion the defining part of their life. Religion doesn't enter politics, with atheist Prime Ministers like Bob Hawke being elected without any fuss, and, of course, women have the right to control their reproductive health, children should be given sex education and drug users should be given access to clean needles. In America, on the other hand, 26% of the population goes to Church weekly, 41% go regularly and 80% believe in miracles, actually thinking that their god directly intervenes in our life. This population is loud, abusive and has cowed or cajoled the rest of the religious population into providing them support even on extremist issues. Jerry Falwell could safely come out and say that 9/11 was caused by "pagans, abortionists, feminists, gays, lesbians, the American Civil Liberties Union and the People For the American Way," John Hagee can say after Hurricane Katrina "I believe that New Orleans had a level of sin that was offensive to God, and they were recipients of the judgement of God for that", Pat Robertson can accuse left-wing professors of all being "racists, murderers, sexual deviants and supporters of Al-Qaeda," and Fred Phelps can say "God hates fags," yet the only one punished by mainstream American Christians is Phelps, who committed the additional sin of being anti-American. The others, extremists by any consideration, are considered respected spokesmen for the religion.

The religious extremists in America have (successfully) stolen patriotism and tied it to Christianity. They have been rewriting history, claiming that America was founded as a Christian nation, despite many of the key Founders being non-

Christian (Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson and Tom Paine were explicitly not Christian, George Washington and James Madison were careful to never proclaim a position) and the first government unanimously endorsing the Treaty of Tripoli, stating "The United States is not in any sense founded upon the Christian religion." Instead, they cite their own success at rebranding America as the basis for further stealing America for the Christians — the addition of "In God We Trust" on the coins in 1864 and "One Nation Under God" into the Pledge of Allegiance in 1954. With the gain of power they are wielding it to cement their position and to crush dissenters. They have made criticism of religion such a crime in the public sphere that even gross abuse is not punished if it has a religious basis. This year we saw an 11-year-old girl slowly die of diabetic ketoacidosis over the span of 30 days, suffering symptoms like nausea, vomiting, excessive thirst, loss of appetite and weakness, because her parents refused to allow her to take simple insulin injections to save her life and instead relied only on prayer. The police didn't even take the other children away from these criminally negligent parents, simply because their excuse was religion.

Consider the issue of religious terrorism. From the headlines, it would be assumed that most cases of religious terrorism in America are performed by Muslims. Far from it, Christian terrorism is much more common. On the issue of

abortion alone, Christian terrorists groups such as the Army of God, Aryan Nations, Christian Patriots, the Ku Klux Klan and the Lambs of Christ perform multiple attacks every year. Only 8 people have been killed by Christian terrorism since 1993, but this is largely due to police intervention, as the number of attacks is astronomical — in the past 30 years there have been 17 attempted murders, 383 death threats, 153 incidents of assault or battery, 3 kidnapping, 655 bioterror threats, 41 bombings, 173 arsons, 91 attempted bombings or arsons, 619 bomb threats, 1630 incidents of trespassing, 1264 incidents of vandalism and 100 attacks with stink bombs. This is nearly one act of Christian terrorism against reproductive clinics or staff every two days for 30 years, and, ignoring threats, trespassing or vandalism, it is more than one case of Christian terrorism that could have resulted in death every month for the past 30 years, based on a single issue alone. Yet how often do we hear about Christian terrorism on the news? How often do moderate Christians condemn extremist Christians? The extremist group is so large it has cowed the moderates into keeping silent and wordlessly supporting their coup.

This religious extremism is also directed against atheists. The discrimination is rife. More than half (53%) of Americans would refuse to vote for an atheist as President, regardless of party or experience. There are no elected Governors, Federal Senators, or Supreme Court Judges who are not religious. Less

## THIS MODERN WORLD

### THE RISE AND (RELATIVE) FALL OF STUPIDITY IN AMERICA

EVENTUALLY, HOWEVER, PEOPLE BEGAN TO NOTICE THAT STUPIDITY WASN'T WORKING OUT VERY WELL. THE ECONOMY'S GONE TO HELL, THE CONSTITUTION'S BEEN SHREDDED, AND WE'RE APPARENTLY NEVER GETTING OUT OF IRAQ.

MAYBE LETTING STUPID PEOPLE RUN EVERYTHING WASN'T SUCH A GOOD IDEA.



AFTER 9/11, STUPIDITY BECAME PATRIOTIC. BAD THING HAPPEN! US GO KILL PEOPLE NOW!

US SHOW WORLD WHO AM BOSS!

IT AM ONLY THING TO DO!



AND NOW, AFTER SEVEN YEARS OF RELENTLESS STUPIDITY, NON-STUPID PEOPLE ARE FINALLY BEGINNING TO ASSERT THEIR NON-STUPIDITY--WITHIN REASONABLE LIMITS, OBVIOUSLY...

SHOULDN'T A PRESIDENT WHO AUTHORIZED TORTURE AND ILLEGAL WIRETAPPING BE SUBJECT TO--AH--

--MILD EXPRESSIONS OF DIS-APPROVAL? ABSOLUTELY!

OH--RIGHT! WE DON'T WANT TO GET CARRIED AWAY!



by TOM TOMORROW

FOR SEVERAL YEARS, ANYONE WHO QUESTIONED STUPIDITY WAS INSULTED AND MALIGNED (THOUGH NOT VERY CLEVERLY, OF COURSE)...

YOU DO REALIZE THAT IRAQ HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH 9/11--?

YOU AM AMERICA-HATING TRAITOR WHO AM PROBABLY HOMOSEXUAL!

WHY YOU HATE BRAVE TROOPS?!



BUT SOONER OR LATER, STUPIDITY WILL STAGE A COMEBACK.

NEW BAD THING HAPPEN! US GO KILL MORE PEOPLE NOW!

AND US FURTHER DISREGARD BASIC PRINCIPLES WHICH ALLEGEDLY DEFINE US AS A PEOPLE!

IT AM ONLY THING TO DO!



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than 1% of Congress is not religious. No President in living memory has been non-religious. The broad cultural perception of atheists is immorality and criminality, even though (despite judicial bias) atheists are heavily under-represented in prisons (only 0.2% of inmates). The Boy Scouts' official position is to not allow atheists in as Scouts or Scout Leaders and the American Heritage Girls are the same (Girl Scouts are starting to allow in some non-theists). Discrimination, exclusion, and persecution of children is bad enough, but the bigotry extends further to violence. The University of Florida student who recently abducted a communion wafer has received hundreds of pieces of hate mail and death threats. The student would be wise to take them seriously too. Consider the murder of Larry Hooper in 2005 by his extremist Christian roommate Arthur Shelton, explicitly because Hooper did not believe in God. At the trial his family came to the court room and screamed out against "the people from hell, evil and devils," "the one good thing of all of this is that another atheist is dead and the world is better off for it" and "the only good atheist is a dead atheist".

It is this violent and discriminatory climate that has, in my opinion, altered American atheism. In Australia, choosing to be an atheist is like choosing boxers over briefs — nobody cares except your partner, and it is your private decision unless you chose to proclaim it to the world. In America, that decision has real consequences and so, many are afraid to come out as atheists. In Western Europe 70% of the non-religious use the word atheist, while in America even the non-religious shy away from the label, with less than 3% using it. In Australia I don't even know if we have atheist groups, it is so completely unnecessary. In America, under barrage from religion constantly, irritated and offended by people saying "God Bless You" every time I do something nice and reacting with shock when I respond that I am an atheist, I sought out the company of atheist groups and was shocked at the wide array available. The first event I went to was with the Seattle Atheists/Agnostics Meetup Group, and the edge of persecution was noticeable right from the start — you needed to join before being told the location, and the reservations are all made anonymously with the host institution simply being told "if anybody asks for 'the meetup' send 'em our way." Discussion was not the casual and light chuckling about the odd quirks of the religious the way it is in Australia. Instead you can hear the hurt of people being forced to hide their position on religion at school or at work for fear of being treated differently, people exiled and disinherited from their family, people rejected by their partners, people forced to live a secret life. On the positive side, you can also hear the tone of defiance and even challenge in their voices, daring religion to strike them again.

The demographic tide away from religion is turning in America. The proportion of young adults today who are not religious is 25%. As long as Americans can block the religious extremists from legislating religion and stifling education, in twenty years it will be as effortless to be an atheist in America as it is today in Australia. But for the present, I have only the greatest admiration for those Americans who have the courage to withstand the overwhelming pressure and declare themselves atheists.

## PRO-CHOICE UPDATES Reproductive Rights and the Beijing Olympics by Marcy Bloom

Watching the Beijing Olympic Games has been an amazing experience for me. China — the world's most populous nation — has displayed itself spectacularly. The leaders of China want the world to see a city, a country, and a people that encompass the nation of the future. (<http://travel.msn.com//Guides/MSNTravelSlideShow.aspx?cp-document=414384&imageindex=18>)

Beijing has undergone breath-taking modernization in preparation for these 2008 Games and the entire country has put its best foot forward. In fact, during China's bid for the Olympics in 2001, Beijing Olympic official Liu Jingmin stated that the Olympic games are "an opportunity to foster democracy, improve human rights, and integrate China with the rest of the world." (<http://www.ir2008.org/02/issue.php>)

Did that happen? As the world carefully watches, Rh Reality Check readers have the opportunity to reflect on the reality of this many-faceted China of the Olympics as it pertains to women's health, reproductive rights, and human rights.

Overall, human rights activists warn that China is still very much a totalitarian state that has used free markets to fuel economic growth, lift hundreds of millions of its people out of poverty, and attempt to demonstrate that a strict one-party Communist system of rule can be as beneficial as a democratic system — all the while using these mechanisms to control every aspect of the behavior of its huge population and to consolidate its power. (<http://hrchina.org/public/contents/press?revision%5fid=68829&item%fid=68117>)

Even as China emerges from the socialist police state that was crafted under Chairman Mao's oppressive Cultural Revolution, the country is still full of rampant government corruption, secret trials, inhumane detentions, abuses of power, injustices, and the denial of human rights. (<http://www.rockymountainnews.com/news/2008/jun/26/out-of-maos-shadow/>)

As I watch in awe at the powerful athleticism of the young Chinese women of the Olympics, I wonder about their reproductive rights, reproductive health, and their status in Chinese society.

In January 2007, respected Chinese journalist Li Xing wrote: "I have been trying hard to help my readers understand that fact that discrimination against women and attitudes of male chauvinism are continuing to hurt Chinese women." She further declared that the general media have not been much help in getting rid of traditional stereotypes against women. For example, the January 2007 media coverage of a report from the State Population and Family Planning Commission indicated that for every 100 baby girls born in 2005, there were over 118 baby boys. In some provinces, the gap is even more severe — 130 baby boys for every 100 girls. This startling disparity is expected to widen, with serious concerns for the survival of girls, as well as social stability. However, according to Li, most of the Chinese media reports were concerned solely with the impact on men, highlighting the fact that by 2020, 30 million Chinese men will find it impossible to find a wife. Li questioned where the focus was for women's lives, health, rights, and well-being because of this polarizing gender imbalance. She emphasized: "As far as the root of the matter is

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"BY SIMPLE COMMON SENSE I DON'T BELIEVE IN GOD, IN NONE."  
CHARLIE CHAPLIN

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concerned, news media just stop short of condemning the traditional male chauvinism [and women's inequality] entrenched in Chinese culture, as if it is something we can do little about." ([http://www.womenofchina.cn/Issues/Rights\\_Protection/13587.jsp](http://www.womenofchina.cn/Issues/Rights_Protection/13587.jsp))

Where does the male chauvinism of Chinese culture referred to by Li come from? Many believe that the heart of the problem lies in the Confucian tradition of man's superiority over women, a belief that has survived decades of Communist rule. (<http://www.peopleandplanet.net/doc.php?id=2169>) According to the Confucian structure of society, women at every level were to occupy a position lower than men. (<http://www.womeninworldhistory.com/lesson3.html>) This "natural and proper" view of women has had an enormous influence on the attitudes towards girls and boys that have long been held in Chinese society. In a patriarchal society where boys carry on the family name, are considered better workers, and are seen as insurance against old age, parents — especially those in rural areas — prize boys and have a disincentive to bear and keep their female infants. ([http://www.weeklystandard.com/weblogs/TWSFP/2007/07/chinas\\_missing\\_girls.asp](http://www.weeklystandard.com/weblogs/TWSFP/2007/07/chinas_missing_girls.asp))

In 2004, the Chinese government stated that it recognized that the equality and advancement of women was closely tied to the entire society's development and growth. This was part of its annual report on The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), ([http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/cedaw36/cc/CHINA\\_advance%20unedited.pdf](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/cedaw36/cc/CHINA_advance%20unedited.pdf)) which the government had previously ratified. CEDAW makes it clear that coercion in family planning policies is prohibited: "Compulsory sterilization or [forced] abortion adversely affects women's physical and mental health, and infringes on the right of women to decide on the number and spacing of children." (<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/>)

However, the implementation of China's "one-child" policy, begun in the 1970s and which sets birth quotas for most couples to one child, has caused the dramatic gender imbalance noted earlier. While the Law on Population and Family Planning states that one child is mostly merely "encouraged," this appears blatantly false. Abusive or coercive enforcement measures, such as forced abortions, compulsory sterilizations, and the forced insertion of intra-uterine devices after abortions or births, have gone on for years and continue to be documented. (<http://hrchina.org/public/contents/29593>)

The one-child policy was devised to curb China's burgeoning population, now at more than 1.3 billion, but the attempts have created numerous human rights violations. Women who have refused to have abortions, sterilizations, and/or use contraception, as well as their family members, have been threatened, lost societal needs such as their jobs and homes, and have been imprisoned. It is local authorities who decide when and how to collect the so-called "social maintenance" penalties used to enforce the one-child policy, and these fines have often been abusive, arbitrary, and corrupt. Recently there have been protests and riots in certain parts of the country over family planning rules; farmers have demanded refunds of fines levied against the families who had more than one child. These arbitrary enforcing measures, such as hefty fines, forced abortions, confiscation of homes and property, as well as illegal land grabs and the imprisonment of "law breakers and instigators," have fueled deep tensions between

Chinese citizens and Communist party officials, challenging the party's efforts to maintain stability and keep its grip on power. (<http://www.alternet.org/thenews/newsdesk/PEK95542.htm>)

The cases of Mao Hengfeng and Chen Guangcheng are illustrative of the inhuman penalties handed out when family planning/one-child policies are challenged. Mao has been a human rights activist for 20 years and was sentenced to 2 1/2 years in prison after a series of events that began with the loss of her job after she refused, and later felt coerced, to have an abortion. (<http://www.ir2008.org/03/about.php>) Chen is a blind, self-taught lawyer and activist who is serving more than four years in prison after exposing abuses in the implementation of the one-child policy. Like Mao, he has been abused in prison and is in poor health. (<http://www.ir2008.org/02/about.php>)

China's growing gender ratio disparity is a result of the restrictive implementation of its family planning policies and the deep cultural prevalence for male children. Some officials have admitted that the one-child policy has "aggravated the imbalance," as the restrictions have led to gender selection abortions that have overwhelmingly caused the abortion of female fetuses. (<http://hrchina.org/public/contents/29593>)

According to a United Nations official: "The shortage of women will have enormous implications on China's social, economic, and development future... The skewed ratio of men to women will have an impact on the sex industry and human trafficking," as well as family, societal, and regional stability. (<http://www.pop.org/main.cfm?id=310&r1=15.00&r2=2.00&r3=0.50&r4=0.00&level=3&eid=1096>)

In 1994, the Mother and Child Health Act outlawed the practice of gender identification of the fetus and gender selection abortions; it was reaffirmed in the 2002 Population and Family Planning Law. However, many consider this law unenforceable and yet another human rights violation against women and couples.

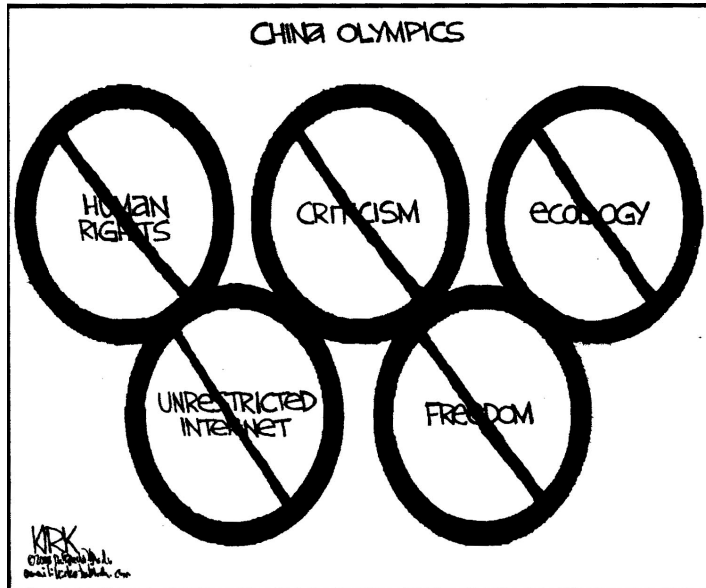
On the positive side, Chinese officials have begun the "Care for Girls" campaign in an effort to raise awareness and demonstrate the value of girls and women. This advocacy program emphasizing gender equality is particularly aimed at prospective parents in many underdeveloped areas to correct the severe gender disparity. This is key, as changing the cultural attitudes around women and girls, and educating the public on their equal value, as well as their human rights, is fundamental. Observers of Chinese society also encourage laws that grant girls and women equal rights, enhance the rights of daughters and their responsibilities toward their natal families, give land and inheritance rights for women, increase flexibility around the one-child policy, and implement and expand the social security system for the elderly so that parents do not have to become so dependent on sons for their care and survival. ([www.prb.org/presentation/ShortageofGirlsInChina.ppt](http://www.prb.org/presentation/ShortageofGirlsInChina.ppt))

In addition, economic support is now being offered to girl-only families in rural areas. A pilot program begun in 2004 in certain parts of the country will financially reward those farmers who have no children, have only one child, or have two female children. The Chinese government has finally realized that incentives for fewer children work better than punitive measures and is an important step toward helping farmers comply with the country's family planning policy. According to population expert Liu Junzhe, this policy is placing more value on human rights. Liu also believes that the policy may

contribute to the modification of traditional beliefs about male children and subsequently may aid in restoring a balance to the country's distorted gender ratio. ([http://www.kaisernetwork.org/daily\\_reports/print\\_report.cfm?DR\\_ID=25121&dr\\_cat=2](http://www.kaisernetwork.org/daily_reports/print_report.cfm?DR_ID=25121&dr_cat=2))

What emerges, then, is that there are both regressive and progressive aspects to the laws and human realities of China's family planning policies. Beijing was given the opportunity to host the Summer Olympics largely because the Chinese government promised to greatly improve its human rights record. In reality, Chinese authorities are reported to have greatly restricted the movements of numerous human rights defenders — both Chinese and foreign — and many have been detained or denied visas so they have not been able to travel to Beijing during the Olympics. (<http://hrichina.org/public/contents/press?revision%5fid=68829&item%5fid=68117>)

As I marvel at the Chinese women athletes who run, jump, spin, bicycle, swim, dive, tumble, somersault through the air, and demonstrate their amazing prowess, I wonder what the future of their rights will be. After all, the 29<sup>th</sup> Olympiad will end, but the power, worth, and value of Chinese women and girls never will.



"NEITHER IN MY PRIVATE LIFE NOR IN MY WRITINGS HAVE I EVER MADE A SECRET OF BEING AN OUT-AND-OUT UNBELIEVER."  
SIGMUND FREUD

### What Was Our Crime? By Rob Moitoza

The current presidential run is reminding many of us of an unfulfilled dream we had way back in the Sixties. I recently watched a PBS special on the Sixties. I watched and remembered as police in full riot gear clubbed us over and over again, even as we lay defenseless on the ground. They even shot a few of us down like dogs, and, as I watched, the question that kept popping into my mind was, "What was our crime?"

We were young. We were naive. We really believed that this was a government "of, by and for the people." We really thought that if enough of us Americans hit the streets and said,

"Stop this war" that we'd be listened to. We thought our government would respect the wishes of its children. Instead we were scorned, beaten, and even killed. People like Pat Buchanan called us lawless troublemakers. The truth was . . . they were the lawbreakers. They started illegal wars. They disrespected the American people and the constitution. They broke the law. All we were doing was expressing our constitutional right to petition our government for our grievances. They had invaded a country illegally and killed thousands of innocent people . . . including our own sons and daughters. We were called "selfish and self-indulgent." Were we selfish not to want to get killed in a war that was never declared? Were we selfish because we didn't want to see our brothers, sisters and friends coming back in body bags? And how could guys like Buchanan stand by so callously and watch his own sons and daughters being beaten and clubbed? It was unconscionable! Where was the love?

So, what was our crime? Was our crime that we did a few drugs thinking we might find some enlightenment or to deal with the pain of our friends being killed? Was our crime that we enjoyed our bodies and our sexuality? Was our crime that we enjoyed rock and roll music and liked to dance?

Maybe our crime was simply that we were human beings . . . and those on the right have never had much use for anything resembling humanism. Meanwhile, while we were being chastised for our out-front sexuality, their church leaders were sexually abusing little children in our own churches. While they chastised us for experimenting with drugs they drank bourbon and sevens, beat their wives and assembled the largest "for profit" drug industry in the world. As for the music, they found a way to corporatize that too. They still hate the music . . . but they love the money they make off of us.

So, what was our crime? The simple answer is that they were afraid we were somehow a threat to their wealth and their power. And that's where they just don't get it. We were never interested in their wealth or their power. All we wanted to do was keep ourselves and our brothers and sisters from being killed or turned into vegetables in a stupid and senseless war which we didn't even get to vote on. That was not a crime. We wanted to see more equity for the races and sexes. No crime there! And we wanted to take care of the planet which sustained us. These were very difficult tasks when guys like Pat Buchanan and his corporate friends didn't give a damn about how many of us were killed as long as they stayed rich. That was their only priority.

Meanwhile, while we had such a heavy task at hand, we wanted to have a little fun, play a little music and do a little partying. Was that so horrible? We weren't the ones defying the constitution, clubbing the citizens, napalming innocent civilians, or breaking national and international law. It was our constitutional right to protest. They had no right!

Maybe our crime was our innocence! Maybe we thought America was a more honorable place to live. Maybe we actually believed in the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. Maybe we were the true patriots.

We had the soul, but they had the guns. After that some of us gave up and went for the money, but many of us carried on the struggle in our own ways. Many went into the Peace Corps or environmental groups. Some started the whole recycling idea which has now become mainstream. Many went into social

work and tried to make things better for women and minorities. Some went into politics or the legal field and tried to work for justice within the system. Many became healers and therapists. This idea that everyone in the Sixties generation sold out is sheer right wing propaganda. I, myself, continued as a musician and worked for social justice my entire life. I am not ashamed of my generation.

Our generation committed no crime. The crimes were committed against us. The crimes were also committed against the constitution and the rest of the world. We were trying to hold those in power accountable. Sound familiar? We are still trying. This election is a culmination of the dream of the Sixties. A dream for a more equitable and peaceful world where every race, color, creed, and gender is respected. Where every child has a chance to grow up and “pursue happiness.”

And, in the meantime, if partying is the greatest crime I ever committed, I say, “Party on, dudes!”

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*“CHRISTIANITY IS SUCH A SILLY RELIGION.” GORE VIDAL*

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### **Tell It Like It Is By G. Richard Bozarth**

A truly good government is one that serves citizens; that is, a good government is one of the citizens, by the citizens, and for the citizens. A good government is one tamed by civil liberties, which are the constituents of freedom. Good governments are made when civil liberties have been translated into laws that require government to treat all citizens as much as humanly possible as though they are born equal, and to preserve, protect, and defend the rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness to ensure they are unalienable. A good government obeys these most essential laws, even when national security is threatened, because a good government always walks its talk.

A nation that wants to be a land of the free requires a good government. It also requires good citizens. A good citizen is one who is courageous enough to prefer freedom over even a guarantee of security and who practices civil liberties as a personal moral code. To do this takes courage and uncompromising commitment because it means having to suffer the burdens of tolerating behaviors that offend and of enduring intellectual battering in Freethought's entrepôt.

If good government and good citizens are the goals, a culture based on Freethought and Secular Humanism is the

means. In Freethought/Secular Humanist philosophy, civilized behavior for both government and citizens is that which establishes justice, ensures domestic tranquility, promotes the general welfare, and secures liberty as though liberty is a birthright for all humans. There's no other way to go if a nation wants to be a land of the free.

These are the essential tenets of the Freethought Movement, which has always been a blend of Freethought — uncompromising commitment to civil liberties — and Secular Humanism — everything else not directly connected to civil liberties. (Humanists will probably protest honoring only Secular Humanism, but I do it because I am convinced that Secular Humanism is a purer version of Humanist ideals than what exists as Humanism today.) In Europe and its colonies in Western culture's 18th century these truths became self-evident for many citizens. The first government to be dedicated to the Freethought Movement was created by European colonists who wanted to be governed by a federal government tamed by civil liberties.

The most important civil liberty is separation of government and religionism, which is the precondition essential to making the Freethought Movement the dominant cultural force. Civil liberties are always weakened, limited, abridged, circumvented, or eliminated in any nation where the government is entangled with religionism. Sectarian governments always have been, always are now, and always shall be the enemies of civil liberties. Without secured civil liberties, Freethought and Secular Humanism cannot change a nation into a land of the free.

How do I know this? Governments entangled with religionism have existed since the beginning of civilization and continue to exist today. These entangled governments always have been and always are theocracies (the religious leaders of the dominant sect rule directly) or theocratic (the religious leaders of the dominant sect or dominant religion rule indirectly). James Madison told the harsh truth about entangled governments over two centuries ago: “in no instance have they been seen the guardians of the liberties of the people.”

If religionism exerted beneficial moral influence, which is the currently triumphant myth, a theocracy would be a paradise of eunomy where all citizens have the liberty they need to pursue happiness throughout their lifespans. That has not happened because it cannot happen. There has never been a good theocracy in the past, there are no good theocracies existing today, and there never will be a good theocracy in the future. Theocracies are always a horrorshow because religionism exerts detrimental moral influence.

The Founders knew this, which is why they intended the federal government to be a secular government separated from religionism by a barrier of law. Yes, many of them believed only a federal barrier was needed, which allowed each state to be “free” to get entangled with religionism as much as its citizens wanted. Many Founders believed this was the way to ensure the U.S. would be a generic Christian nation without any danger of one Christian sect becoming a national theocracy. U.S. history has proved these Founders were wrong, often in brutal ways, and current events in the U.S. continue to prove how wrong they were. Jefferson knew the barrier had to be a wall instead of the fence that satisfied many Founders, and today the Freethought Movement knows it has to be a high and wide wall. The wrong intentions of the Founders must be



ignored today even if they were the intentions of the overwhelming majority. The Founders' theocratic intentions are wrong just like the intentions of those Founders who wanted slavery to always be legal in the U.S. are wrong.

If the U.S. is to finally become a land of the free, federal, state and local governments must be secular. There's no other way to go. Once that is accomplished, next is making the U.S. into a secular culture that has Freethought and Secular Humanism as its DNA. This will weaken the political power and cultural influence of religionism, which simultaneously reduces the efficacy of religionism's detrimental moral influence. People will be less and less attracted to wallowing in religionism's mire, and increasingly drawn to the healthy rationality of Atheism. Eventually religionism will exist only as relics in museums, old books in libraries, and components of analyses of extinct cultures.

A culture that practices Freethought/Secular Humanist philosophy will be secular and tolerant. That kind of secular culture lowers the value of organized religion. When citizens are free to pursue happiness in their own individual ways, religionism becomes more personal, more private, and more diverse. A tolerant secular culture encourages individuality, which dilutes the appeal of organized religion because it reduces conformity to authority. Since organized religion increases the efficacy of religionism's detrimental moral influence to extremely dangerous levels, anything that increases the disorganization of religion or weakens the conformity of the religionists who are still organized decreases the efficacy of religionism's detrimental moral influence.

We see this today in the U.S. even though the U.S. is still not as secular — or as free! — as it needs to be to make real the Founders' noblest intention, which is to have government preserve, protect, and defend the rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness to ensure they are unalienable. Organized religion still has enough members to be politically powerful and culturally influential, but none of organized religion's leaders can be happy with declining commitment to organized religion in the U.S. — or with the nonconformity thriving in their congregations. The Vatican must shake as though hit by an earthquake each time a new study reveals how few Roman Catholics in the U.S. practice what the pope and cardinals preach. How many of today's powerful Protestant shepherds are happy with the astonishingly rapid acceptance of homosexuality as both moral and Christian behavior by the sheep they are leading? Who in 1969 would have dared to predict that by 1999 there would be Protestant congregations led by homosexual clerics who are totally out about it, and some of these congregations would perform gay and lesbian wedding ceremonies even though the marriages are not accepted as legal by local, state, and federal governments?

It is important to understand this: those religionists who are tolerant, moral persons are not that way because of the kind of moral influence religionism exerts on them. The beneficial moral influence they are responding to is exerted by secularization. It is the beneficial moral influence of secularization that motivates them to practice good citizenship. Tolerant, moral religionists are that way because cultural secularization, which happened throughout the First World during Western culture's 20th century, eroded organized religion's detrimental cultural influence.

Cultural secularization also enables religionists to become influenced by the Freethought Movement. It's possible for liberal religionists to be Freethinkers, and some probably even believe they are Secular Humanists, assuming they can go blind when exposed to that part of Secular Humanist philosophy that clearly defines Secular Humanism as atheistic (a feat that's actually easy for religionists). The beneficial moral influence exerted by Freethought and Secular Humanism is at least two or three powers of ten greater than the beneficial moral influence exerted by basic secularization. One of the things that makes secularization's moral influence beneficial is how it increases a person's receptivity to reformation by the Freethought Movement, which enables her to experience the Freethought Movement's beneficial moral influence. It works even if those reformed people don't know what Freethought or Secular Humanism is or why they are the supreme glories of civilization.

A culture cannot become completely secularized if its government is not separated from religionism by a high and wide wall. What we have in the U.S. today cannot be called a wall. The barrier is more like a fence today, and not a very high one. The ultimate goal of U.S. theofascists is to reverse cultural secularization in the U.S. until a Christian nation has been established as the cultural norm. There are those who are honest about it. More effective are the theofascists who lie by telling us their goal is only the liberation of religionism so it can exert beneficial moral influence throughout our culture.

This Big Lie is effective because too many people (among them Freethinkers, Secular Humanists, and even Atheists!) believe religionism exerts beneficial moral influence. One reason why they believe this myth is because there are not enough of us in the Freethought Movement who are militant, therefore we cannot loudly and often enough tell these truths: religionism exerts detrimental moral influence and the efficacy of religionism's detrimental moral influence increases as the religiosity of a culture increases! There it is. Écrasez l'infâme!

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*"MY EARLIER VIEWS OF THE UNSOUNDNESS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHEME OF SALVATION AND THE HUMAN ORIGIN OF THE SCRIPTURES HAVE BECOME CLEARER AND STRONGER WITH ADVANCING YEARS AND I SEE NO REASON FOR THINKING I SHALL EVER CHANGE THEM."*  
ABRAHAM LINCOLN

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## When Winning Is Losing

By Paul Shelton

I suffer from a nagging angst. It is my suspicion that I'm not the only sufferer, though it is rarely acknowledged. It relates to those moments when we consider how we will cope with being proven, or at least being regarded as having been, wrong. When I read reports of lessening violence in Iraq as the Maliki government makes small strides toward building the coalitions it needs to govern and toward fashioning a more effective military and police force, I wonder how probable it is that George Bush will emerge from this action "smelling like a rose." Imagine this scenario: In the late fall of 2008, change in the Middle East is fast and comes entirely unexpected. Other Sunni Arab states accept the Iraqi Shiite dominated government and diplomatic relations bring new political respect for a strengthening Iraqi regime. The Iraqis have found a new national resolution coming from all warring sects to work together, and the army and police forces begin holding their own around the country battling Shiite and Sunni extremist militias and Al Queda in Iraq. Mr. Maliki says it's time for the US to go. We leave in the spring and summer of 2009 to begrudging world acclaim for our efforts in bringing about a free and largely democratic Iraq. A pure Islamic theocracy has, from all present appearances, been avoided.

Furthering this hypothetical scenario, George Bush is regaled as the leader who stood up against the taunts and abuse heaped on him by people of lesser courage and vision (like us). His steadfast resolve has born great fruit as the Middle East now has a stable, non-theocratic nation, poised to lead its neighbors by example toward a renaissance of open government. A new sentiment sweeps Iraq as America is seen as the selfless power with the courage and compassion to give them a renewed chance at peace, justice, and prosperity. America sacrificed 4500 of its own and a trillion dollars of its national wealth to rid this ancient land of despotism and bring it hope and opportunity. No other land but America, and no other leader than George Bush, could have so magnanimously vanquished the evil that had formerly plagued this land and launched a Middle Eastern Renaissance. (Show Iraqi women crying with gratitude.)

What a glorious outcome! We should all wish for it, shouldn't we? And therein lies our greatest challenge. How does one fight so hard against something one finds so abhorrent, and at the same time wish for its success? We know that, should success follow, few will understand the subtlety of our argument when we say that George Bush got lucky. We will be forever regarded as just plain wrong, spineless, and narrow of vision.

I also know we can look at luck both ways. Maybe George Bush got unlucky and we shouldn't condemn him for anything more than the lawlessness of the invasion itself. As events have turned out, success in Iraq has been lost so far only because of two factors. First, Don Rumsfeld's flawed sense of how few troops we needed and the inept planning for occupation, and second, by the deadly logic of Moslem leaders. The ruthlessness of invading another nation aside, the success of the mission in the eyes of the world and in American opinion has been challenged only by these two unfortunate events. Our military, after Rumsfeld's departure, has, for all we can tell, done a much better job of making the best of a bad situation.

From the Moslem perspective, the saving grace to this point has been the Sunni about-face with Al Queda. If the Moslems had not reacted as they did, this war, Rumsfeld or not, would have been over many years ago. And if the Moslems miraculously put their guns away today, this war would be effectively over tomorrow.

Geopolitical strategy is certainly not exercised in a world of certainty. Often history has a way of taking its own path in spite of our controlling efforts. I will remain satisfied that my thinking about our Iraq involvement was an accurate probabilistic and moral appraisal. The chances of a successful outcome, worth the lives and money it may take, were slim. So much so, that words like senseless and moronic fit easily in any discussion on the subject. But once the deed was entered into, the only way we could "prove" we were right was for the whole enterprise to collapse. We found ourselves in the difficult position of knowing that while our position may be absolutely correct, there would be no way to prove it or defend it in the face of mission success, as defined by those who have the most media influence. In complex systems, getting the right outcome from the wrong actions, or getting lucky when you've done a bonehead thing, seem to disguise all errors — like the runner who makes an insane dash for the plate against all convention and the coach's signs, and slides in safely to win the game. The coach may bench him, but the fans love him.

This mentality, that failure was essential, has been one hallmark of all anti-war efforts I have followed. MoveOn.org, as much as I appreciate the good they have done, has focused on the negative as though wanting to expose all possible evidence that collapse was the inevitable conclusion. Nothing good that happens is ever hopeful. It's a mirage; it's been "Foxed" for mass deception. Even what may be regarded as small successes are often twisted around and either considered irrelevant or as actually showing further failure. With due respect for commentators from the same pod as I, I believe the Summer 2008 edition of our erstwhile journal also gave us a strong hint of this mindset. These wars must fail. Measured discussions on how to prosecute the war, once we were in it, were harder to find in our movement. So I suspect my angst was shared, at least subconsciously, by many of our mind.

A second source of angst, which is a direct extension of the first, is in knowing that should this war be "successfully" concluded, every idea with George Bush's stamp on it, from snuffing out the right to an abortion, to providing public funding for religion, to the selective scuttling of habeas corpus, to "prudent" torture, to snooping without warrants — all will have added cachet as the judgment of a wise and foresightful man. What majority, of people today or of historians a century hence, will rate GW Bush as the worst president ever to foul the office, if all they care to see is the downstream political outcome, which may be regarded popularly as a success.

So for my part, I want Mr. Bush to fail utterly, not so much in recompense for the terrible things I believe he has done, but to give history an object lesson steering us away from a repeat in some distant future — and providing national political impetus to return our constitution to its pre-Bush form. But this thought must share space with a rational understanding that it is in America's best interest if his policies in Iraq and Afghanistan, however misguided, in the outset or now, succeed. Just in case, I am getting ready to start saying he got lucky as the world

changed, it wasn't worth the lives, the expense, and the international estrangement — and it, and much more, could have been done for a tiny fraction of the bill we've run up with no lives lost. What he did is still immensely arrogant and immoral. But only intellectuals like you and me will listen.

We can pass this off as absurd if we choose. There is no way in hell that anything good can come from George Bush's colossal blunders. But I have read too much history to believe it isn't possible that a fool and a liar can't reap the benefits of great leaps of good fortune. That lone white marble in a bag full of black ones, may find its way to the top after shaking — and fate may pluck it out and hold it high.

Whatever the future holds, I believe my premise still stands; we cannot in good conscience hope for ultimate failure in Iraq and Afghanistan, however compelling it is to look for every possible chink that points to or suggests failure. By rights, we should be hoping that we have to speak up clearly one day, and declare: Well, my friends, he did it against all odds. It was an arrogant, moronic, and immoral idea, but somehow it worked.

We have to give Bush credit on one score; he certainly stuck to his guns in the face of strident opposition. He is a man of conviction. Just like bin Laden — a man with an unshakable resolve. That is, if he succeeds; if he fails, he is only a stubborn, ignorant, ideologue.

Imagine how Bush's people will try to twist history if Obama is elected and finds a successful way out of Iraq. Maybe even bin Laden is captured. Who will they insist should get the credit? Of course, the man who had the vision to start this war and see it through, only to hand over the reigns as success was about to tumble into Obama's lap.

It would be all too simple if we were dealing with a sports franchise. It is so easy to say, "That was a dumb move trading for those has-beens. Here comes another year in the cellar. But I hope I'm wrong." The Russians have it a lot tougher when they consider Stalin. Their psychological escape is to say, "So Stalin murdered millions and ruined countless lives", but then never dare to answer the question, "Was that good or bad?"

I am mindful, of course, that decades will pass before a consensus verdict will emerge on the geopolitical success or failure of this action. Its standing as an immoral act will dim quickly with time. It's the law of unintended and unforeseen consequences that will leave Bush's legacy open for a period eclipsing the time of many of us on this globe. I, for one, however, discern trends under Bush's presidency that are very troubling, and which, for me, are more ominous in their significance for our nation over time than the outcome of the Iraq war is. The war, it seems, may be only a historical blip, but the violations of our constitution under Bush, and the acquiescence of the broader electorate to these violations, have set in place serious long-term cancers, which, if not addressed, could lead us far away from the ideals we believe define the best America.

Let us hope we can find a way to bring justice to George Bush and his pals without having to witness the total failure of Bush's unfortunate military adventures. Let us hope, if Obama is elected, we can draw a line between Bush's failures and Obama's successes, so the two are never confused. To truly succeed in the Middle East, we will have to encourage changes and realize successes that go well beyond ending this war.

There is much left to be done to bring relief to the Middle East. But most important now, as it is long overdue, the world must hurry forward, shifting its focus and attention to embrace the most noble and essential vision of all — that of a biologically sustainable and peaceful planet for thousands of years into the future.



"IN THE EXPERIENCES OF A YEAR OF THE PRESIDENCY, THERE HAS COME TO ME NO OTHER SUCH UNWELCOME IMPRESSION AS THE MANIFEST RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE WHICH EXISTS AMONG MANY OF OUR CITIZENS. I HOLD IT TO BE A MENACE TO THE VERY LIBERTIES WE BOOST AND CHERISH." WARREN G. HARDING

## FOND FAREWELLS

### Harry F. App

Harry App passed away July 26, 2008 at home in LaConner, Washington. He was surrounded by lots of love from family and friends. He was born November 26, 1923 in Gold Bar to Barbara and George Z. App. At age two following the death of his father, the family moved to Spokane.

Following graduation from Gonzaga Prep in 1942, he enlisted in the U.S. Army during WWII and served in the European Theater of Operations for three years. He was in North Africa and the Italian campaign after assignment to Company C. 101st military police and served with the Fifth Army from southern Italy to Germany.

Returning home and eligible for the GI Bill, Harry went to Gonzaga University and received a B.S. degree and attended graduate school at Gonzaga. Harry married Mary L. Hitchcock in 1948. He and Mary started their family in Spokane with moves to Kennewick and Hillsboro, Oregon, where Harry taught high school science. The family moved back to Spokane where he worked for Spokane City Health department as a Health and Environmental Specialist.

Harry was preceded in death by brothers George and Frank and loving daughter Ann. Harry is survived by his wife, Mary App, sons Bill App, Mark App and his wife Linda, George App, and Rich App and daughters Mary St. Onge, Jan App, and Alice App and her husband Scott Wichman,



grandchildren Shelli and Cear St. Onge, and Caroline App.

In 1960, the family of ten made an adventurous move to Napa, California. Harry worked for the Napa County Health Department as an environmental inspector in the beautiful Napa valley wine country. The following year Harry was accepted to graduate school at UC Berkeley School of Public Health. After getting his Masters of Public Health (MPH) degree, the family moved to Olympia where he worked for the Washington State Department of Health as Director of Health Education until he retired in 1982.

He and Mary moved to LaConner, where they made many new friends. Harry was an avid reader, especially of history and philosophy, and always had a keen interest in politics and was an active Democrat. In 1991 Harry started the Humanists of North Puget Sound (HNPS), a chapter of the American Humanist Association (AHA). Harry and Mary took many motorhome trips to Baja, Mexico and other areas of Mexico and the U.S. and Canada. He was a dedicated fly fisherman, especially of the streams and rivers of Montana.

Harry enjoyed life and learning and will be greatly missed and remembered by his family and those who knew him. The family wishes to express a heartfelt thank you to Skagit Hospice for their kindness and care. At Harry's request, no services will be held. Memorials may be sent to HNPS Building Fund, 3317 108th St. SE, Everett, WA. 98208 or to a charity of your choice.

Ron Renard talked to Mary App who reported that Harry was a Humanist till the end. According to Mary, when Hospice asked if Harry wanted the a Chaplin to come by and see him he said "Not just no, but Hell no!"



"RELIGION [IS THE DIRTIEST WORD IN THE LANGUAGE] BECAUSE IT'S ONE OF THE WORST THINGS THAT EVER HAPPENED TO THE HUMAN HEART AND THE HUMAN MIND . . . TO SURRENDER ALL THE REASON AND POTENTIAL OF THE HUMAN MIND TO A MAN IN THE SKY WHO EXISTS JUST TO PUNISH YOU SEEMS VERY PRIMITIVE TO ME."

GEORGE CARLIN

## A GOOD BOOK

### *Dead Certain: The Presidency of George W. Bush*

by Robert Draper

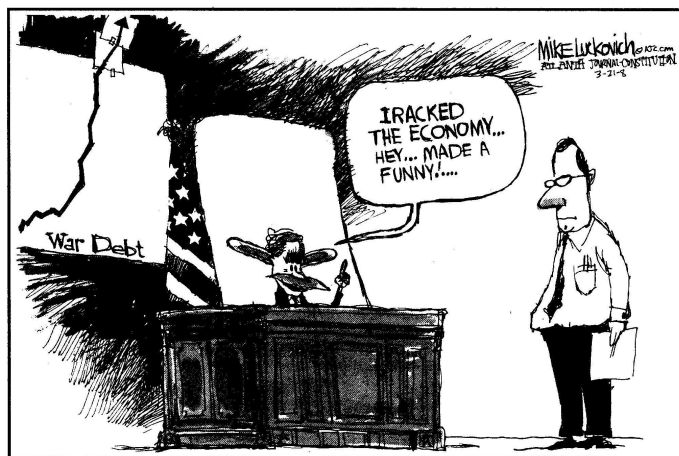
Reviewed by Richard Bozarth

The mission of *Dead Certain* is to illuminate W. Bush's character to show how his personality and moral, philosophical, and religious beliefs influence the things he has done since being made President by five corrupt U.S. Supreme Court Justices. The man revealed by this book is not one many people will be able to admire. After reading it, it is a lot easier to understand how W. Bush turned his presidency into a massive disaster.

One surprise is this: *Dead Certain* convincingly demonstrates that W. Bush does read serious books. What is not demonstrated is what W. Bush gets out of his reading. He obviously does not acquire intellectual excellence. When he isn't reading his speech writers' words, he sounds stupid. His stumbling, bumbling incompetence and often childish petulance make him look stupid. His resistance to admitting mistakes is stupid.

The one talent that might mystify a lot of people is that he inspires intense loyalty in a certain kind of person. What do they see in him? And what does he see in them? A lot of these loyalists joined him in the White House and in the various departments of the federal administration. They have all proven that they are not the best or the brightest. Like the man they adore, they have demonstrated they are incompetent. Many of them share W. Bush's moral degradation by enthusiastically supporting his claim that the President as Commander in Chief has the power to authorize using torture when the U.S. is fighting a war. Another shared moral degradation is an enthusiasm to use the War on Terrorism as a justification to weaken, limit, abridge, circumvent, or eliminate many of the freedoms they hypocritically claim they are preserving, protecting, and defending.

*Dead Certain* begins with the 2000 presidential primary campaign and shows how it exposed many of the character flaws that have made W. Bush's presidency a disaster for the U.S. It goes on to analyze several of W. Bush's domestic disasters: Katrina, the attempt to privatize Social Security, the doomed crusade to make Harriet Miers a USSC Justice, the equally doomed deal to turn over the management of major U.S. ports to Dubai Ports World (to reward the United Arab Emirates for its support in the War on Terrorism), the Valerie



Plame Scandal, and the humiliating Election 2006 defeat. Each disaster is used excellently to expose W. Bush's character flaws and incompetence.

The Iraq War, the Afghanistan War, and the generic War on Terrorism will define W. Bush's presidency the same way the Vietnam War defines LBJ's presidency. *Dead Certain* provides excellent analysis of the successful sales campaign to get a majority of U.S. citizens to support the unnecessary Iraq War. It also adds more evidence to the case for the WMD and al-Qaeda links scams being lies about the quality of the evidence supporting those accusations instead of lies about the existence of WMD and links. Most of the Bush 2Gang, especially W. Bush, were believers in both. They were dead certain Iraq had WMD and links to al-Qaeda and, if the evidence was too weak to prove it, then that was the fault of the evidence and not the belief. Were there members of the administration who were telling lies about the WMD and links instead of lies about the quality of the evidence? Almost certainly. It is nearly impossible (well, for me) to believe Undersecretary of Defense Douglas J. Feith and Veep Cheney were gullible believers.

Interestingly, W. Bush had a crisis of faith about Saddam's WMD. After months of aggressively, confidently telling U.S. citizens that Saddam had WMD, the persistent absence of evidence that would convince a skeptic was beginning to shake his faith. At a meeting "in the Oval Office with Rice, Card, Tenet, and McLaughlin.....he admitted to those in the room that the evidence of Saddam's weapons of mass destruction was less than persuasive." CIA Director George Tenet came to the rescue. "'It's a slam dunk,' Tenet assured the president." He restored W. Bush's faith.

The restoration explains this amazing revelation: "Though it was not the sort of thing one could say publicly anymore, the president still believed that Saddam had possessed weapons of mass destruction. He repeated this conviction to [Chief of Staff] Andy Card all the way up until Card's departure in April 2006, almost exactly three years after the Coalition had begun its fruitless search for WMDs." When W. Bush believes, he believes like a religionist.

*Dead Certain* used the incredibly incompetent efforts to restore reliable electricity to Iraq as the icon of W. Bush's total failure in Iraq. The subject has been covered very well by other books, yet *Dead Certain* manages to avoid the curse of appearing to be a tedious rehash of what has been provided by previous books. Of course, for a reader who begins reading about the Iraq War with this book, that is not a problem.

Electricity is a good icon because it is the second most desired essential service the Iraqis want (the first is security) and so much of the trouble the U.S. has had in Iraq could have been avoided simply by providing Iraqis with reliable electricity, especially during the intensely hot summers that country has. Lack of electricity was infuriating to the Iraqis. How could the nation that put a man on the moon, robots on Mars, and invented the Internet fail to accomplish something that should have been so much easier: electricity 24/7/365?

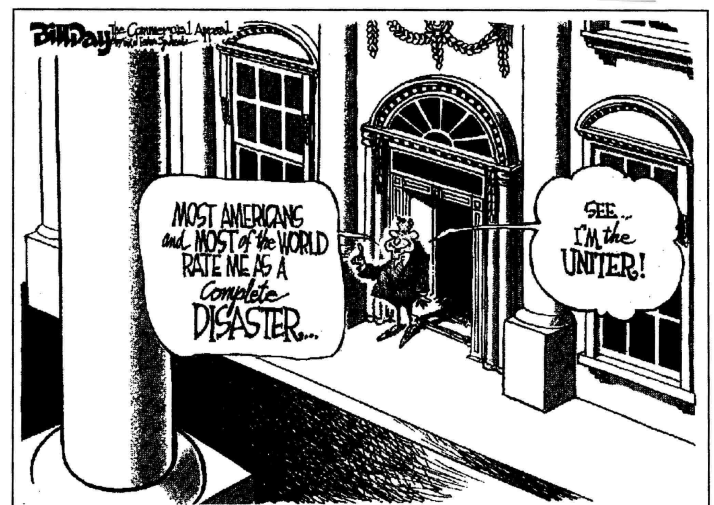
Basically, the answer is incompetence. W. Bush might possibly end his presidency as the most incompetent U.S. President. When W. Bush and his gang created the Coalition Provisional Authority, their incompetence was massively inflicted on Iraq. Add to that the SOP corruption in Iraq and

failure became inevitable. When W. Bush leaves the White House, Iraq will still be suffering from unreliable electricity service, and that suffering will be a lasting icon of what kind of President W. Bush had been.

Now the War President can see at the end of his presidency what his incompetence has achieved: Afghanistan, which for a few years had looked like a victory, becoming a deeper and more violent quagmire because the military resources that might have prevented the renaissance of the Taliban and al-Qaeda in Afghanistan were bogged down in the quagmire of Iraq; Iraq, after the humiliation of changing to tactics that for years he and his gang had insisted were not necessary, proving daily that it is very unlikely it can be surged from defeat to victory; the War on Terrorism, the winning of which he had promised would be "now the focus of my administration", remaining a long, dark tunnel without one photon of light detectable to nurture a belief in the tunnel having an end.

*Dead Certain's* major failures are dodging three major features of W. Bush's presidency that demonstrate thoroughly what kind of man he is. 1: Authorizing torture shows his moral degradation. He made that worse by not having the integrity to take responsibility for it. Instead, he did his best to lay all the blame on the enlisted troops who were required to do the dirty deeds he had authorized. 2: Using the War on Terrorism to "defend" freedom by weakening, limiting, abridging, circumventing, or eliminating every civil liberty he could shows how his character has not been shaped even a little by the ideals that, if practiced, would make the United States a land of the free, and how he lied when he swore to preserve, protect, and defend the U.S. Constitution. 3: His attempt to expand presidential powers by exploiting the wars he had started to claim these powers belong to a U.S. President as Commander in Chief when the U.S. is at war shows that he is unfit to be the leader of a nation like the United States (in this chapter would have been analyzed a similar kind of power grab he allowed Cheney to make for the office of Vice President). The failures mean the book does not quite fully accomplish its mission.

However, I recommend *Dead Certain* highly. Any person wanting to understand how the U.S. ended up trapped in the quagmires of Afghanistan and Iraq will be rewarded by this book. That it could have been a better book does not mean it is a bad book.





*"THE OLD TESTAMENT IS RESPONSIBLE FOR MORE ATHEISM, AGNOSTICISM, DISBELIEF -- CALL IT WHAT YOU WILL -- THAN ANY BOOK EVERY WRITTEN." A. A. MILNE*

## ANOTHER GOOD BOOK

*Atheist Universe*  
by David Mills

Reviewed by Jim Rybock

*"TO ALL FREETHINKERS, PAST AND PRESENT, WHOSE INDEPENDENCE OF MIND ISOLATES THEM FROM THE SYMPATHY AND UNDERSTANDING OF THEIR COMMUNITY, BUT WHOSE COURAGEOUS AND UNWAVERING DEVOTION TO THE SCIENTIFIC METHOD HAS LIBERATED THEIR COMMUNITY FROM THE DARK AGES." DAVID MILLS, DEDICATION OF ATHEIST UNIVERSE*

As evident from the subtitle of this book — "The Thinking Person's Answer to Christian Fundamentalism" — its purpose is to offer rebuttals to the claims of fundamentalist religion. On that basis, I'm surprised that I liked the book at all. In fact, I found it easy to read and I learned some new and important things about how the world works. I probably wouldn't have purchased it in the first place except for the excellent reviews. Another point in its favor is that author David Mills has written other books on science and religion and has been associated with the Albert Ellis Institute, which I greatly admire.

The reason I was reluctant initially is that I tend to shy away from treatises that present secular arguments against the claims of Fundamentalist Christianity. I have questioned the value in debating the creationists because it feels to me that by doing so we lower ourselves to their level — which I define as a total lack of respect for objective, rational analysis and a willingness to compromise the truth for their personal beliefs. By even getting on the same stage, we tend to give their arguments credence when they deserve only scorn and ridicule. Such debates seem comparable in some ways to the argument that creationism should be presented along with evolution in the

science classroom — so as to "fairly" balance all points of view. And it feels comparable in some ways to what is so common and maddening about political debates and so-called political journalism today — that is, to be fair, we must present both sides of every issue, even when one side is devoid of merit. The creationists clearly want their religious views to be accepted by the mainstream, and they see the debate format as a means to that end.

Also, I never seem to get the opportunity to directly confront fundamentalists about their beliefs, so I have little need for these counter arguments. No proselytizers ever come knocking at my door. I don't seem to attract any argumentative types when manning the HOW booth at Seattle's streetfairs. And, frankly, I avoid overtly religious people like the plague. I would prefer to spend my time elsewhere — to be honest, anywhere.

Maybe my problem is a certain degree of personal laziness, rationalized in terms of priority setting at a time when my timeframe on this earth is getting shorter and shorter every day. But arguing with the fundamentalists seems tantamount to preparing concise, logical arguments about why the tooth faerie or the boogie man in the basement does not really exist. I simply don't have time for that crap.

Then there's the part of all this that just makes me mad. I mean, who the hell do these people think they are holding back human society by promoting ideas that come from the dark ages? Their stupidity astounds and angers me.

And yet, in spite of all this, another part of me says this issue is very important and our arguments and rebuttals need to be understood by everyone on the secular side if we are to protect ourselves or maintain some semblance of sanity in this religiously insane world. I respect people like HOW member Jim Corbett who are willing to do the dirty work by throwing themselves on the altar of debate, so to speak.

In light of that background, I was expecting a dry and boring read. But what a pleasure in Chapter 1 ("Interview with an Atheist") to encounter a clear, simple rebuttal of all the major fundamentalist arguments. Presented in Q&A format, Mills responds to questions from a hypothetical interviewer whose approach to the topic mirrors society — or at least American culture — at large. The questions range from "What's the difference between an atheist and an agnostic?" and "In looking at all the wonders of the universe, how can you possibly say there's no God?" to "Can you prove God doesn't exist?" and "If you don't believe in God or life-after-death, then what is the meaning of life?" and "Does it make you uncomfortable that communist nations espouse atheism, whereas capitalist, freedom-loving nations encourage religious belief?" Mills answers each head-on, using clear logic and drawing on data and facts where needed to support his case.

What an excellent refresher. I can't say I encountered a "Wow" moment in these





arguments, but overall that chapter gave me a very good feeling about my philosophical convictions and the power of the evidence, science, and logic behind it all. I particularly liked the sections addressing: Jesus as a historical figure (Mills calls his so-called teachings “disgusting” rather than admirable and even presents sound evidence for the claim that Jesus never even existed); the 1500-year history of torture by the Christian Church (“Torture was the rule, not the exception.”); Mill’s own conversion from a proselytizing born-again Christian in high school to someone who discovered that science offered powerful evidence against Christian teachings and the Bible; and how the change from the Julian to the Gregorian calendar caused the pagan celebration of the winter solstice to be converted (stolen and perverted, actually) to a celebration of the birth of Jesus.

Chapter 2 (“Origin of the Universe: Natural or Supernatural”) followed with a solid treatise on the physical sciences and cosmology. I had just had a brief discussion with Jim Corbett about the concept of the “beginning of time” represented by the Big Bang theory, and this chapter expanded on and clarified some of those issues. It included some basic information on the formation of the solar system and how the Earth and other planets coalesced around the sun. I enjoyed both the way the creationist arguments were rebutted and the basic, down-to-earth (pun intended) way the principles of geology and physics were explained. I may have — should have — learned most of this in my many years in the classroom, but, if so, some concepts had been forgotten through lack of use. Again, it felt good to get a solid science refresher on how we arrived at where we are and what we know today.

Subsequent chapters rebutted the so-called “miracles” of planetary clockwork and life on earth with all its complexities (the human eye, for example). Mills rebuts the ridiculous claim that all life was first formed in a single “Creation Week” and that the lack of a complete fossil record proves the creationist view. He clearly demonstrates the Christian right’s astounding ignorance of science and the scientific method. The latter chapters address intelligent design (which Mills described as “Christianity’s newest cult”) in some detail. Also included were chapters on the compatibility of science and religion (they are not), the myth of hell, and the Christian anti-porn crusaders.

OK, I admit that I didn’t read the last few chapters with the dedication and interest I had given the earlier ones. Reflecting again on my personal situation, I realized I had other, better things to do with my time. But they are undoubtedly useful to anyone who wants to get further into those topics so I recommend them to anyone with the patience.

Finally, the book includes abundant quotes from the great scientists, philosophers and freethinkers of all ages. Note that all the quotes in this issue of the *SHP* — except for the quote by the late and great George Carlin and the Lincoln quote following the cover story — were taken from Mill’s book.

So for a good read and an excellent reference tool — should the Christian proselytizers ever come knocking at your door — read this book.

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“I BELIEVE THAT RELIGION, GENERALLY SPEAKING, HAS BEEN A CURSE TO MANKIND.” H.L. MENCKEN

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## YET ANOTHER GOOD BOOK

### *Ba’th Soldier: An Analysis Of The Saddam-Era Iraqi Warfighter* by Matthew M. Yalch Reviewed by Richard Bozarth

*Ba’th Soldier* is a good book that is not easily acquired. It was published in 2006 by Shangri-La Publications, which is located in Warren Center, PA, and only an e-mail address is given (gosline@hotmail.com). A friend passed it on to me because he knew I would like to read it. I’m glad he did. It is a valuable contribution to the growing literature on W. Bush’s unnecessary, extremely expensive war.

*Ba’th Soldier* is Yalch’s graduate thesis, and its target audience is the professors who would be determining if it is good enough to earn him the degree he was seeking. The writing is below average for its genre. However, the goodness of a book is not exclusively based on how well it is written. The information in this book is valuable and the analysis of the information is convincing. It is worthy to be on the same bookshelf with the other books about the Iraq War I’ve read.

Yalch enlisted in the Army after graduating from Cornell University in May 2002. He wasn’t driven by a need to get some payback for 9/11 or to participate in his generation’s war (then only Afghanistan). He was attracted to intelligence work. The Iraq War started while he was a student at the U.S. Army Intelligence School and Center in Fort Huachuca, AZ, and that quickly replaced Afghanistan as the war he would most likely participate in. To prepare for that and also to make himself better able to do an intelligence job in Iraq, he began studying the culture and history of the nation. Instead of being sent to Iraq after graduation, he was assigned to the XVIII Airborne Corps and put in G2 (intelligence). Believing a tour of duty in Iraq was inevitable, he kept on studying it. Meanwhile, he thought it would be advantageous to get more university education if the Army would pay for it. He was given a scholarship to return to Cornell for an advanced degree. When it came time to produce a thesis, all that voluntary studying was there to serve that purpose.

Here are the reasons why this is a good book:

- Yalch gives a good summary of the history of Iraq from the first civilization thousands of years ago, through the split of Islam into Sunnis and Shi’as, the British colonial activities that laid the foundation of the U.S.’s current troubles, the triumph of the Ba’th Party, Hussein’s infamous regime, and ending with the U.S. involvement in Iraq from its pro-Hussein days to the quagmire of the Iraq War.
- Yalch explains the many reasons why the Iraqis did not show W. Bush and the invasion troops much love after the regime change. For examples, there is the general hatred because the U.S. is justly perceived as unfairly pro-Israel and hypocritically pro-Muslim dictators if they serve U.S. interests, and there are specific hatreds caused by the hideous deprivations and deaths (hundreds of thousands of them children) caused by the aggressive economic sanctions the U.S. mercilessly demanded in the 1990s and by the Highway of Death massacre inflicted on Iraq’s retreating army in the Gulf War.
- Yalch reminds the reader that the WMD scam used to justify the Iraq War was more U.S. hypocrisy guaranteed to make

it less likely the Iraqis would trust the U.S. enough to allow their hearts and minds to be won during the occupation. The chemical WMD Hussein once had and used came from the U.S. and other Western countries during the years when they were pro-Hussein.

- Yalch does not let the reader forget that Hussein actually had legitimate justifications for conquering Kuwait. The little kingdom had been created by the British after WW1 out of territory that had been part of the Basra province during the Ottoman Empire. It is land stolen from Iraq. Why should Iraq tolerate the theft forever? Its claim to Kuwait was and is as strong as China's claim to Hong Kong and Taiwan, and stronger than China's claim to Tibet. Its claim to Kuwait was and is many times stronger than the U.S. claim to Native American lands. Kuwait asked for conflict with Iraq by selling more oil than its OPEC quota after OPEC had agreed on quotas that would help Iraq's economic recovery from its foolish war with Iran. Hussein declared it an act of economic war and promised military war if Kuwait didn't stop. Kuwait didn't stop and Iraq reclaimed its stolen territory.
- Yalch discusses one of the major reasons why it is very unlikely the U.S. will accomplish its new mission in Iraq, the creation of a stable, pro-U.S., anti-Iran, anti-al-Qaeda, secular democratic government. Hussein's Iraq was the enemy of Islamic fundamentalists like al-Qaeda, the Islamic theofascists in Iran, the Wahabbi cult in Saudi Arabia, the Taliban in Afghanistan, the theofascist tribes currently providing a home for al-Qaeda in Pakistan and supporting the Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan, and the theofascists like Muqtada al-Sadr and his Mahdi Army in Iraq. It was the U.S. invasion and occupation that brought al-Qaeda into Iraq and unleashed Iraq's theofascists.
- Yalch gives the reader understanding of why Iraq's culture and its many religious and ethnic animosities make it an inappropriate place for conversion to a U.S.-style democratic government.
- Yalch uses the example of Iraqi women as part of his analysis of the doom W. Bush has brought to Iraq, which is a tragedy other Iraq War writers I've read tend to ignore or drive by with merely a glance at it. The U.S. did not liberate Iraqi women. Hussein had done that. After the regime change liberated Iraq's Islamic fundamentalists, women suffered loss of liberty. Using physical and psychological terrorism, Iraq's theofascists have been steadily forcing Iraqi women into the prison of shâri'a. It should disgust every U.S. citizen who authentically loves freedom (as compared to W. Bush and his gang, who only ooze the word out of their mouths every chance they get as part of their PR campaigns for the Iraq War in particular and for the historical greatness of W. Bush in general) that our nation is the cause of the degradation of Iraqi women. How many of their hearts and minds have we won? Every U.S. citizen should be profoundly ashamed of this fact: Iraqi women will look back on the years of Hussein's regime for who knows how many decades after 2003 and know those were the good old days.

Any person wanting to understand the Iraq War to learn why it has been a terrible and terribly expensive failure should

read *Ba'th Soldier*. It is one of a steadily increasing number of books on the war that will not make W. Bush and his gang happy. It might not be convenient to acquire, but the effort to get it will be amply rewarded.

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*"THE STUDY OF THEOLOGY, AS IT STANDS IN CHRISTIAN CHURCHES, IS THE STUDY OF NOTHING; IT IS FOUNDED ON NOTHING; IT RESTS ON NOTHING; IT PROCEEDS BY NO AUTHORITIES; IT HAS NO DATA; IT CAN DEMONSTRATE NOTHING."* THOMAS PAINE

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## A GOOD FILM

### *Religulous*

#### Opens in Theaters October 3

Thanks to the Humanists of Greater Portland for alerting us to this new Lionsgate Films documentary which follows Bill Maher as the "man-on-the-street" interviewing unsuspecting believers who represent an array of religious sects. Through his comedic genius, Maher takes on the "greatest fiction ever told" as he exposes religious fanatics who get tangled up in a web of their own contradictions.

An advance review by film critic James Rocchi ([www.cinematical.com/2008/09/07/tiff-review-religulous](http://www.cinematical.com/2008/09/07/tiff-review-religulous)) reads: "In *Religulous*, stand-up social commentator Bill Maher doesn't just assert how he believes in one less god than many of us, and he doesn't just craft bold, bizarre and hilarious moments of comedy and discussion with the help of director Larry Charles (*Borat*). More important, and more intriguing, Maher states the film's thesis in an introduction filmed at Megiddo, the prophesied location of the final battle of Armageddon as written in Revelation; Maher, much like author Sam Harris does in his excellent (if dry) book *The End of Faith*, proposes that religious belief, in an age of chemical, biological and nuclear weapons, actively endangers humanity through encouraging conflict, promising rewards for irrational behavior, justifying artificial divisions and enabling other unfounded and unkind forms of thinking. Or, as Maher succinctly puts it early on, 'When Revelations was written, only God had the power to destroy the world. . . .' And then the opening titles kick in, a montage of Maher globe-trotting in search of people to talk to, and as the guitar riffs of The Who's "The Seeker" ring out, we recognize that we're going to get plenty of sizzle along with the steak in *Religulous*, lots of showbusiness to liven up the soul-searching."

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### TRIBUTES TO FUNDAMENTALIST FLATULENCE, EVANGELICAL EFFLUENCE, AND IMPLACABLE IGNORANCE

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

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#### Focus On Family Pulls Controversial Video Asking Prayers For "Rain Of Biblical Proportions"

Until it was pulled, the group "Focus on the Family Action" had a video on its Web site asking people to pray for "rain of biblical proportions" during Sen. Barack Obama's acceptance speech at Invesco Field on August 28.

In the video, Shepard called for Christians to pray for “abundant, torrential” rains during the Democratic nominee’s acceptance speech in order to disrupt it. He had asked Christians to pray for rain that would create flash flood warnings and “swamp the intersections.”

In the video, Shepard said he hoped the rain would start “two minutes before the acceptance speech begins.”

“I’m still pro life, and I’m still in favor of marriage as being between one man and one woman,” Shepard said in his video. “And I would like the next president who will select justices for the next Supreme Court to agree.”

The video was posted on the Internet on July 30.

[Source: TheDenverChannel.com August 12, 2008]

*[Editors’ note: The weather during the Obama event turned out to be sunny and warm.]*

### **Dear Lord, Forgive Me For Screwing the American Public**

As financial workers suffer through tumultuous times on Wall Street, some are turning to an old source of solace: religion. Religious leaders said attendance was up at lunchtime meetings in New York’s financial district last week, with many more people in business attire than usual.

“The economic financial crisis is a reminder that we cannot put our faith in riches, that we cannot put our faith in money,” Bozzuti-Jones said in his sermon at lunchtime on Friday, which he devoted to coping with the financial crisis. “People are just sitting there, praying or crying and definitely exhausted. There has definitely been an increase in the number of people who have come in,” he said in his office after the service. The church was putting on special workshops and seminars over the next few weeks including “Coping with stress in an uncertain time” and “Navigating career transitions.”

Lou Janicek, who works as a financial adviser on Wall Street, said he had not considered attending a religious service, but said Wall Street would benefit if people applied the same morals they learned in church to the workplace. “What you do at work matters as much as whether you regularly attend church or the synagogue or whatever,” said Janicek, who was brought up as a Christian. “If you are an accountant or you find yourself in an unethical situation, you can’t just stand by and let it happen -- then you have another Enron.”

[Source: Reuters, September 22, 2008]

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*“ONE IS OFTEN TOLD THAT IT IS A VERY WRONG THING TO ATTACK RELIGION, BECAUSE RELIGION MAKES MEN VIRTUOUS. SO I AM TOLD; I HAVE NOT NOTICED IT.” LORD BERTRAND RUSSELL*

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[www.humanistsofseattle.org](http://www.humanistsofseattle.org)

#### **The Secular Web**

[www.infidels.org](http://www.infidels.org)

#### **The American Humanist Association**

[www.americanhumanist.org](http://www.americanhumanist.org)

#### **Corliss Lamont Site**

(includes complete text of *The Philosophy of Humanism*)

[www.corliss-lamont.org](http://www.corliss-lamont.org)

#### **Ethical Culture Society of Puget Sound**

[www.ethicalculturesociety.org](http://www.ethicalculturesociety.org)

#### **Seattle Atheists**

[www.seattleatheists.org](http://www.seattleatheists.org)

#### **Atheist Alliance**

[www.atheistalliance.org](http://www.atheistalliance.org)

#### **Freedom From Religion Foundation**

[www.ffrf.org](http://www.ffrf.org)

#### **Foundation for Critical Thinking**

[www.criticalthinking.org](http://www.criticalthinking.org)

#### **Products for Humanists/Atheists**

[www.evolvefish.com](http://www.evolvefish.com) (emblems, pins, shirts, hats)

#### **San Francisco Atheists**

[www.sfatheists.com](http://www.sfatheists.com)

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[www.EvolveFISH.com](http://www.EvolveFISH.com)

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[www.cs.cmu.edu/Web/People/spok/banned-books.html](http://www.cs.cmu.edu/Web/People/spok/banned-books.html)

#### **Committee for Skeptical Inquiry**

[www.csicop.org](http://www.csicop.org)

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[www.positiveatheism.org](http://www.positiveatheism.org)

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*“AS A HISTORIAN, I CONFESS TO A CERTAIN AMUSEMENT WHEN I HEAR THE JUDEO-CHRISTIAN TRADITION PRAISED AS THE SOURCE OF OUR PRESENT-DAY CONCERN FOR HUMAN RIGHTS . . . IN FACT, THE GREAT RELIGIOUS AGES WERE NOTABLE FOR THEIR INDIFFERENCE TO HUMAN RIGHTS.” ARTHUR SCHLESINGER, JR.*

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*“THE AIM OF A RELIGIOUS MOVEMENT IS TO INFLICT A MALADY IN SOCIETY, THEN OFFER THE RELIGION AS A CURE.” ERIC HOFFER*

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