



# Willamette Freethinker



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A publication of Corvallis Secular Society

<http://css.peak.org>

Corvallis Secular Society (CSS) is a Humanist and Freethought society for all nontheists of good will.

CSS is affiliated with the American Humanist Association (AHA) and the Council for Secular Humanism (CSH).

## From the Editor:

A new shuttle disaster, and for a few brief minutes, every one of us wondered if it might be “the next big terrorist attack”. That is, of course, exactly how Bush wants us to react. Oh, how badly Bush and the news media wanted this to be related to terrorism! The media would have had a field day, and Bush would have had the last excuse he needs to go bomb Iraq (despite the fact that Iraq has not been shown to be involved in any sort of terrorism against us thus far).

\*SIGH\* Oh, well. I promised to list some more of my favorite web sites this month, so let’s get started...

### The Secular Web:

<http://www.infidels.org>

This site remains the all-time greatest secular resource on the web. Want to know what a certain historical figure thought of religion? Want to locate a local, national or international freethought group? Everything you could ever want to know about our cause is on this site!

### The New York Times:

<http://www.nytimes.com>

The most liberal newspaper out there (which these days, means “the newspaper with the smallest degree of rightward slant”). I usually head straight for the editorials to see what Paul Krugman (one of the best columnists in America) or Bob Herbert has to say. Even their conservative commentator, Bill Safire, is occasionally more reasonable than others of his ilk. Note: The NY Times requires you to login the first time you use it, which is annoying — but it’s totally free and non-invasive.

### WorkingForChange:

<http://www.workingforchange.com>

This is “a comprehensive Web site made up of resources for people with progressive values. Anyone with Internet access (members and non-members alike) can speak out on urgent issues, read informative news and columns, go shopping, make a donation or volunteer their time.” I’d like to add that you can also catch Molly Ivins’ (another of the best columnists in America) latest column on this site.

More next month!

*Reed Byers*

Editor, *Willamette Freethinker*

## CSS Meetings and Events

### Calendar:

Saturday, Feb 15<sup>th</sup> 2:00-4:00 CSS regular meeting  
Saturday, Mar 15<sup>th</sup> 1:00-4:00 CSS potluck  
Saturday, Apr 19<sup>th</sup> 2:00-4:00 CSS regular meeting

### Regular meeting time:

Third Saturday of each month, from 2:00-4:00 pm.

### Regular meeting location:

Corl House (3975 NW Witham Hill Dr, Corvallis).



### Support CSS: Buy from AMAZON.COM!

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## In this issue:

- From the President of CSS p.2
- NY Times Letter to the Editor p.3
- Justice Scalia’s Lament p.3
- Beware Statesman Invoking God p.4
- Voice of an Angel p.5
- What’s Wrong With Equality? p.6
- Bio Prof Won’t Recommend Student p.7
- New Penn & Teller Series! p.8
- Presidential Address: Columbia Tragedy p.8
- Eugene Starts Couples Sign-Up p.9
- Letters to the Editor p.9
- Catholics Flock to Fence-Post Mary p.10

# From the President of CSS:

## Building Churches with Public Money

To compel a man to furnish contributions of money for the propagation of opinions which he disbelieves and abhors, is sinful and tyrannical. [Thomas Jefferson, Statute for Religious Freedom, 1779]

The Bush Administration has announced plans to grant federal housing money for building and remodeling churches and other houses of worship. The Federal Register (Monday, January 6, 2003) contained the proposals for "Participation in HUD [Department of Housing and Urban Development] Programs by Faith Based Organizations."

The scheme would provide taxpayer dollars for building or reconstructing religious structures, as long as any part of the building is also used for "social services". This proposal would be a death blow to the constitutional principle of separation between church and state, according to the *Freedom From Religion Foundation*.

The proposal would remove requirements that religious organizations receiving HUD funding "provide assurances that they will conduct eligible program activities in a manner that is 'free from religious influences.'"

**The "establishment of religion" clause of the First Amendment means at least this: Neither a state nor the Federal Government can set up a church. Neither can pass laws which aid one religion, aid all religions, or prefer one religion over another.... No tax in any amount, large or small, can be levied to support any religious activities or institutions.... [Justice Hugo Black, U.S. Supreme Court, *Everson v. Board of Education*, 1947]**

The *New York Times*, in a January 28, 2003, editorial, wrote: "Spending taxpayer money to build religious structures is a radical move, and one that defies long-established constitutional precedents. The new policy should be challenged and, if the administration refuses to withdraw it, struck down by the courts.... Taxpayer money could be spent to build parts of a church, synagogue or mosque that are used for approved social service functions."

"The proposed rule...if properly administered,...would create a cumbersome process in which government officials would be required to monitor the areas taxpayers paid for, to ensure that no religious activities occur there. It is far more likely that many religious groups would feel free to use the building as they chose, as long as social services were provided somewhere. That would violate the core constitutional principle that the government cannot spend money to promote religion."

What James Madison and the other men of his generation had in mind when they wrote the First Amendment was that there should be no official relationship of any character between government and any church or many churches, and no levying of taxes for the support of any church, or many churches, or all churches, or any institution conducted by any of them. [Sam J. Ervin, Jr., 1896-1985, U.S. Senator from North Carolina]

Barry W. Lynn, executive director of *Americans United for Separation of Church and State*, says that "Churches that want to add on an annex should turn to their members for the money to do it, not the taxpayer. Houses of worship built with federal funds simply have no place in America."

The *Anti-Defamation League* argues that the proposed rule would "inevitably result in very broad and unconstitutional entanglements between government and religion to an extent never seen before." "Allowing HUD and religious organizations to split the cost of building a facility (yet barring the use of such a facility for religious activity) will cause HUD and the religious organization to enter into what is, at best, unseemly negotiations as to what counts as religious activity or not."

"The issue of enforcement of the separation between religion and government funds is not adequately addressed in the Proposed Rule. The Proposed Rule raises many very difficult questions: Will HUD remove structures from offending institutions? Will it place liens on houses of worship if they fail to adequately comply? What happens to the structures built with government funds when secular programs cease, but the institution wants to continue to utilize it for religious purposes?"

***The Lemon Test: First, the statute must have a secular legislative purpose; second, its principal or primary effect must be one that neither advances nor inhibits religion; finally, the statute must not foster "an excessive government entanglement with religion."* [The Lemon test was formulated by Chief Justice Warren Burger in the majority opinion in *Lemon v. Kurtzman* (1971). The purpose of the Lemon test is to determine when a law has the effect of establishing religion. The test has served as the foundation for many of the Court's post-1971 establishment clause rulings.]**

Ellen Johnson, president of *American Atheists*, has warned: "For the first time since the American Revolution, taxpayers will be picking up the tab for building churches and other facilities used for sectarian worship as part of a scheme just to further the faith-based initiative. It's pretty clear that this

new rule is also part of a plan to use government money to pay for the rehabilitation of dilapidated houses of worship, and divert money away from secular social services."

Christopher Anders, legal counsel for the *American Civil Liberties Union*, told reporters that the new Bush plan "is probably the most clearly unconstitutional aspect of the White House's faith-based initiative that we've seen up to this point."

## My View

Since the establishment of our country, religion has not been the government's business. Bush is changing this, in his mad rush to destroy the U.S. Constitution. He is effectively establishing a "religion tax" to support churches. He seeks, and is rapidly establishing, a theocratic dictatorship. He acts without regard for Congress or the Courts, and plunders the national wealth as though it were his own. With no regard for the environment or for the opinions of other nations, his actions are controlled, not by intellect, but by his "gut feelings."

The next two years, I predict, will see a rapid increase in the rate of this transformation. In part, he envisions an America where the religious right, supported by taxes, runs the country, and controls education and social services. The rights of minorities, the nonreligious, women, homosexuals, liberals and progressives, environmentalists, advocates of population management, and of anyone else the religious right doesn't like, may soon be gone. The right of individuals to make their own reproductive and end-of-life decisions are under massive attack already.

It is my considered view that George W. Bush is the greatest threat this country has ever faced.

*John Dearing*  
President of CSS

## NY Times Letter to the Editor

Jan 31, 2003

To the Editor: Re "The Prince of Peace Was a Warrior, Too" (Op-Ed, Jan. 28): Let us remember that millions of Americans are not Christians, and scriptural exhortations to either war or peace are not the deciding factor in our moral philosophy. Ostensibly, this country still maintains separation of church and state. One would hope that we are not about to embark on a religious war. Biblical or other religious quotations are poor justification for any American foreign-policy action, especially one as irreversible and devastating as the decision to make war.

BETSY TOLL  
Portland, Or.

## Justice Scalia's Lament

Washington Post Editorial, 1/28/2003

Speaking recently in Fredericksburg, Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia made a remarkable claim about the First Amendment's religion clauses. The "true tradition of religious freedom in America," he said, was "a tradition of neutrality amongst religious faiths. The government will not favor Catholics, Protestants, Muslims, Jews. . . . But the tradition was never that the government had to be neutral between religiousness and nonreligiousness. That principle, however, has since been adopted by the Supreme Court" over the past few decades. The justice attacked the Supreme Court's case law that has sought to separate church from state more rigorously than the founders did as an example of what he derisively termed the "living Constitution" — "the new view... which says [the document]... means what we think it ought to mean." Justice Scalia speaks passionately on this subject. But his history is mischievous, and the principle he derives from it is dangerous.

In reality, the founding-era practice of religious neutrality was not one that even Justice Scalia today would recognize as neutral. For while Justice Scalia's idea of government neutrality among religious groups had some adherents at the time, it was not the principle that governed the early history of the American republic. States retained established churches and religious tests for public service, for example. Congress paid for missionary work among Native Americans. And many scholarly authorities emphatically did not understand the First Amendment, as the justice now does, as putting Christianity on an even playing field with other religions. Justice Joseph Story — a celebrated early commentator on the Constitution — wrote in 1833, for example, that the point of the amendment was "not to countenance, much less to advantage Mahometanism, or Judaism, or infidelity, by prostrating Christianity," but to establish federal neutrality between Christian sects and the states those sects dominated. "[I]t is impossible for those who believe in the truth of Christianity as a divine revelation to doubt that it is the especial duty of government to foster . . . it among all the citizens and subjects," he wrote. This sounds little like neutrality among religions. Justice Scalia's Constitution, in other words, is just as "living" as the one he derides. He merely prefers to draw the line in a different place.

The trouble is that he draws it in a place that would permit public religious exercises that endorse one broad religious system — Judeo-Christian monotheism — at the expense of all other systems of belief and would do so with the imprimatur of the state. Justice Scalia can pretend that certain school prayers, to cite one example, are nondenominational, but any invocation of one God necessarily excludes Hindus as surely as it excludes atheists. Protecting their consciences from state indoctrination may be, as Justice Scalia laments, a deviation from the vision of religious freedom the First Amendment was originally intended to enshrine. But America has changed since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and the American understanding of the principle the First Amendment stated — Justice Scalia's understanding included — has changed with it. In contemporary America, governmental neutrality on religious matters should be true neutrality.

# Beware Statesman Invoking God

by Diana Wichtel, *New Zealand Herald*, 2/9/2003

The alarm bells really started ringing after September 11, when George W began throwing around words like “crusade” and “evil-doers”. I liked him better in the old days, when he said things like, “I know how hard it is for you to put food on your family” and “I know the human being and fish can coexist peacefully”.

Actually, I never liked him.

But such pronouncements, though devoid of discernible meaning, were at least relatively harmless.

Now, emboldened by getting away with sounding increasingly like an Old Testament prophet rather than a 21<sup>st</sup> century world leader, Bush continues to blur the lines, not just between church and state but between the will of God and the will of George W. Bush.

In journalist Bob Woodward’s behind-the-scenes book, *Bush at War*, we hear this from Bush: “There is a human condition that we must worry about in times of war. There is a value system that cannot be compromised — God-given values. These aren’t United States-created values.”

He is talking about things like freedom and mother love, apparently. But he’s also setting up the outrageous notion that if and when America goes to war it will be about upholding Divine law. Nothing to do with American foreign policy.

They say Bush was quite a drinker before he saw the light. For that matter, Bush says it himself. Then he gave up the booze and became a born again Christian.

This explains a lot. Like many a reformed hellraiser, he seems to think this gives him permission to preach to the rest of us, even though most of us knew way before George W did that excessively abusing oneself with substances was a bad idea.

Bush has certainly retained the manipulative qualities and denial techniques of the hardened boozier. To invoke God in the way he does is to cut the moral ground out from under anyone who disagrees with you. By the time he’s finished, to be against America’s policies is to be against God. It would be quite clever if it wasn’t so scary.

Well, not that clever. Even in Old Testament mode, Bush sometimes reverts to his English-as-a-second-language ways. “We hold dear what our Declaration of Independence says, that all have got unalienable rights, endowed by a Creator,” he told community and religious leaders in Moscow last year.

It was an interesting Freudian slip. That double negative in “unalienable” means the rights are, in fact, alienable, something a lot of innocent civilians may be about to find out.

But it’s getting harder to laugh. Some commentators are seriously worried about what has been referred to as Bush’s “Messiah complex”. Others think the rhetoric is largely for political purposes.

I hope the latter are right. The alternative is that the most powerful man in the world believes that God’s plan includes apocalypse, if not now, then possibly quite soon.

Whatever Bush’s temporal or spiritual agenda, he was at it again in his State of the Union speech. “The liberty we prize is not America’s gift to the world, it is God’s gift to humanity.”

Cue wild applause. Liberty is God’s gift to humanity. America sees itself as a free nation, therefore God has favoured America. Iraq, on the other hand, is not free, therefore God doesn’t like Iraq and it’s okay to bomb it back into the Stone Age. Nice.

This sort of thinking has done some good — there are hilarious parodies of Bush speeches to be found on the net — “Our God also pities the atheists who insist on separation of church and state. Forgive them Father, for they do not know that in Hell, even your teeth burn. (Applause.)”

And, of course he is not the first politician to claim that God is on his side. Nor, sadly, will he be the last. You also have to take into account the general God—bothering tendencies of American public life. American entertainment industry awards ceremonies are full of people, mostly living lives of appalling consumption and hedonism, who seem to believe God is directly responsible for their latest forgettable album or awful sitcom.

But this is different. This is a fundamentalist mindset. And what disturbs me about fundamentalism of any flavour is that it is usually so frighteningly primitive and literal. Writing about Woodward’s aforementioned book, a reviewer says, “What are readers to make of the anecdote in which a CIA operative is told to bring Osama bin Laden’s head home in a box? Was this for real? Apparently so, since the operative took a cardboard box and dry ice with him.”

Yikes. The trouble with bringing God into politics — well, you only need to think of Northern Ireland, the Middle East, Bosnia ... and it’s not that big a step from believing you are serving God to believing you are God.

The Nazis saw themselves as super beings with the right to give and take away, to decide who would live and die, who was human and who was not. The horror of what they did stays so fresh not because they behaved like monsters. Live long enough and you see a lot of that. It’s because they behaved like gods. And that’s something we don’t want to see again.

# Voice of an Angel

## Death with Dignity: From Daisy to Buttercup

In March of 1987 my parents bought me a puppy — a female Rat Terrier I named Daisy Mae. She was my constant companion as I went through college and then into my adult life.

Daisy had a few scrapes with death in her 16 years. My dad liked to go hiking around the Three Sisters and would often take Daisy with him so he wouldn't have to be alone.



**Daisy Mae**  
14 years old

They went on a long hike one day and Daisy happily followed him jumping over one log after another. They finally made it to the top of a ravine and dad sat down on a log at the edge of a precipice to rest. Daisy assumed it was just another log to jump over so she took a run and began to bound over, not realizing on the other side awaited a several hundred foot drop. Luckily dad caught her out of the corner of his eye and managed to swing his arm around, sending her tumbling backwards to the ground — all the while, the thought running through his head: "If I don't bring this dog home in one piece my daughter is going to kill me!" Usually by the end of the day he would end up

carrying Daisy the last mile or two because her feet were just too tired.

She was always there at the door to greet me excitedly as I came home. She loved to sleep next to me where ever I happened to be — on the floor next to my desk or on the couch with me as I watched TV. When I was not home, she would whine and stare at the door awaiting my arrival (just ask Reed!).

Last month, just after her 16<sup>th</sup> birthday I had to euthanize Daisy. She was diagnosed with liver cancer last year and things were rapidly getting worse for her. She was sick and in pain, and I could not bear to see her suffer further. It was by far the hardest thing I have ever had to do in my life.

I spent many weeks anguishing over the decision. In the end, I knew the right thing to do was to not consider my feelings, but rather to consider hers. I was responsible for making sure she did not needlessly suffer. It was probably one of the most selfless things I have ever done. Sometimes an act of kindness is the hardest thing we have to do.

I have done much thinking on this issue and I can't help but see how much this relates to the assisted suicide issue.

I am rather taken aback at how easily we accept that it is best to not let our cherished pets suffer needlessly, yet we do not allow the same basic dignity for human beings. I don't presume to compare an animal with a human, but in this case, we can't stand to see our pets suffer and yet somehow think it is nobler to allow a human to suffer.

I also find it amusing that the ones who voice the greatest objections are devout Christians. These are people who are "sure" that there is life after death. They are sure they will go live in heaven with their God, yet they are terrified at the prospect of ending the physical existence. Is it not better to allow someone to end their pain and go on to live the magical existence that awaits them? Or perhaps, they aren't fully sure that there really is such a thing as life after death?

No one who suffers from a terminal condition should have to be made to live a miserable life. Because our pets can not make this decision for themselves, we make it for them. We should allow the same basic right to human beings who are capable of making the choice for themselves. In fact, the state of Oregon has voted (more than once) and agreed on this very issue. Yet, extreme Christians, such as John Ashcroft, try to force their ideology on others and try to deny the people of Oregon their right to pass fair and just laws. I wonder if Ashcroft ever had a pet he loved dearly become sick. I wonder if he did the right thing and end that pet's life before it needlessly suffered. I wonder.

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Since I could not stand being home by myself all day long with no warm furry canine to love, Reed and I decided to look for a new dog. I'm pleased to report that we adopted a 6-week-old Beagle puppy. We've named her Buttercup and plan to spoil her rotten.

*Angela Byers*  
CSS Treasurer & Webmaster



**Buttercup at 6 weeks old**

# What's Wrong With Equality?

Wayne Everett Orgar, CSS Member  
January 2003

One of the reasons that religions try to control the thinking of people is to maintain the social order, especially to the benefit of those who are in control. The social concept of equality is not of religious origination for the most part. This certainly is true of Christianity. The mythological Jesus did not promote social equality and never spoke out for civil rights or against slavery. He supposedly said to care for the poor by giving alms but he never advocated for **improving** the social order so the poor would not have to be given alms in the first place. The same was true for early America.

According to David Wagner: "Colonial and early American theologians did not support modern liberal notions of equality, much less a provision of aid as an entitlement of citizenship. John Winthrop, the early Puritan leader, supported charity but did not think that God meant 'the great ones' to be equal to the poor and inferior sort of men." The poor "should never rise against their superiors," although he admitted that the "mighty" had some (unspecified) obligation to the poor. Even the most liberal of Protestant sects, the Quakers, urged a submissive attitude on the poor and saw charity in terms of a noblesse oblige. In the words of William Penn "God had not placed men on the level, but has arranged him in descending orders of subordination and dependency; due respect for these God-ordained differences required Obedience to Superiors, Love to Equals...Help and Countenance to Inferiors" (Winthrop and Penn quoted in Bremer, *American Philanthropy*, p8-10.)

He continues: "Indifference to conditions of inequality in the actual world – as compared to the Kingdom of God – allowed a variety of injunctions to come from the apostles that strongly support inequality and oppose rebellion. The famous "rendering unto Caesar" has always had the direct effect of allowing current social arrangements to stand in exchange for tolerance of the church by civil authorities, a pattern established since the early Christian church first compromised with the Roman emperor Constantine. In turn then, St. Paul argues, "You were a slave when called? Never Mind." (I Cor. 7:21), and St. Peter (2:18-3:7) intones, "Slaves, be submissive in all fear to your masters: . . . Likewise wives, be submissive to your husbands."

The notion of equality was even further from the mind of Protestantism's founder, Martin Luther. He replied with rancor to the radical Anabaptists and peasant rebels of the sixteenth century, also quoting Paul, " . . . make all men equal and so change the spiritual kingdom of Christ into an external worldly one! Impossible! An earthly kingdom cannot exist without inequality of persons. Some must be free, others serfs, some rulers, others subjects. As St. Paul

says, Before Christ both master and slave are one." (Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, New York: Penguin, 1926, p84)."

Those who wish to maintain the social order use religion to encourage people to seek a spiritual equality on earth and a social equality in an imaginary afterlife. I have worked in social services. Don't be fooled by the occasional anecdote about someone that has gotten off "welfare" and is supposedly self-supporting in a comfortable fashion. This is only clever marketing by those in control. It does not represent the reality of those in need. The working poor are only the current manifestation of those who were given alms in the first century. They are the serfs of our times.

Several years ago, I chose to work in temporary jobs while waiting to start graduate school again. Some of the things I did was work in a seed mill, as a janitor for a well known computer firm, and pulling green chain in a lumbar mill. These jobs were typically back breaking, demeaning, in poor work environments, and only paid \$6.50 - \$7.00 an hour with no benefits. If I did not have savings and a credit card, I could have ended up either homeless or living in a group home. By the time taxes and social security are deducted, you may have enough left over to pay rent on a cheap one-bedroom apartment, utilities, food, and clothes. Forget paying for health care on those wages. I had to pay for a high deductible policy with savings. If you already have a car, it better not break down. You may be forced to chose between paying rent or fixing your car and living in it.

The widening gap between the rich and the poor in America today shows little evidence that things have changed much. I doubt that faith-based initiatives will ever result in equality. Faith-based programs have not been shown to be any better than secular programs. Bibles, preaching, and prayer do not provide the training for marketable job skills that pay a living wage. So, instead of giving your hard-earned money to the clergy, give it to a secular organization that provides health care or training to promote a realistic independence. Give it to an organization that hires qualified people without regard for religion or creed. Support your public schools, libraries, and political candidates who have not lost touch with what community life is really like. It's the best way to achieve equal opportunity and thus equality.

## Reference

Wagner, David. *What's Love Got To Do with It? A Critical Look at American Charity*. The New Press: New York, 2000, pp. 50 and 78 respectively.

# Biology Professor Refuses to Recommend Students Who Don't Believe in Evolution

Associated Press, 1/30/2003

DALLAS— A biology professor who refuses to write letters of recommendation for his students if they don't believe in evolution is being accused of religious discrimination, and federal officials are investigating, the school said.

The legal complaint was filed against Texas Tech University and professor Michael Dini by a student and the Liberty Legal Institute, a religious freedom group that calls Dini's policy "open religious bigotry."

"Students are being denied recommendations not because of their competence in understanding evolution, but solely because of their personal religious beliefs," said Kelly Shackelford, chief counsel for the institute.

The Department of Justice asked Texas Tech in Jan. 21 letter to respond to the allegations, university officials said.

Texas Tech spokeswoman Cindy Rugeley said that the university stands by Dini, and that his policies do not conflict with those of Texas Tech.

"A letter of recommendation is a personal matter between a professor and student and is not subject to the university control or regulation," Texas Tech Chancellor David Smith wrote in October in response to an earlier letter of complaint.

Dini, an associate professor who has been at Texas Tech for 10 years, said Wednesday he didn't know about a federal inquiry. He referred questions about his policy to a Web page that outlines it.

The Web page advises students seeking a recommendation to be prepared to answer the question: "How do you think the human species originated?"

"If you cannot truthfully and forthrightly affirm a scientific answer to this question, then you should not seek my recommendation for admittance to further education in the biomedical sciences," Dini writes.

The legal complaint began with Texas Tech student Micah Spradling, who withdrew from Dini's class and the university in the fall and enrolled at Lubbock Christian University after learning about Dini's policy.

Spradling, 22, wants to become a physician and said he needed a letter of recommendation from a biology professor but, as a creationist, he said he couldn't "sit there and truthfully say I believe in human evolution."

"It's a theory. You read about it in textbooks. I could explain the process, maybe how some people say it happens, but I could not have said ... I believe in it," Spradling said Wednesday. "I really don't see how

believing in the evolution of humanity has anything to do with patient care or studying science."

Spradling re-enrolled at Texas Tech this semester, after obtaining a recommendation letter at the other school.

Dini writes that he has the policy because he doesn't believe anyone should practice in a biology-related field without accepting "the most important theory in biology."

"Good scientists would never throw out data that do not conform to their expectations or beliefs," he writes.

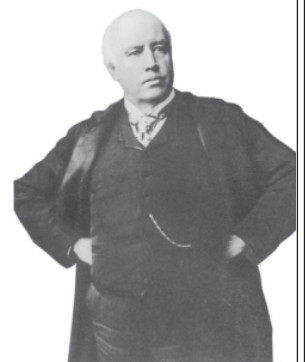
Dini also says he refuses to write letters of recommendation for students he doesn't know fairly well and those who haven't earned an "A" in one of his classes.

Department spokesman Jorge Martinez refused to not confirm or deny an investigation, citing department policy.

## Celebrate Humanism!

... the whole year long, with the The Council for Secular Humanism's 2003 calendar — "Robert Green Ingersoll: Humanist Hero"

This beautiful, informative calendar features Robert G. Ingersoll, selected as 2003's humanist hero to coincide with the 10th anniversary of reopening the Robert Green Ingersoll Birthplace Museum in Dresden, New York. The calendar features pictures of Ingersoll memorabilia as well as moving quotations from his speeches. The calendar also has an endorsement by Jeff Ingersoll, a friend of the Council and descendant of Robert G. Ingersoll. Let the Council for Secular Humanism fill your year with interesting quotes and facts which connect you with our vibrant and important tradition!



The calendar is \$8.00. You can order and pick yours up at the CSS meetings. Or add \$2.00 shipping and handling if you need them mailed to you. Send your order to the CSS Treasurer (address listed on back). \$2 of each calendar sold goes to support CSS!

**Makes a Great Gift!**  
Supplies are limited so orders yours today!

## Penn & Teller: Bullshit!

Sorry about the language, folks, but I'd be sorrier if I didn't pass the word along about this FABULOUS new (but seemingly short-lived) cable series.

The name of the show is "Bullshit!", and that's what it's about. For half an hour every week, famous magicians Penn & Teller give us a skeptic's guide to the baloney, hogwash, malarkey, and utter crapola in modern culture.

Yes, there's a lot of very strong language on the show. In the opening monologue of the first episode, Penn & Teller explain that if they went on the air and said that certain people are con artists, hustlers, liars and thieves, they could get sued. But if they simply demonstrate what these people are doing and call them "assholes" (or worse), they're safe.

The show airs on **Showtime at 11pm Fridays**, and here is the primary schedule. (Note that we've already missed the first few episodes, but Angela and I \*JUST\* found out about the series in time to tell you now — and we've managed to catch and record ALL of the previously-aired epsodes in repeats this week!)

<u>Episode</u>	<u>Air Date</u>	<u>Episode Title</u>
01	01/24/03	Talking to the Dead
02	01/31/03	Alternative Medicine
03	02/07/03	Alien Abductions
04	02/14/03	End of the World
05	02/21/03	Second Hand Smoke, Baby Bullshit
06	02/28/03	Sex, Sex, Sex
07	03/07/03	Feng Shui/Bottled Water
08	03/14/03	Creationism
09	03/21/03	Self-Helpless
10	03/28/03	ESP

This series was specifically made FOR people like us, BY people like us! Needless to say, we HIGHLY recommend it!

Additional text from their website:

"Penn & Teller deliver a high-octane, weird, wacky, entertaining journey through some bizarre territory that no one else is brave enough to touch, with this Showtime 'no limits' reality series."

"Penn & Teller have been dying to do a show like this. Confirmed skeptics and pro-science atheists (they refer to God as 'an imaginary friend'), these magicians are big fans of the art of debunking."

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"As our increasingly anti-intellectual, anti-science culture moves on each day to new crackpot subject matters, Penn & Teller are there to aggressively shoot down whack-jobs and fuzzy thinkers, no matter where they originate."

## President Addresses Nation on Space Shuttle Columbia Tragedy

[Editor's Note: *What might otherwise have been a moving speech in the advent of our recent shuttle tragedy was turned into a disaster of its own, when our beloved President decided to use the event to casually declare America to be a Christian nation after all. Try to imagine what our country might be like today, if it were NOT being run by people who find the highlighted text below to be appropriate...]*

My fellow Americans, this day has brought terrible news and great sadness to our country. At 9:00 a.m. this morning, Mission Control in Houston lost contact with our Space Shuttle Columbia. A short time later, debris was seen falling from the skies above Texas. The Columbia is lost; there are no survivors.

On board was a crew of seven: Colonel Rick Husband; Lt. Colonel Michael Anderson; Commander Laurel Clark; Captain David Brown; Commander William McCool; Dr. Kalpana Chawla; and Ilan Ramon, a Colonel in the Israeli Air Force. These men and women assumed great risk in the service to all humanity.

In an age when space flight has come to seem almost routine, it is easy to overlook the dangers of travel by rocket, and the difficulties of navigating the fierce outer atmosphere of the Earth. These astronauts knew the dangers, and they faced them willingly, knowing they had a high and noble purpose in life. Because of their courage and daring and idealism, we will miss them all the more.

All Americans today are thinking, as well, of the families of these men and women who have been given this sudden shock and grief. You're not alone. Our entire nation grieves with you. And those you loved will always have the respect and gratitude of this country.

The cause in which they died will continue. Mankind is led into the darkness beyond our world by the inspiration of discovery and the longing to understand. Our journey into space will go on.

**In the skies today we saw destruction and tragedy. Yet farther than we can see there is comfort and hope. In the words of the prophet Isaiah, "Lift your eyes and look to the heavens. Who created all these? He who brings out the starry hosts one by one and calls them each by name. Because of His great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing."**

**The same Creator who names the stars also knows the names of the seven souls we mourn today. The crew of the shuttle Columbia did not return safely to Earth; yet we can pray that all are safely home.**

May God bless the grieving families, and may God continue to bless America.

## Eugene Starts Couples Sign-up

by Joe Mosley, Eugene Register-Guard, 2/2/03

Mark this one on your calendar as the Valentine's Day for everyone.

For sweethearts and lovers of every age, size, ethnicity and political persuasion. And of each gender, in any combination.

Feb. 14 will mark the start of Eugene's domestic partnership registry, which will give gay couples — as well as unmarried heterosexual couples — the opportunity to have their ongoing, committed relationships recognized by a government entity. In this case, the Eugene city recorder's office.

"We are taking appointments," says Mary Feldman, who recently transferred into the city recorder's position after serving on the city's human rights staff — where she helped formulate city code amendments that authorized the registry when adopted in November by the City Council.

"Actually, I think we have four or five (couples) lined up already, and this is just word of mouth," Feldman says. "People have called in asking about it, and we have taken the appointments. But now we're really going to start getting the word out."

Eugene's registry — Oregon's third, following similar programs in Ashland and Portland/Multnomah County — was unanimously approved by the council following a year of public comment and debate.

Registration will be an official but largely symbolic act, open to any couple in a relationship "of mutual support and commitment." It won't require businesses or agencies to extend benefits or privileges on the basis of a person's listing in the registry, but will add "domestic registry status" to a list of characteristics protected by the city against housing and public accommodation discrimination.

Each partner of a couple must be at least 18 years old, they cannot be blood relatives and they will be required to sign statements affirming their domestic partnership status. They will not be required to be city residents but must bring government-issued, photo identification such as driver's licenses or passports with them.

A sample of the city's domestic partner registry application form is at <http://www.ci.eugene.or.us/Cityreco/> on the city's Web pages.

Appointment times for what Feldman estimates will be about a 15-minute registration procedure will be available one morning and one afternoon each week. After an initial rush of couples who have been waiting for such a registry, the appointments and processing of paperwork are expected to take only a couple of hours per week of staff time.

"It costs \$50, and that fee was calculated to cover all the costs of this program," Feldman says. "So it's not going to cost the taxpayers anything."

## Letters to the Editor

Jan 14, 2003

Hi, A small group of people in Brookings are interested in learning more about the humanist society, and possibly starting a local chapter.

If anyone from CSS is ever planning on being in Brookings on the 2nd or 4th Sunday of any month, we would love to have them give a talk at our small Friends of the Unitarian-Universalists group. Appreciate your asking your chapter members.

Thanks,

Eleanor Carlson  
Friends of the UU's in Brookings-Gold Beach  
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Brookings OR 97415

January 31, 2003

The other night I forced myself to watch the State of the Union, and I will say, gagger that he is, he does represent the Puppet Master and the Cabal well.

He might just as well have had Robertson or Falwell perform an invocation as to do that pious bit of religiosity himself. Disgusting!!

He spent a good half hour trying to convince the audience that war ON Iraq is justified. And there is more and more opposition to that scheme. This is increasingly a hard sell.

There are those that believe that Iraq's oil is the one goal. But that is only half the story, the other goal is to Christianize the "heathen Hordes." (When I was growing up, heathen was anyone not a Christian, and a finer point on that was to specify those not Catholic. The dictionary, of course, includes Islam.)

How so many are taken in by this Administration, is beyond belief.

One of our heathen writers: Chris Dawkins, Paul Kurtz or Tom Flynn claimed in a recent article that some people have an extra gene they say is a "religious-belief gene" that allows susceptibility to that particular malady. And, on that subject, in a Letter to the Editor, one woman wrote: "...religious belief must be a severe form of mental disease."

I cannot quarrel with that.

Claude Clayton  
Astoria, Oregon

**Christianity will doubtless still survive in the earth ten centuries hence — stuffed and in a museum.**

— Mark Twain's Notebook, 1898

# Catholics Flock to Fence-Post Virgin Mary

## Reuters, 2/6/03

SYDNEY (Reuters) — Catholics in the Australian city of Sydney are flocking to pray at a fence post at Coogee beach which they believe projects an image of the Virgin Mary.

Devotees say the Virgin can be seen in the afternoons from a vantage point 300 meters (yards) away from the white post, in the east of the city, and some believe she appeared to comfort Australians worried about a possible war in Iraq.

Some leave flowers, crucifixes and bottles of oil nearby.

“Some people say they can’t see her but yes, I see her. I see her crown, her white robe. I’m so happy that I get goosebumps,” Sydney resident Anna, originally from Italy, told Reuters Television.

Catholics are not the only ones paying homage.

“I believe it’s Mother Teresa who has come,” said clairvoyant Bronwyn Wilson. “She’s very upset with war looming and everything. She comes in peace because she represented peace.”

Others are more skeptical.

“If that’s what they want to believe fair enough but I personally think it’s a lot of rubbish — it’s just a fence,” a British traveler told Reuters.



A woman reaches to touch a fence post as near Coogee beach in Sydney’s eastern suburbs February 6, 2003. For more than a week devoted Catholics have been flocking to a vantage point about 1000 feet from the fence which devotees say looks like the Virgin Mary when viewed at certain times each afternoon through squinted eyes.

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