



# Willamette Freethinker



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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:

Geez. What a month.

Terri Schiavo dies, the Pope dies, Michael Jackson's on trial for child molestation, Prince Charles is getting re-married, and the right wingers couldn't be happier. The "news" media is nicely distracted from reporting anything that might remotely resemble actual news.

Say, for instance, the fact that the President has now officially violated the U.S. Constitution in a way that allows for no wiggle room.

Section Four of the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment reads in part, "The validity of the public debt of the United States, authorized by law, [...] shall not be questioned." So you know all those highly public speeches Bush has been giving, telling everyone that we've got to have private accounts in Social Security, because there IS no trust fund, "just a bunch of IOU's in a file cabinet"...? Well, those IOU's are backed by the full faith and credit of the United States government, and any suggestion that they're not as good as cash is not just treasonous (as it threatens our entire economy if other nations suddenly lose faith in the IOU's we've given THEM), but unconstitutional as well.

Let the impeachment begin!

Oh wait, I'm sorry, this didn't involve either a blow job OR a blue dress, what was I thinking?

So let's be good little American drones and talk about Terri Schiavo instead. I know, I know, it's been done quite literally to death, but bear with me.

You see, I got this phone call a couple of weeks ago. It was my mom, asking me what I thought of the Schiavo situation.

Foolishly, I gave her my honest opinion. Terri Schiavo, from all accounts except for the wishful fantasies of her parents, was long dead. The part of her brain responsible for thought, intelligence and personality — the part that made her HER — was physically absent, replaced by fluid.

Now it's a real shame that the rest of her brain was still firing signals that caused her to move around and give the

(continued on page 4)

## CSS Meetings and Events

### Calendar:

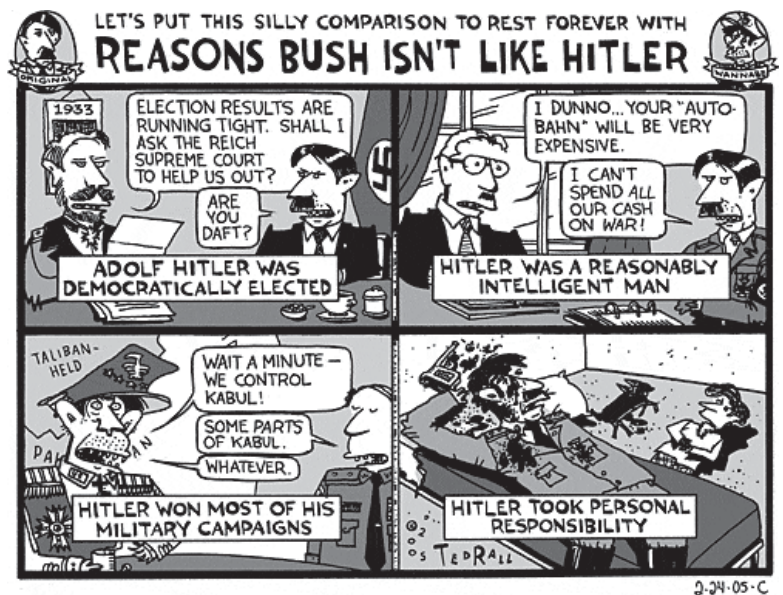
- Saturday, Apr 16<sup>th</sup> 2:15-4:15 CSS regular meeting  
The April meeting will start 15 minutes late, due to a conflict with another group's meeting at Corl House.
- Saturday, May 21<sup>st</sup> 2:00-4:00 CSS regular meeting
- Saturday, Jun 18<sup>th</sup> 1:00-4:00 CSS potluck

### 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).



## In this issue:

- From the President of CSS p.2
- God Isn't Real p.3
- Voice of an Angel p.4
- When Religion Takes Over, Tyranny Results p.5
- Sharia: Iraq's Dark Cloud p.6
- Couple Makes Candles That Smell Like Jesus p.7
- IMAX Theaters Reject Film Over Evolution p.8

# From the President:

## HUMANISM, SCIENCE, & PUBLIC POLICY

A speech given before the Salem Unitarian-Universalist Congregation on March 20, 2005

### Part 2 of 2

#### III. PUBLIC POLICY

The present administration's science policies are a paradigm — an outstandingly clear or typical example — of the misunderstanding and misuse of science in the pursuit of a political and religious agenda. One example of this misuse, and of the wanton disregard for the long-term consequences of our actions, is our abuse of the ocean.

Earth's ocean (there is only one) is suffering degradation by human actions and inactions. The same can be said of the land, the air, and the biological diversity of our planet. According to the OSU News Service at Oregon State University, in a release published June 5, 2003, "Scientific knowledge about the oceans has increased tremendously in the last quarter century but US policy for managing its territorial waters has lagged far behind the science...leading to resource depletion, pollution, habitat destruction and political polarization."

True to form, the Bush Administration's Justice and Defense Departments, in the summer of 2002, argued in a lawsuit that federal actions in the area of the ocean that the US controls are suddenly exempt from the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). This would deny citizens the right to ensure that agencies follow the law and consider the environmental impacts of major federal projects. This is exactly the wrong approach to caring for the ocean. A "sea change" in the Executive branch of our government may be a prerequisite to responsible changes in marine management.

The American Humanist Association's *Humanist Manifesto III* says, "We...maintain that it is a...planetary duty to protect nature's integrity, diversity, and beauty in a secure, sustainable manner." The Council for Secular Humanism's *The Affirmations of Humanism* include, "We want to protect and enhance the earth, to preserve it for future generations, and to avoid inflicting needless suffering on other species." We need to urge proper ocean management. This includes a reduction in pollution, the establishment of marine reserves where fishing is banned, and the reduction of fishing methods that result in a large "bycatch." (Bycatch refers to the marine animals caught accidentally and thrown back, usually injured or dead.)

Earth is home for *Homo Sapiens*, and for all other species. This planet is our nest, and we foul it at our peril: there is no other. We owe future generations a healthy environment. Ultimately, the promotion of other humanistic causes, and the continued existence of civilization itself, depend on environmental preservation.

The Bush Administration regularly ignores, distorts, or suppresses science, whenever it conflicts with the President's religious and social goals. Rep. Henry A. Waxman, Democrat from California, has created a website, [www.politicsandscience.org](http://www.politicsandscience.org), entitled "Politics & Science: Investigating the State of Science Under the Bush Administration." "This website...is an ongoing record of interference with science by the Bush Administration." Just a few examples:

**Manipulation of Scientific Committees:** Bush has opposed the appointment of qualified experts, including some of the most respected scientists in their fields, on the basis of political litmus tests. This includes appointing people with scant scientific credentials but strong industry ties, and appointing nonexperts with right-wing ideological agendas.

**Distortion of Public Information:** Bush has distorted communications to the American people, provided incomplete and inaccurate scientific information to Congress, altered web sites by deleting information that conflicts with his priorities or adding unscientific information that supports such priorities, and more.

**Interference with Scientific Research:** Federal funding for research and development totals over \$100 billion dollars. The public expects that this research will be conducted independently and objectively. Yet the Bush Administration has threatened political scrutiny of scientific research projects that concern social conservatives.

**A specific example: Research on Oil and Gas Practices:** Without giving any scientific justification, the EPA changed data on the environmental impact of "hydraulic fracturing" — an oil and gas practice pioneered by Halliburton. With hydraulic fracturing, companies sometimes inject fracturing fluids containing benzene and other carcinogenic and toxic chemicals into geologic formations containing underground sources of drinking water. The EPA informed congressional staff that hydraulic fracturing could lead to benzene in underground sources of drinking water at levels above federal standards. When congressional staff raised concerns, EPA changed the data to indicate that the benzene levels would not exceed standards.

**The abuse of science is continuing in Bush's second term:** An AP news report by Paul Recer, which appeared February 21, 2005), reported: "The voice of science is being stifled in the Bush administration, with fewer scientists

heard in policy discussions and money for research and advanced training being cut, according to panelists at a national science meeting. Speakers at the national meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science expressed concern Sunday that some scientists in key federal agencies are being ignored or even pressured to change study conclusions that don't support policy positions." He also reports on diminishing funding for basic research and science education, and on the decreasing flow of foreign science students to US universities, due to government restrictions. He notes that the *questioning* of the proven science about global warming has become more important than finding ways to cope with climate change.

Not to worry, though: White House spokesman Ken Lisaius is quoted as saying, "The president makes policy decisions based on what the best policies for the country are, not politics. People who suggest otherwise are ill-informed."

It's going to be a long four years.

## PARTING THOUGHTS

Surveys of religious belief show that mainline Christian denominations are losing membership, while the more fundamental-ist, conservative, and strident denominations are growing. In spite of the progress of science and technology, more people than ever seem to believe in a supernatural realm, in the existence of gods, in ghosts, in an afterlife, in the efficacy of prayer and faith, in creationism, in angels, in reincarnation, in the power of incantations and rituals, in miracles, in faith healing, in prophecy (knowledge of future events), in divine revelation, in the truth of ancient holy books, in astrology, and so forth. The history of our species in modern times has been riddled with religious superstition, intolerance, theocracy, and violence. *Yet nonreligious people are constantly being told that religion is necessary for morality!*

With Bush in the White House and Republicans decisively controlling Congress, there is an accelerated packing of our courts and governmental agencies with judges and other appointees that pass an archconservative social and religious litmus test. The next four years could change our government from a struggling secular, representative, and tolerant *constitutional democracy* into a full-fledged theocracy.

According to Babu Gogineni, Executive Director of the International Humanist and Ethical Union, Humanists hope for the "adoption of the scientific temper and the useful application of technology, accompanied by the increasing secularisation of society – all of which are humanist contributions....By secularisation, we mean...the...steady weaning away of society from religion and the religious mode of thinking."

Author John Steinbeck, in his Nobel Prize for Literature acceptance speech, 1962, wrote: "We have usurped many of the powers we once ascribed to God. Fearful and unprepared, we have assumed lordship over the life or death of the whole world – of all living things. The danger and the glory and the choice rest finally in man. The test of his perfectibility is at hand. Having taken Godlike power, we must seek *in ourselves* for the responsibility and the wisdom we once prayed some deity might have. Man himself has become our greatest hazard and our only hope."

It may be the best of times, but it is also the worst of times. The *promise* of reason, of science, and of all fields of human endeavor, are threatened by a rising tide of religious and political intolerance, stridency, violence, and close-mindedness. We need to speak out against the theocrats, and in favor of the separation of government and religion and of the increasing secularization of our society. We need to support education, environmental responsibility, and the like. There is no better time than the present to get involved. While we still can.

"To every man is given the key to the gates of heaven; the same key opens the gates of hell." [Buddhist proverb.] I think this means that we now have the power to make our society and our planet a "heaven" or a "hell." We can embrace Humanistic ideals to make human life rewarding and sustainable, or we can embrace intolerance, tribalism, ignorance, superstition, fear, demagoguery, and war, returning human life to *brutishness*, if not to extinction. I urge us all to cultivate a "reverence for life," by working to use the keys of science and compassion – Humanism – to open the gates of heaven on Earth.

*John Dearing*  
President of CSS

## God Isn't Real

A country song by Robbie Fulks

A world filled with wonder, a cold, fathomless sky  
A man's life so meager, he can but wonder why  
He cries out to Heaven its truth to reveal  
The answer: only silence, for God isn't real.

Go ask the starving millions under Stalin's cruel reign  
Go ask the child with cancer who eases her pain  
Then go to your churches, if that's how you feel  
But don't ask me to follow, for God isn't real.

He forms in his image a weak and foolish man  
Speaks to him in symbols that few understand  
For a life of devotion, the death blow he deals  
We'd owe Him only hatred, but God isn't real.

Go tell the executioner of the power he can't defy  
Go tell his shackled victim of the mercy on high. . .  
Then go to your churches, go beg, pray, and kneel,  
But don't ask me to follow, for God isn't real.

No, no matter how He should be, God isn't real.

# From the Editor

## (continued from page 1)

illusion that there was “still someone home”. But that’s all it was. An illusion. She had become a living body with no person inside.

Since we’re not anticipating any medical breakthroughs to re-create a dissolved brain anytime soon, there was really no point in keeping her body going.

More importantly, though, is that the man she married — the one SHE CHOSE as her partner and surrogate — decided that she wouldn’t have wanted to continue in that condition. Barring any proof of abuse or neglect, nobody — not her parents, not the state, and certainly not the federal government — has the right to substitute their judgement for that of her husband.

Well, that didn’t sit too well with my mom. You see, HER mom (my grandmother) is in a nursing home, in a similar condition. She’s hooked up to feeding tubes, and has essentially no communication with or awareness of the outside world. And my mom wasn’t just asking my opinion out of curiosity — she was seeking validation of HER choice to keep her mom alive by any means necessary. So now she swears she’ll never give me power of attorney — presumably because I’ll kill her the first chance I get.

She’s even started using Bush’s catchphrase, talking about “erring on the side of life”.

A hundred thousand innocent Iraqis have died directly due to Bush’s decision to wage war on a country that had nothing to do with 9/11 and posed no threat to us whatsoever. Bush didn’t hesitate to sign the papers allowing over 150 prisoners to be executed in Texas while he was Governor, including many who had not received fair trials, or with DNA evidence indicating innocence. Bush even signed a law in Texas stating that life-support patients who weren’t improving and couldn’t pay for treatment, could be disconnected EVEN OVER THE OBJECTIONS OF THEIR FAMILY! But for one politically-useful mindless body, Bush suddenly wants to “err on the side of life”. And he’s willing to make Michael Schiavo’s life miserable to do it.

This is why we have a legal system. Terri’s parents have lured many celebrities and politicians into siding with them. The major media, recognizing that “Terri’s fight to survive” is a much more dramatic headline than “Michael’s fight to allow his wife’s body to die in peace”, slants all the news in favor of her parents. But our objective legal system, which DOESN’T have to worry about ratings, fame or getting reelected, has CONSISTENTLY examined the facts, and sided with Terri’s husband (over 30 times now, including appeals to every court in the land, and other legal stunts her parents have tried).

Terri’s parents have had every opportunity to present their side of things. But the courts have rejected their arguments. The legal process works.

My mom doesn’t care about the PROCESS of making the decision. It’s just the decision itself that matters to her. She thinks Terri’s husband is wrong, so she’s happy to let the government step in and make the choice for him.

But of course, process DOES matter. You can’t change the rules back and forth whenever the results don’t go your way. That way lies anarchy.

Whether you like the choice Terri’s husband made or not, it was HIS DECISION TO MAKE. Just like the choice to keep my grandmother alive under any circumstances is MY MOTHER’S DECISION TO MAKE. If other family members tried to sue to get my grandmother removed from life support, I would expect the courts to defend my mom’s decision (as my grandmother’s closest living relative) as vigorously as they defended Michael Schiavo’s.

Meanwhile, in personal news:

- Angela’s heart has been beating fast and irregular for over a month now, with no improvement, despite Lots and Lots of Drugs. If she hasn’t improved in three more weeks, the doctors are thinking of trying to electrically shock her heart into submission.
- A hot water leak in our wall has left our guest bathroom and hall closet a moldy, mildewy mess, and the disaster restoration folks have ripped holes in three walls to dry it out and repair it. After a week, it’s STILL not fully dry, and it may be another week before they can start rebuilding. On the bright side, Angela gets to pick new colors for the guest bath and living room!
- Angela was in the hospital for 24 hours due to sharp stabbing painful spasms in her chest and back. And some of the tests required that she NOT take her regular pain drugs for fibromyalgia for many hours... Needless to say, she was Not Happy. The problem seems to have been some combination of a bad gall bladder (she only has 14% regular function), and intense acid reflux.
- And oh yeah, it seems that John Dearing had a cancerous polyp removed last month, and just recently came out of surgery to remove 30cm of his colon (“and connecting tissue”) to be safe, in case the cancer they’d already removed had spread further. (Fortunately, it hadn’t).

As I said, what a month!

*Reed Byers*  
Editor, *Willamette Freethinker*

## Voice of an Angel

[Editor’s Note: *Yeah, right. See my column above. Yer lucky to be getting a newsletter at all this month...*] ☺

# When Religion Takes Over, Tyranny Results

## by Salman Rushdie, *New York Times*, 3/13/2005

I never thought of myself as a writer about religion until a religion came after me. Religion was a part of my subject, of course — for a novelist from the Indian subcontinent, how could it not have been? But in my opinion, I also had many other larger, tastier fish to fry. Nevertheless, when the attack came, I had to confront what was confronting me, and to decide what I wanted to stand up for in the face of what so vociferously, repressively and violently stood against me.

Now, 16 years later, religion is coming after us all and, even though most of us probably feel, as I once did, that we have other, more important concerns, we are all going to have to confront the challenge. If we fail, this particular fish may end up frying us.

For those of us who grew up in India in the aftermath of the Partition riots of 1946-1947, following the creation of the independent states of India and Pakistan, the shadow of that slaughter has remained as a dreadful warning of what men will do in the name of God. And there have been too many recurrences of such violence in India — in Meerut, in Assam and most recently in Gujarat. European history, too, is littered with proofs of the dangers of politicized religion: the French Wars of Religion, the bitter Irish troubles, the “Catholic nationalism” of the Spanish dictator Franco and the rival armies in the English Civil War going into battle, both singing the same hymns.

People have always turned to religion for the answers to the two great questions of life: Where did we come from? and how shall we live? But on the question of origins, all religions are simply wrong. The universe wasn't created in six days by a superforce that rested on the seventh. Nor was it churned into being by a sky god with a giant churn. And on the social question, the simple truth is that, wherever religions get into society's driving seat, tyranny results. The Inquisition results, or the Taliban.

And yet religions continue to insist that they provide special access to ethical truths, and consequently deserve special treatment and protection. And they continue to emerge from the world of private life — where they belong, like so many other things that are acceptable when done in private between consenting adults but unacceptable in the town square — and to bid for power. The emergence of radical Islam needs no redescription here, but the resurgence of faith is a larger subject than that.

In today's United States, it's possible for almost anyone — women, gays, African-Americans, Jews — to run for, and be elected to, high office. But a professed atheist wouldn't stand a popcorn's chance in hell. Hence the increasingly sanctimonious quality of so much American political discourse: the current president, according to Bob Woodward, sees himself as a “messenger” doing “the Lord's will,” and “moral values” has become a code phrase for old-fashioned, anti-gay, anti-abortion bigotry. The defeated Democrats also seem to be scurrying toward this kind of low ground, perhaps despairing of ever winning an election any other way.

**In today's United States, it's possible for almost anyone — women, gays, African-Americans, Jews — to run for, and be elected to, high office. But a professed atheist wouldn't stand a popcorn's chance in hell.**

According to Jacques Delors, former president of the European Commission, “The clash between those who believe and those who don't believe will be a dominant aspect of relations between the U.S. and Europe in the coming years.”

In Europe, the bombing of a railway station in Madrid and the murder of the Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh are being seen as warnings that the secular principles that underlie any humanist democracy need to be defended and reinforced. Even before these atrocities occurred, the French decision to ban religious attire such as Islamic headscarves had the support of the entire political spectrum. Islamist demands for segregated classes and prayer breaks were also rejected. Few Europeans today call themselves religious — only 21 percent, according to a recent European Values Study, as opposed to 59 percent of Americans, according to the Pew Forum. In Europe, the Enlightenment represented an escape from the power of religion to place limiting points on thought, while in the United States it represented an escape into the religious freedom of the New World — a move toward faith, rather than away from it. Many Europeans now view the American combination of religion and nationalism as frightening.

The exception to European secularism can be found in Britain, or at least in the government of the devoutly Christian, increasingly authoritarian Tony Blair, which is now trying to steamroll Parliament into passing a law against “incitement to religious hatred” in a cynical vote-getting attempt to placate advocates for British Muslims, in whose eyes almost any critique of Islam is offensive. Journalists, lawyers and a long list of public figures have warned that this law will dramatically hinder free speech and fail to meet its objective — that it would increase religious disturbances rather than diminish them. Blair's

(continued on page 8)

# Sharia: Iraq's Dark Cloud

## An Islamic constitution is huge peril.

by Susan Jacoby, *LA Times*, 3/21/2005

[Editor's note: *Susan Jacoby is the author of "Freethinkers: A History of American Secularism" (Metropolitan Books, 2004) and director of the Center for Inquiry-Metro New York. She recently came to speak on the topic of Secularism at Oregon State University; many CSS members attended.*]

One of the more disturbing byproducts of the U.S. involvement in Iraq is the recent outpouring of rationalization from across the American political and cultural spectrum for the incorporation of Islam into the new Iraqi constitution.

There's nothing particularly surprising about such rationalizing on the right. Vice President Dick Cheney responded predictably to January's Iraqi election, which expanded the power of Shiite religious parties, with the declaration that "we have a great deal of confidence in where they're headed." What else is an architect of the war going to say?

On the Christian right, such reactions are even more understandable; these are the very people who routinely denigrate America's own constitutional separation of church and state. Why should they worry if the new Iraqi government prevents a woman from divorcing without her husband's consent and gives her legal testimony only half the weight of a man's? As long as the Iraqis steer clear of a Saudi-style ban on all other forms of worship (read Christianity), a religion-based Iraqi constitution poses no logical obstacle for U.S. fundamentalists.

But the neocon hawks and religious right are far from alone in their sanguine view of Islam as the basis for a friendly government. Some on the left, succumbing to a patronizing multiculturalism — freedom of conscience for me but not for thee — are also spouting rationalizations for looking the other way if Islamic law, or *Sharia*, is imposed on the people of Iraq.

Many members of the new Islamic studies establishment in U.S. universities see objections to a union between government and Islam as one more example of American provincialism. "The mere mention of Islam in a constitutional context should not cause an overreaction," asserts Frank E. Vogel, director of Harvard University's Islamic legal studies program.

"This could be a legitimate cause for alarm, or it could be purely symbolic," adds Vogel, whose official academic title is "Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques Adjunct

Professor of Islamic Legal Studies." (The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, as it happens, is one of the official titles of the king of Saudi Arabia.)

But if history teaches us anything, it is that government enforcement of religious law has always been the natural enemy of individual and minority rights. One person's religious symbolism may be another person's real pain.

One of the "compromises" suggested by multiculturalists is a framework of secular law that nevertheless gives religious authorities full jurisdiction over sensitive matters like marriage and divorce. That was precisely the compromise that the new Israeli state made with Orthodox rabbis in 1948.

**If we fail to honor the secular side of our civic heritage at home, it certainly follows that we cannot object to majority-rule theocracy abroad.**

Although most Israeli law is secular, Orthodox rabbinical courts have near-total jurisdiction over marriage and divorce. A Jewish woman (even a non-observant Jewish woman) may divorce only if her husband gives her permission in the form of a *get*, a religious divorce decree. This "compromise" has consigned thousands of unhappy Israeli wives — known as *agunot*, which literally means "chained women" — to legal limbo. Without a *get*, a Jewish woman cannot remarry in Israel

and her children from subsequent unions — even if she marries abroad — are considered illegitimate.

Does anyone seriously think that Islamic jurisdiction over family law will produce fairer treatment for Iraqi women than the Orthodox Jewish jurisdiction has produced for Israeli women?

In Afghanistan, the U.S. gave in to the Islamic hard-line demand that the post-Taliban Afghan constitution prohibit passage of any law "contrary to the sacred religion of Islam." Defenders of this Faustian bargain take comfort from the unwillingness of Afghan President Hamid Karzai to enforce it. But what happens when Karzai is succeeded by someone who may not share his moderate views? A constitution that gives religion a "sacred" status offers a standing invitation for politicians and clerics to define sanctity for the rest of society.

Optimists about a church-state compromise in Iraq dreamily suggest that the new Iraqi government, whatever its constitution actually says about religion, will most likely adopt the *de facto* moderate course of Afghanistan instead of the repressive models of Saudi Arabia and Iran. Let's hope so — not for our own sake but for the sake of those Iraqis who yearn for personal

freedom and do not want their lives controlled by religious fanatics.

The sad and disgraceful common strand running through the many rationalizations for an Islam-based Iraqi constitution is an implicit and, in the case of the Bush administration, explicit denial of the importance of secular Enlightenment values in American history. Without the administration's constant political drumbeat equating U.S. patriotism with religious faith, it would be much harder to argue on behalf of theocracy in other cultures.

If we fail to honor the secular side of our civic heritage at home, it certainly follows that we cannot object to majority-rule theocracy abroad.

**"The wages of sin are death, but by the time taxes are taken out, its just sort of a tired feeling."**

— Paula Poundstone

### Three ways to support Corvallis Secular Society online!



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- Follow the given directions. When it asks for "Recipient's Email", type: [webmaster@css.peak.org](mailto:webmaster@css.peak.org)



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**Thank you for helping support freethought in Oregon's beautiful Willamette Valley!**

## Couple Sells Candles That Smell Like Jesus

by NBC News, 3/15/2005

<http://www.nbc10.com/news/4287825/detail.html>

You can find candles with just about every fragrance imaginable, from blueberry to ocean mist to hot apple pie.

Now there's a candle that lets you experience the scent of Jesus, and they've been selling out by the case.



"We see it as a ministry," says Bob Tosterud, who together with his wife came up with the idea for the candle.

Light up the candle called "His Essence"

and its makers say you'll experience the fragrance of Christ.

Bob Tosterud and wife Karen say the formula is all spelled out in Psalm 45.

"It's a Messianic Psalm referring to when Christ returns and his garments will have the scent of myrrh, aloe and cassia," says Karen Tosterud.

Wondering what that must smell like, Karen Tosterud ordered those oils, a combination that produces sort of a flowery, cinnamon aroma. Then she called on a friend who just happened to be a candle-maker.

"And in October, we got our first batch of 768 candles. We had no idea how it would go," Karen Tosterud says.

But once word got out they went through 10,000 candles.

"It's the only one on the market and everyone tells us it's very unique and nothing like it," says Karen Tosterud.

"We wanted people to be able to experience Christ in new ways and to be able to read a bible and have that scent and that candle as a reminder that he is with us all the time."

"You can't see him and you can't touch him," says Bob Tosterud. "This is a situation where you may be able to sense him by smelling. And it provides a really new dimension to one's experience with Jesus."

The candles never stay on the shelves for long. The Tosteruds say each one that goes out is like a ministry in itself.

The candles sell for about \$18. They are sold in about 150 stores around the country. Or you can order them online at [www.hisessence.com](http://www.hisessence.com).

# IMAX Theaters Reject Film Over Evolution

by Associated Press, 3/23/2005

CHARLESTON, South Carolina (AP) — IMAX theaters in several Southern cities have decided not to show a film on volcanoes out of concern that its references to evolution might offend those with fundamental religious beliefs.

“We’ve got to pick a film that’s going to sell in our area. If it’s not going to sell, we’re not going to take it,” said Lisa Buzzelli, director of an IMAX theater in Charleston that is not showing the movie. “Many people here believe in creationism, not evolution.”

The film, “Volcanoes of the Deep Sea,” makes a connection between human DNA and microbes inside undersea volcanoes.

Buzzelli doesn’t rule out showing the movie in the future.

IMAX theaters in Texas, Georgia and the Carolinas have declined to show the film, said Pietro Serapiglia, who handles distribution for Stephen Low, the film’s Montreal-based director and producer.

“I find it’s only in the South,” Serapiglia said.

Critics worry screening out films that mention evolution will discourage the production of others in the future.

“It’s going to restrain the creative approach by directors who refer to evolution,” said Joe DeAmicis, vice president for marketing at the California Science Center in Los Angeles and a former director of an IMAX theater.

“References to evolution will be dropped.”

# When Religion Takes Over... (continued from page 5)

government seems to view the whole subject of civil liberties with disdain: What do freedoms matter, hard won and long cherished though they may be, when set against the requirements of a government facing re-election?

And yet, the Blairite policy of appeasement must be defeated. Perhaps the British House of Lords will do what the Commons failed to do, and send this bad law to the scrap heap. And, though this is more unlikely, maybe America’s Democrats will come to understand that in today’s 50/50 America they may actually have more to gain by standing up against the Christian Coalition and its fellow travelers, and refusing to let a Mel Gibson view of the world shape American social and political policy. If these things do not happen, if America and Britain allow religious faith to control and dominate public discourse, then the Western alliance will be placed under ever-increasing strain, and those other religionists, the ones against whom we’re supposed to be fighting, will have great cause to celebrate.

Victor Hugo wrote, “There is in every village a torch: the schoolmaster — and an extinguisher: the parson.” We need more teachers and fewer priests in our lives because, as James Joyce once said, “There is no heresy or no philosophy which is so abhorrent to the church as a human being.” But perhaps the great American lawyer Clarence Darrow put the secularist argument best of all. “I don’t believe in God,” he said, “because I don’t believe in Mother Goose.”

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