



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:

I ran across a quote this month, while collecting items for this newsletter:

Science is not a democracy.

And in that one simple sentence, I suddenly see a picture of the worst problems facing America today.

The quote is, of course, exactly right. Science is not a democracy. You don't get to vote on truth. Despite all the efforts of George Bush, Big Business and the Religious Right, unpopular facts do not cease to be facts, and popular lies don't suddenly become true.

Intelligent Design doesn't become any more true just because a bunch of local yokels get riled up and take over control of the Kansas School Board.

Global Warming doesn't cease to exist because it's inconvenient for ChevronTexaco and the big oil conglomerates.

Bush is famous for cutting funds going to scientists whose findings he dislikes, and instead giving that money to people who are willing to say what he wants to hear. His people routinely take reports from the EPA and other agencies and rewrite vast sections to conform with their political desires.

And this occurs outside of the straight science arena as well.

Iraq didn't have WMDs just because we wanted an excuse to invade. And, after the fact, we can't decide that we REALLY invaded in order to spread peace and democracy throughout the Middle East. That's not why we invaded. Really. There were actual reasons Congress voted to do it, and remaking Iraq in our image wasn't one of them.

Science is not a democracy. We atheists are specifically the group of people who understand this best. Sorry, Christians, but reality isn't a popularity contest. There are limits to what "spin" can do for you.

Or there should be.

Reed Byers

Editor, *Willamette Freethinker*

CSS Meetings and Events

Calendar:

Saturday, Oct 15 th	2:00-4:00	CSS regular meeting
Saturday, Nov 19 th	2:00-4:00	CSS regular meeting
Saturday, Dec 17 th	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).

**Donald Rumsfeld is giving
President Bush his daily briefing.**

**He concludes by saying:
"Yesterday, 3 Brazilian soldiers were killed."
"OH NO!" Bush exclaims. "That's terrible!"**

**His staff sits stunned at this display of
emotion, nervously watching as the
President sits, head in hands.**

**Finally, Bush looks up and asks,
"How many is a brazillion?"**

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From the President:

Cinematic Humanism, Part II: Freethought Movies

Sources:

Freedom From Religion Foundation: <http://ffrf.org/timely/flicks.php>
 The Internet Movie Database (IMDb): <http://www.imdb.com>
 Amazon: <http://amazon.com>
 Heart of the Beholder: <http://www.beholder.com>

Freethinkers in the United States are a growing but increasingly-embattled minority. We champion the free and open expression of ideas; the religious/political right, in contrast, tends to try to censor the expression of ideas and images they dislike. (They not only want to decide what *they* can read, view, and think: they want to make that decision for *you* as well.) This censorship takes many forms, including attempts to ban magazines, books, stage productions, and films.

The movie, **Heart of the Beholder (2005)**, is a case in point. According to Amazon.com, this movie is:

Based on a True Story — Mike and Diane Howard opened the first videocassette rental store in St. Louis in 1981. With hard work, their company grew into a multi-million dollar chain of video stores. The Howards were targeted by a religious group called the Citizens For Decency. The CFD insisted the Howards remove movies that they felt were obscene. Films such as *Taxi Driver*, *Agnes of God*, *Blazing Saddles*, *Animal House*, *Mr. Mom*, *SPLASH*, and many more.

When Martin Scorsese's controversial film, *The Last Temptation of Christ*, was released on video, the Howards' were the only stores in St. Louis to carry the film. The CFD declared war with pickets and boycotts. Death threats were made against their daughter. The prosecutor filed obscenity charges and alleged that the Howards had ties to organized crime which made Mike and Diane social outcasts.

They won their court case, but the negative publicity and legal fees bankrupted them. After an aborted suicide attempt, Mike pulled himself together. Mike finds out that a former prostitute, who had fallen into the religious group, told the zealots how the Prosecuting Attorney had been a regular customer of hers. The CFD then blackmailed the Prosecuting Attorney with information about the prosecutor's secret sex life. Mike and Diane lost everything, but they did get something the powerless seldom do — REVENGE.

For more detail, please see http://www.beholder.com/HOTB_background.htm: this link is *very* interesting! In turn, the *production* of the film was fought by the religious right: they don't want this story told. Nevertheless, this movie is now available.

Several films over the years have had a Freethought theme (or at least have had a freethinker as a character!). *Freethought Today*, the newspaper of the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF), published a list of "freethought flicks" in their January/February 2002 issue. It is available at <http://ffrf.org/timely/flicks.php>. It includes a synopsis of each film listed. If you want suggestions for some thought-provoking as well as entertaining movies, this is a great website to visit. Here are some sample entries:

Chocolat (2001 comedy). Director: Lasse Hallstrom. Actress Juliette Binoche and many supporting actors shine in this charming fable of the enlightening powers of chocolate in a Catholic-drenched French village during Lent in 1959. Binoche plays the overt town infidel who changes everything for the better. A veritable freethought confection. Do not miss! PG-13.

Contact (1997 sci-fi). 150m. Directed by Robert Zemeckis. What freethinker doesn't know that atheist Jodie Foster portrays an openly nonreligious scientist in this well-received movie based on Carl Sagan's novel? One of the few movies with a nonreligious protagonist where atheism and rationalism play an overt role in the plot. PG.

Drop Dead Gorgeous (1999 satire). 98m. Director: D. Michael Patrick Jann. The March 2001 Freethinker, a British publication, calls this "an unashamed and extremely funny poke at American small town religiosity and hypocrisy," depicting a Lutheran beauty contestant and her mother who will stop at nothing to win: "After all, Jesus loves a winner." PG-13.

Elmer Gantry (1960 drama). 145m. Director: Richard Brooks. Burt Lancaster gives an Oscar-winning portrayal of Sinclair Lewis' unforgettable evangelistic con-man character. Brooks also won best screenwriter. NR.

Jesus Christ Superstar (1973 musical). 103m. Director: Norman Jewison. Tim Rice-Andrew Lloyd Weber score. "No miracles? No resurrection? Judas a good guy? Only a

(continued on page 10)

Government by Temper Tantrum

Bush responds to women's health resignation by appointing veterinarian

by Molly Ivins, 9/22/05

AUSTIN, Texas — So here are all the liberals going into a giant snit just because George W. Bush appointed a veterinarian to head the women's health section of the Food and Drug Administration. For Pete's sake, you whiners, the only reason he chose the vet is because Michael Brown wasn't available.

If you recall, Ol' Heckuva-Job Brownie had to go home, walk his dog and then hug his wife after exhausting himself in his triumphal handling of Hurricane Katrina. Otherwise, he'd have been Bush's first pick.

Now, even the veterinarian doesn't get the job — just because those professional feminists raised such a stink. What's wrong with a vet? They know a lot about birth and udders and stuff. If the mother is having trouble giving birth, you grab the baby by the legs and pull it out — it's not brain surgery. Then you worm 'em, you tag 'em and you spray for fleas. Why the fuss?

The only reason Bush even needed a new head of the Office of Women's Health is because the last one, Susan Wood, quit. She was upset because the political hacks who run the agency refused to allow over-the-counter sale of the emergency contraceptive pill Plan B.

True, that decision was made against the advice of the FDA's own scientific advisory panel and will unquestionably result in more abortions and almost certainly damage to some women's health. But why would anyone expect the Bush hacks to pay attention to scientific and clinical evidence, fully evaluated and recommended by the professional staff? Just like the folks at FEMA, they got their jobs because they know how to set up photo-ops for Bush.

There's a doctoral dissertation to be written about Bush appointees named during the administration's frequent fits of Petulant Pique. These PP appointments are made in the immortal childhood spirit of "nanny-nanny boo-boo, I'll show you." Susan Wood resigns in protest over the politicization of women's health care? Ha! We'll show her — we'll put a vet in charge instead!

The PP appointments are less for reasons of ideology or even rewarding the politically faithful than just in the old nyeh-nyeh spirit. You could, for example, put any number of people at the Department of Labor who are wholly unsympathetic to the labor movement — Bush has installed shoals of them already. But there is a certain arch, flippant malice to making Edwin Foulke assistant secretary in charge of the health and safety of workers.

Republican appointees who oppose the agencies to which they are assigned are a dime a dozen, but Foulke is a partner from the most notorious union-busting law firm in

the country. What he does for a living is destroy the only organizations that care about workers' health and safety.

Here's another PP pick: put a timber industry lobbyist in as head of the Forest Service. How about a mining industry lobbyist who believes public lands are unconstitutional in charge of the public lands? Nice shot. A utility lobbyist who represented the worst air polluters in the country as head of the clean air division at the EPA? A laff riot. As head of the Superfund, a woman whose last job was teaching corporate polluters how to evade Superfund regulations? Cute, cute, cute. A Monsanto lobbyist as No. 2 at the EPA. A lobbyist for the American Petroleum Institute at the Council on Environmental Quality. And so on. And so forth.

The Federal Trade Commission was finally embarrassed enough by demands from Democratic governors to start an investigation into recent price gouging by oil companies. But the investigation will be headed by a former lawyer for ChevronTexaco. Is this fun or what? Nanny-nanny boo-boo.

The terrible lesson of Hurricane Katrina is that public policy is not a political gotcha game. The public interest is not well-served by appointing incompetents or anti-incompetents to positions of responsibility. Public policy is about our lives.

Here's another example: The Violence Against Women Act expires on Oct. 1 and must be reauthorized before then. It doesn't look good. For 10 years, this law has helped improve criminal justice and community-based responses to sexual violence and sexual assault. As result, there has been an overall decline in the incidence of women battered or killed by their partners.

But as the July-August issue of Mother Jones painfully demonstrates, domestic violence remains a hideous problem. It is both a public health and a human rights issue. Homicide is the 10th leading cause of death for women under 65. According to the Family Violence Prevention Fund, about 30 percent of American women report being physically abused by husbands or boyfriends. Every year, more than 300,000 U.S. women are raped and more than 4 million assaulted. Funding for family violence prevention was cut by \$48 million this year.

I guess it would be pretty funny, on some level, to put a vet in charge of this issue, too. But let's not. This is about people's lives. I've already seen too many people staring numbly at walls, still in shock. Let's start by getting Congress to at least reauthorize the act. The arsenal of democracy starts with the telephone, the fax machine, the e-mail, paper and pen. Just sign it, "Your constituent."

Societies Worse Off 'When They Have God on Their Side'

by Ruth Gledhill, *Times Online (UK)*, 9/27/05

submitted by Jeff Lewis, CSS Member

RELIGIOUS belief can cause damage to a society, contributing towards high murder rates, abortion, sexual promiscuity and suicide, according to research published today.

According to the study, belief in and worship of God are not only unnecessary for a healthy society but may actually contribute to social problems.

The study counters the view of believers that religion is necessary to provide the moral and ethical foundations of a healthy society.

It compares the social performance of relatively secular countries, such as Britain, with the US, where the majority believes in a creator rather than the theory of evolution. Many conservative evangelicals in the US consider Darwinism to be a social evil, believing that it inspires atheism and amorality.

Many liberal Christians and believers of other faiths hold that religious belief is socially beneficial, believing that it helps to lower rates of violent crime, murder, suicide, sexual promiscuity and abortion. The benefits of religious belief to a society have been described as its "spiritual capital". But the study claims that the devotion of many in the US may actually contribute to its ills.

The paper, published in the *Journal of Religion and Society*, a US academic journal, reports: "Many Americans agree that their churchgoing nation is an exceptional, God-blessed, shining city on the hill that stands as an impressive example for an increasingly sceptical world.

"In general, higher rates of belief in and worship of a creator correlate with higher rates of homicide, juvenile and early adult mortality, STD infection rates, teen pregnancy and abortion in the prosperous democracies.

"The United States is almost always the most dysfunctional of the developing democracies, sometimes spectacularly so."

Gregory Paul, the author of the study and a social scientist, used data from the International Social Survey Programme, Gallup and other research bodies to reach his conclusions.

He compared social indicators such as murder rates, abortion, suicide and teenage pregnancy.

The study concluded that the US was the world's only prosperous democracy where murder rates were still high, and that the least devout nations were the least dysfunctional. Mr Paul said that rates of gonorrhoea in adolescents in the US were up to 300 times higher than in less devout democratic countries. The US also suffered from "uniquely high" adolescent and adult syphilis infection rates, and adolescent abortion rates, the study suggested.

The study concluded that the US was the world's only prosperous democracy where murder rates were still high, and that the least devout nations were the least dysfunctional.

Mr Paul said: "The study shows that England, despite the social ills it has, is actually performing a good deal better than the USA in most indicators, even though it is now a much less religious nation than America."

He said that the disparity was even greater when the US was compared with other countries, including France, Japan and the Scandinavian countries. These nations had been the most

successful in reducing murder rates, early mortality, sexually transmitted diseases and abortion, he added.

Mr Paul delayed releasing the study until now because of Hurricane Katrina. He said that the evidence accumulated by a number of different studies suggested that religion might actually contribute to social ills. "I suspect that Europeans are increasingly repelled by the poor societal performance of the Christian states," he added.

He said that most Western nations would become more religious only if the theory of evolution could be overturned and the existence of God scientifically proven. Likewise, the theory of evolution would not enjoy majority support in the US unless there was a marked decline in religious belief, Mr Paul said.

"The non-religious, proevolution democracies contradict the dictum that a society cannot enjoy good conditions unless most citizens ardently believe in a moral creator.

"The widely held fear that a Godless citizenry must experience societal disaster is therefore refuted."

Religion And Societal Harm

by Wayne Orgar, CSS Member, 10/07/2005

Something is going on in our world that continues to escape the media and the public for the most part. Our focus is on hurricane Katrina and Rita, government fumbling, which celebrity is breaking up with whom, and steroid use among athletes. Meanwhile, the lack of benefit from religion for societal health in the United States continues its downward plunge throughout the twentieth century and now into the twenty-first century.

Despite popular belief and the American media, theism has not helped people control their behavior, theism has not necessarily helped people be more healthy, prayers have not proven to be of any use, and faith-based initiatives have still not been shown to be better than secular approaches and may be worse.

A recent and comprehensive examination from a global perspective on the association of religion and societal health and dysfunction has been published this month in the *Journal of Religion and Society* (1). Authored by Gregory S. Paul, once again the preponderance of the data shows no benefit from religion worldwide. Studies of smaller populations that are reported in the media often try to convince believers otherwise for political and commercial advantage. This particular review was mentioned in the United Kingdom on-line and in the *Los Angeles Times*. If this had been one of those bogus prayer studies, we would have seen the headline screaming out from Time magazine within a week.

"In general, higher rates of belief in and worship of a creator correlate with higher rates of homicide, juvenile and early adult mortality, STD infection rates, teen pregnancy, and abortion in the prosperous democracies," according to this review. Despite the consolidated wealth in the United States, this study shows that our country demonstrates this dysfunction more than most. We also lead the world in incarceration rates and poverty rates for developed countries. Recent events show that our country is not prepared for disaster despite spending billions of dollars on homeland security and defense. We are not spending money efficiently.

Correlation does not prove causation. Yet, for theists to claim that religion is beneficial, i.e. causes benefit in a democracy, you do need to have a positive correlation between religion and benefit to claim causation globally. This is not the case. There is no evidence of benefit from religion globally.

What our nation needs is good dose of more secularism, not faith. Slipping into the fantasy world of religion has not helped this country identify and solve its problems. Religion only exacerbates the denial that characterizes our nation today.

Reference

1. Cross-National Correlations of Quantifiable Societal Health with Popular Religiosity and Secularism in the Prosperous Democracies. A First Look. *Journal of Religion and Society*. Gregory S. Paul. Baltimore, Maryland, Volume 7. (<http://moses.creighton.edu/JRS/2005/2005-11.html>). Accessed 10/8/05)

Recall the President!

by Bill Maher, 9/10/2005

America must recall the President!

That's what this country needs — a good, old-fashioned, California-style recall election, complete with Gary Coleman, porno actresses and action film stars. And just like Schwarzenegger's predecessor here in California, George Bush is now so unpopular, he must defend his job against... Russell Crowe.

Because at this point, I want a leader who will throw a phone at somebody. In fact, let's have ONLY phone throwers — Naomi Campbell can be the Vice President!

Now I kid, but seriously, Mr. President, this job can't be fun for you anymore... There's no more money to spend; you used up all of that... You can't start another war because you also used up the army. And now, darn the luck, the rest of your term has become the Bush family nightmare — helping poor people!

Listen to your mom; the cupboard's bare, the credit card's maxed out, and no one's speaking to you. Mission accomplished!

Now it's time to do what you've always done best: lose interest, and walk away. Like you did with your military service, and the oil company, and the baseball team.

It's time! Time to move on and try the next fantasy job. How about cowboy, or spaceman? Now, I know what you're saying. You're saying that there's so many things that you, as President, could involve yourself in.

Please don't!

I know, I know, there's alot left to do. There's a war with Venezuela, and eliminating the sales tax on yachts. Turning the space program over to the church, and Social Security to Fannie Mae. Giving embryos the vote!

But sir, none of that is going to happen now. Why? Because you govern like Billy Joel drives. You've performed so poorly, I'm surprised you haven't given yourself a medal. You're a catastrophe that walks like a man.

Herbert Hoover was a shitty president, but even he never conceded an entire metropolis to rising water and snakes.

On your watch, we've lost almost all of our allies, the surplus, four airliners, two trade centers, a piece of the Pentagon and the city of New Orleans. Maybe you're just not lucky!

I'm not saying you don't love this country; I'm just wondering how much worse it could be if you were on the other side.

So yes, God does speak to you, and what he's saying is, take a hint!

Voice of an Angel

Not News!

“NOT NEWS!” I find myself yelling that out almost daily as I watch the news channels. OK, sure the hurricane coverage was relevant, but do we really need to see reporters standing in 100mph gusts — literally getting ‘blown away’? Alright! We get it, it’s REALLY windy out there. Granted, there was some very outstanding reporting after Katrina — I think CNN’s Cooper Anderson deserves a medal for his efforts. But overall, let’s face it — most of the news we see over and over again is just simply NOT NEWS.

My first bone of contention is all the “Pretty White (usually Blonde) Missing Females”. From the missing pregnant lady, to the Runaway Bride, to the missing teen in Aruba (or was it Jamaica — ah who cares). Maybe their stories might deserve a mention from time to time, but do we need hourly updates?

My question is why aren’t we hearing about all the missing black women? Look at the case of Tamika Huston, a missing young black woman from South Carolina. Her family reported her missing in June 2004. Her skeletal remains were found August 12, 2005. Her family BEGGED the media to get involved, but they didn’t seem to care.

A little over a week after Tamika’s body was found, the body of 24-year-old Latoyia Figueroa of Philadelphia, Pa., missing little more than a month, was discovered in a grassy area of Chester, Pa., 10 miles west of Philadelphia. Figueroa was five months pregnant and the mother of a 7-year-old daughter. Her ex-boyfriend, Stephen Poaches, has been arrested and charged with murder in the deaths of her and her unborn daughter. I guess missing pregnant black women don’t rate as high as missing pregnant white women. These are just two examples — there are many more.

What I find interesting is how after Hurricane Katrina, the media was SHOCKED at how the government responded to poor Black Americans in New Orleans who were left to fend for themselves. Yet the media seems to have the exact same response themselves. The government ignored the pleas for help from the Black Americans in New Orleans and the media ignores the pleas for help from the families of missing Black Americans.

A second bone of contention is “Celebrity Trials”. From OJ Simson to Michael Jackson to Martha Stewart to Kobe Bryant and on and on. How are these trials more important than any others? Does being a celebrity somehow mean it is impossible for you to break the law? Why all the surprise? I simply don’t get it. OK, tell us about the Michael Jackson verdict, but do we have to spend several hours, much of which included watching Michael’s caravan drive from his ranch to the courthouse?

That was NOT NEWS! What? They couldn’t find something newsworthy somewhere in the world to report?

The one mostly bright spot in all this news nonsense is the BBC news. They are my ship in the storm. In-depth reporting on meaningful stories from around the world. When thousands of people were dying of starvation in the Darfur region in Africa this past summer, it barely got any mention on the US news channels. The BBC dedicated time and effort into getting this story out. Lately this is the only place I seem to be able to get any real news. (That and The Daily Show with John Stewart. We really have to start wondering when a “fake” news program gives us better REAL news than the “official” media outlets!)

Maybe it’s the nature of too many 24-hour cable news stations? I simply don’t know. What I do know is there is just too much worthless news on today. Don’t even let me get rambling about the reporting of sports.....

Angela Byers

CSS Treasurer & Webmaster

Wandering in a vast forest at night, I have only a faint light to guide me. A stranger appears and says to me: “My friend, you should blow out your candle in order to find your way more clearly.” This stranger is a theologian.

— Denis Diderot (1713-1784),
French philosopher, writer

When the late Professor Arthur O. Lovejoy was asked at a government investigation if he believed in God, he promptly rattled off thirty-three definitions of God and asked the questioner which one he had in mind. But of course it really didn’t matter to the questioner. To avow a belief in the existence of God simply assured one’s participation in the socio-cultural system, in which everyone knows that God exists out there but we humans are just too ignorant to perceive or define Him accurately.

— pp. 55-56 of “On the Nonexistence of Human Races”, Frank B. Livingstone, in *The Concept of Race*, ed. by Ashley Montagu, (Collier-Macmillan, London), 1964.

Newspaper Letters

'Under God' not needed

Albany Democrat Herald, 9/22/2005

When I graduated from high school in 1951, the pledge of allegiance did not include the phrase "under God." It was a complete and concise statement that expressed loyalty to the flag, and by extension, to our constitution and our country. It had only one purpose and served it well. There was no confusion and no controversy.

When I first heard the pledge recited using the new "under God" phrase, I was shocked; although I was on active duty in the Navy at the time, I didn't know the pledge had been changed. My first thought was that it was a gratuitous statement on its face and the phrase was out of place. It served no useful purpose except to satisfy someone's agenda.

The pledge of allegiance should not include or exclude anything. The Constitution of the United States lays out the rules and should retain that prerogative. The pledge of allegiance should be just that and nothing more.

The Congress of the United States caused this problem and they should fix it. They should remove the two words they added in the 1950s. Then everyone can shut up and sit down, and we can all go back to more important things.

Whether or not its constitutional is beside the point. The two words "under God" don't fit and didn't make any sense in the first place.

Gerald Hansen, Albany

Religion doesn't equal morality

Corvallis Gazette-Times, 10/5/2005

Your Sept. 29 front-page article about the Santiam Christian School, "Upholding their standards," seemed to imply (without coming out and baldly saying it) that one needs to practice religion to have moral values. I think in today's political climate, it cannot be said too often or too loudly, "Those who practice religion have no lock on moral values!"

Conversely, we need only to look at pedophile priests to see that immersing oneself in religion is no guarantee of virtue!

Jo-Ann Taylor Corvallis

Link of morals to enrollment lacking

Corvallis Gazette-Times, 10/5/2005

Gazette-Times editors committed a journalistic sin in their Sept. 29 top story headline, "Moral values lead to strong enrollment growth at Santiam Christian." If the quote had been attributed to the director of the school, that would have been fine. But, it wasn't.

The only thing the Gazette-Times know for sure is that more parents sending their kids to Santiam led to an increase in enrollment. Only God (if you're a believer), knows for sure if the school's "moral values" led to the increase. Moreover, just what these "moral values" are is a mystery, for we're never told what "moral values" Santiam is teaching that other Corvallis schools, which he points out are losing students, are not.

Does the article refer to "honesty," "respecting elders" or what? Because my 7-year-old at Garfield Elementary School is being taught these "moral values." The director of Santiam is quoted as saying: "Values that the home believes with are synonymous with our values." I got a headache trying to figure that one out.

Let's leave the proselytizing on the church podium and out of front page "news" stories.

Keith Kohnhorst Corvallis

Bush court picks bring lasting harm

Bush's addiction to crony loyalist appointments — without regard to competence — makes anything he does questionable-to-dangerous for the American people. Naming his personal lawyer to the Supreme Court is so obviously not "finding the best person possible" that it hardly matters how bad she is.

What is dangerous about both of Bush's appointments is that they will protect him and his gang of criminal looters from the American people when we finally have legislators ready to stand up for us. There are serious crimes involved, and keeping themselves immune from conviction is what makes loyalists who have been part of the team attractive to the Bush administration.

Protecting corporations from accountability, as the Supremes have been doing, serves the few and neuters democracy. Money power and political power are all these small-minded, heartless people care about. How we repeal the damage Bush is doing includes getting a Supreme Court which represents America rather than the greedy elite.

Don Caughey Corvallis

Pastafarianism: Return of the Flying Spaghetti Monster

For more information, see: <http://www.venganza.org/>

[Editor's Note: *Some of you may remember the Open Letter to the Kansas School Board that hit the Net a few months back and appeared in the July issue of this newsletter, in which the Flying Spaghetti Monster (doubtless some unknown relation of our very own Invisible Massless Purple Unicorns) made its first appearance.*

Founded by 24-year-old Bobby Henderson of our very own hometown of Corvallis, Oregon, Pastafarianism (as the movement now likes to be called) is really taking off. Here is what some Real Live Experts have to say on the matter.]

"As a scientist, I'd like to say that the currently accepted scientific theory is evolution. But, some competing ideas have been proposed, such as ID and FSMism, and discussion to include one should include the other, as these ideas are equally valid."

-- Mark Zurbuchen, Ph.D.

"As a medical practitioner and scientist, I wholeheartedly believe that every theory and hypothesis needs full consideration and explanation with formal ratification by peer review. We have a duty to inform our schools and presumably pasta should form a staple part of our educational diet."

-- Dr. A. Macintyre (UK)

"Letting the religious right teach ID in schools is like letting the Marines teach poetry in advanced combat training. As a scientist, I see these the relevancy between the two sets to be equal. If Kansas is going to mess up like this, the least it can do is not be hypocritical and allow equal time for other alternative 'theories' like FSMism, which is by far the tastier choice."

-- J. Simon, PhD

"One of the hardest things to do as a scientist is to put my personal beliefs aside when discussing matters of science. So as a professional, I have to say that both forms of Intelligent Design — ID and ID-FSM are equally valid and if intelligent design is taught in schools, equal time should be given to the FSM theory and the non-FSM theory. But, speaking personally now, it seems to me the FSM theory is MUCH more plausible than the non-FSM ID theory, because it is the only one of the two that takes into account all the discrepancies between ID and measureable objective reality."

-- Professor Douglas Shaw, Ph.D

Why You Should Convert To Flying Spaghetti Monsterism

- Flimsy moral standards.
- Every friday is a religious holiday. If your work/school objects to that, demand your religious beliefs are respected and threaten to call the ACLU.
- Our heaven is WAY better. We've got a Stripper Factory AND a Beer Volcano.

"In discussing competing theories, if one is to present ID then it is only fair and logical to teach other theories with commensurate evidence. Based on Mr. Henderson's letter, it is clear that the FSM theory has evidence comparable in weight to ID. As a scientist and professor, it is often difficult to present differing opinions in an unbiased way. However, it is important to the student to be exposed to these ideas to form their own opinions. This comes right out of the handbook of the ID purporters: present the different 'theories' and let the listener decide. If those in favor of ID are so convinced, then they should not be concerned that the presentation of the FSM theory would serve to undermine the credibility of ID."

-- Elizabeth Garrett-Mayer, PhD

"MMMMMMMMmmmm, spaghetti"

-- H. Neville, Ph.D.

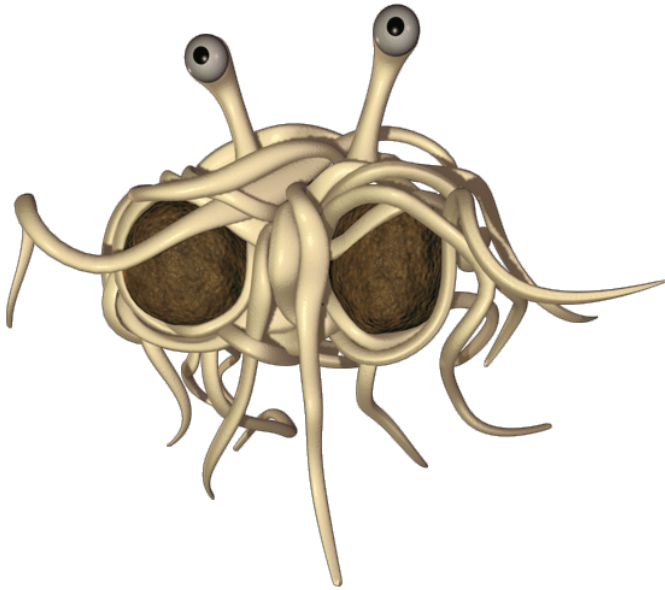
"As a former art historian, I must say that FSM wins hands down over ID when it comes to the complexity of its iconography. ID has produced little aesthetic response to its point of view. FSM on the other hand has stimulated a spontaneous outpouring of highly expressive art."

-- Laura Jones, PhD

"As a professional paleontologist, I need to emphasize that evolutionary theory has nothing to do with explaining the origin of life. Evolution is the scientific explanation that explains the diversity of life that we see all around us. It is usually defined very simply as a change in gene frequencies through time. It's not about origins.

Pastafarianism attempts to explain the origins of the universe, and does so with as much or more validity (and more gusto!) than ID creationism. And maybe many people find a sense of ultimate purpose in the universe by believing in the Flying Spaghetti Monster. But such beliefs are based upon faith, not science. In fact, considering His





active distortions of observable data, science cannot comment upon these beliefs at all, and must proceed in its usual manner — testing hypotheses based upon observable data. Whether these data have been altered by His Noodliness is moot; a difference which makes no difference is not difference.

Pastafarianism does not constitute a scientific theory, despite its apparent adherence to Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle regarding the interactions of observer and observed. It should not be taught as science ... unless, of course, ID creationism is also taught as science, in which case all bets are off.

Best of luck with your web page. I'm off to The Old Spaghetti Factory for worship."

-- E. Scott

"Having now perused the many facets of Pastafarianism (and being both a scientist and a specialist in the anthropology of religion), I believe that there is great scope for women in this religion. Clearly the FSM has aspects of both male and female, with both 'noodly appendages' and two round meatballs which clearly represent the Breasts of the Great Mother Goddess. Given this inclusion of diversity, I feel that Pastafarianism has MORE to offer budding students than ID, which is notably narrow in its outlook."

-- Susan Johnston, PhD

"I have now read and reread the information on Flying Spaghetti Monsterism (FSM) and I have to admit that it is frankly on par with (and in many ways superior to) the alternative proposed by the Kansas School Board. Having been employed by a school district in the state of Utah in the past, I can speak from experience when it comes to the mixture of education and religion. If Intelligent Design (ID) is accepted by the Board we will fight to have FSM accepted as well, and, once this has been accomplished, I am certainly willing to assist in the training of the Kansas school psychologists in the philosophy of FSM, if the ministers and pirates of the Church find me worthy.

As closing note, as a clinical psychologist and newly devoted disciple of FSM, I am going to write and suggest to

the APA (American Pasta Association) that we replace the current diagnostic and statistical manual, the DSM-IV, with the FSM-IV. That way if our clients don't like our diagnoses, they can eat them."

-- Lynne Anne Daurelle, Ph.D.

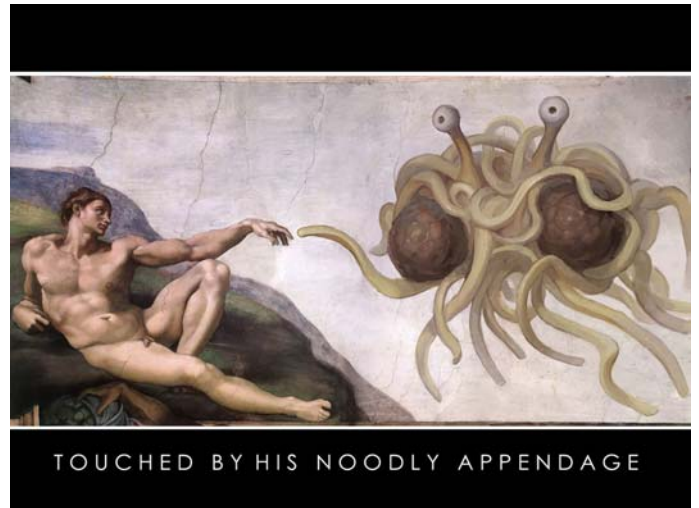
"As a neuroscientist and clinical psychologist, I have often been struck by how the brain resembles pasta. Clearly, the Flying Spaghetti Monster theory is worthy of deep thought. Or at least a side order of garlic toast. Which is more than I can say about ID, which, as St. Sigmund taught, should be subservient to EGO (Equally Goofy Observations)."

-- James Blackburn, Ph.D.

"Both the existence and power of His Noodliness have long been recognized -- if sometimes unconsciously -- by many diverse sources. Fortunately, the lucid tools of postmodern analysis can make that evidence visible and irrefutable. Here are just a few examples. (1) Sir Walter Scott's famous line 'Oh what a tangled web we weave' contains an unmistakable reference to spaghetti -- the substance of our Lordship. (2) Close observers of human behavior will note that Italians have long de facto recognized pastafarianism as a serious competitor to Catholicism, practicing the former more frequently and with even greater gusto. (3) The song 'Yankee Doodle' celebrates His Noodliness, even capturing His amazing ability to create Himself out of a decorated headpiece through a mere change of nomenclature. (4) The very name of the famous Chicago-based Pizzeria Uno embeds a belief in the Oneness of Him. (5) When computer scientists speak of 'spaghetti code', their reference to something incomprehensible by humans serves to heighten the gulf between our finite minds and His omniscience, as does (6) the often-heard remonstrance 'Use your noodle'. (7) The common phrase 'It went over like a wet noodle' clearly refers to His continual surveyance of all from Above.

With such honorable and compelling credentials, pastafarianism cannot be dismissed out of hand. It is certainly on an equal evidential footing with ID and deserves incorporation into any school curriculum that insists upon teaching ID. Besides, the FSM has the advantage of being much more palatable. 'Opt for farfalle, not far-fetched. With Him all things are pastable.' "

-- Charles E. M. Dunlop, Ph.D.



From the President

(continued from page 2)

humanist could have written this musical account of the last days of Jesus," maintains Richard Carrier. "The chorus to the main score, 'Jesus Christ, Superstar, do you think you are who they say you are?' is the skeptical but human theme. Judas (played by Carl Anderson) has all the best songs, full of humanist concerns, questioning the divinity of Jesus. Beware of the year 2000 remake, which is substantially inferior." G.

The Mosquito Coast (1986 drama). Director: Peter Weir. Starring Harrison Ford. Ford plays a brilliant atheist scientist who loves America but hates what it has become, and is afraid of nuclear war. He packs up his family and moves to the South American jungle to carve out a utopia. PG.

O Brother, Where Art Thou? (2000 comedy). Director: Joel Coen. George Clooney, John Turturro and Tim Blake Nelson are a chain-gang on the run in what one reviewer calls a "delightfully loopy" Depression-era remake of 'The Odyssey.' Clooney's comic but appealing character is a stalwart freethinker. John Goodman plays a positively sinister clergyman. Haunting scenes include a mass baptism in a river, and a KKK meeting. Don't miss this one! PG-13.

Pleasantville (1998 comedy). 123m. Director: Gary Ross. Norm Allen considers this film a "story about the importance of embracing life in the here and now," and a satire of '50s sitcoms, traditional family values and the Garden of Eden. He notes: "It made the Christian Film and Television Commission's top-20 list of the Worst Movies of 1998. In other words, it is a 'must-see.'" PG-13.

The Priest (1994 British drama). 97m. Director: Antonia Bird. Helen Weaver notes that this provocative and critically acclaimed movie, condemned by the Catholic Church, shows "the pastor of the church shacking up with his housekeeper, and the young priest struggling with his gay tendencies." R.

I hope FFRF will expand and update this list sometime. Some suggested additions:

- Cool Hand Luke (1967)** **Educating Rita (1983)**
- Fahrenheit 451 (1966)** **Fahrenheit 9/11 (2004)**
- Groundhog Day (1993)** **Heart of the Beholder (2005)**

The reader will probably think of more.

All freethought groups should consider viewing films together from time to time. Those with a freethought/humanist theme are especially appropriate, and can lead to thoughtful discussion.

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<p>President</p> <p>Use this address for comments or questions about CSS.</p> <p>Please do NOT send payments here.</p>	<p>John S. Dearing 126 NW 21st St. Corvallis, OR. 97330 (541) 754-2557 president@css.peak.org</p>
<p>Vice President / Editor</p> <p>Use this address for newsletter submissions.</p>	<p>Reed H. Byers 3035 SE 24th Ave. Albany, OR. 97322 (541) 924-9128 editor@css.peak.org</p>
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