



Willamette Freethinker



*** Double-size Issue! ***

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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:

It's been an amazing month, and I'm ready to sing. The slimiest man in Congress, Tom DeLay, has been forced to quit the House of Representatives!!!

I used to live, work, and go to school in DeLay's district in southern Houston, so I've always had a personal loathing and hatred for the Roach King. To say he lowered the ethical bar in Congress is to make a serious understatement. The man removed the bar entirely, decided the ground was too high, and dug a pit ten miles deep. He was, quite simply, the worst of the worst, and the only thing I'll enjoy as much as his quitting Congress will be when the bastard gets tossed into jail.

Nevertheless, despite the fact that this have developed into an eighteen-page newsletter issue, this rant is the only place you'll hear about DeLay's DeLightful DiLemma. Because there's just too much OTHER material to cover...

In other news, after literally YEARS of being nagged by my friends to do so, I have finally signed up with LiveJournal, a free website where you can create a journal and easily post whatever crosses your mind for all your friends to see. The idea is, it's an easy and fun way to keep all of your friends current on what's going on in your life (and to keep up with what's going on in all your friends lives).

...You'll just have to trust me on this. It's a better idea than it sounds (that's why it took me so long to get started). Once you're doing it, and your friends are doing it, it's actually a wonderful way to keep in touch with everyone you care about. You can set levels of privacy so only select people can read some of your entries, but more often than not, it doesn't matter and you leave it so anyone can read your posts.

You can customize your journal's appearance, post links, photos, you name it. And when you post an entry, your friends can respond to it and turn it into a conversation.

Angela's started a journal as well — and we invite all our newsletter readers to pop by and visit!

You can read my journal at:

<http://unbeliever64.livejournal.com>

and Angela's journal at:

<http://oregongirl1969.livejournal.com>

We post frequently (several times a week), and it can literally be about anything. Work, family, politics, humanism, random thoughts... and if you like what you read, reply to our posts online! We'd love to hear from our Humanist friends in this new forum...

Reed Byers

Editor, *Willamette Freethinker*

CSS Meetings and Events

Calendar:

Saturday, Apr 15th 2:00-4:00 CSS regular meeting
Saturday, May 20th 2:00-4:00 CSS regular meeting
Saturday, Jun 17th 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
- Voice of an Angel p.3
- Atheism Doesn't Mean Amoral p.4
- My Daughter, the Apostate p.5
- Carribean Coral Suffers Record Die-Off p.6
- Atheists Most Distrusted Minority p.7
- Let Cooler Heads Prevail p.8
- Newspaper Letters by CSS Members p.9
- Bush's Grand Game: A PNAC Primer Update p.10
- Fossil Missing Link from Sea to Land Animals p.16
- The Borders of Free Speech p.17
- Study: Prayer Doesn't Affect Heart Patients p.18

From the President

The Islamic Crusade

The etymology of *crusade*, per Merriam-Webster, is a blend of Middle French *croisade* & Spanish *cruzada*; both ultimately from Latin *cruc-*, *crux* cross; it entered the English language circa 1708. When capitalized, it refers to any of the military expeditions undertaken by Christian powers in the 11th, 12th, and 13th centuries to win the Holy Land from the Muslims. It now also means more generally a remedial enterprise undertaken with zeal and enthusiasm.

Although Muslims may dislike the word, I will argue here that an *Islamic Crusade* has begun. In my view, this crusade has been permitted and inspired by several factors. One of these is the West's interference in the Islamic countries, creating great resentment. Much of this interference has been due to our insatiable thirst for oil, which we seem to believe is ours to take, by divine right.

This Administration's foolish response to the 9-11 terrorist attacks has been to soft-pedal the hunt for al Quida (al-Qa'ida), and particularly for its leader, Osama bin Ladin. (Some four and one-half years after these attacks, bin Ladin *still* is free!). Instead, President Bush squandered the mighty resources of the United States and a few allies in a failed attempt to conquer Iraq, a nation that had nothing to do with the terrorist attacks, and which posed no immediate threat to the West. This, one of the most colossal military blunders of all time, has enormously increased Islamic resentment against the West, even as it has failed to provide the flow of abundant, cheap oil that, I suspect, was the (or one of the) real reasons for this invasion. (Bought gas lately?)

Another contributing factor, I believe, is the West's willingness to allow substantial immigration of Muslims. In France, for example, about 10-12% of the population is Muslim, and this fraction is growing rapidly, both by high fertility rates and by continued immigration. (France may, conceivably, become an Islamic nation in this century.) Much of the problem with this immigration by Muslims is that many refuse to integrate and to adopt the secular, tolerant, democratic traditions of the West. They tend to try to force their views on the rest of us. Look at the murder of Dutch film director Theo van Gogh, who made a controversial film about Islamic culture. According to Wikipedia, Van Gogh was murdered in the early morning of Tuesday November 2, 2004, in Amsterdam. He was shot with eight bullets and died on the spot. His throat was slit, and he was then stabbed in the chest. Two knives were left implanted in his torso, one pinning a five-page note to his body. The note threatened Western governments, Jews and Dutch feminist and critic of Islam Hirsi Ali (who went into hiding). (This happened in *Europe!*) Consider also the hysterical and violent Muslim response to some political cartoons first published in Denmark.

Perhaps the greatest contributing factor to the Islamic Crusade is Islam itself. Its theology is violent and intolerant. Their holy book, the *Koran* (or *Quran*) contains many such

passages as these: "Kill the unbelievers wherever you find them, capture and besiege them and prepare for them every kind of ambush." (9.5). "Make war on them until idolatry does not exist any longer and Allah's religion reigns universally." (8.39). Islam has had no reformation, and is unwilling to respect the right of others to believe as they wish. It has no acceptance of a secular society that allows and protects freedom of belief and freedom of expression. (Remember the recent demand that an Afghan convert to Christianity from Islam be killed.)

[It doesn't help when government officials deny reality. On April 1, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice stated in Blackburn, England, that there "is no conflict between Islamic values and democratic values."]

In Europe, with its large and swelling Islamic population, problems are mushrooming (but are underreported). Consider the recent horrifying, slow torturing to death of a young French Jewish man, Ilan Halimi, by Muslim extremists. Remember the fatwa — call for murder — against author Salman Rushdie for "blasphemy."

According to a March 19th opinion piece in Yahoo News by John Leo, "Increasing Muslim violence in Europe is not being reported," "Tony Blankley wrote a *Washington Times* column, March 8, on the underreporting of Muslim violence. He said British politicians tell him there is increasing radical Muslim street violence, explicitly motivated by radical Islam, but not reported or characterized as such. Blankley said rioting Moroccan youths in Antwerp went on a rampage, beating up reporters and destroying cars, but police were instructed not to arrest or stop them. A database search shows little reporting on Antwerp riots. The scary riots in Australia last December, pitting Lebanese immigrants against native whites, were well-covered. But nobody seems quite sure that we are getting the full story about other serious disturbances. From time to time the Internet carries reports of riots that don't make the newspapers, but they are mostly uncheckable. Suppressing news, whether out of multicultural deference or fear, is a perilous business. We can't know how to react to upheavals if we aren't told about them."

Now the intolerance and fanaticism of Islam is beginning to appear in North America. In Canada, the establishment of an Islamic or Sharia Court has been proposed. This "Islamic Institute of Civil Justice" is suggested as a multicultural way of determining personal and family disputes for those who "choose" to abide by Sharia law in Ontario. But discrimination and gender-based persecution are hallmarks of Sharia law. The notion that submitting to the authority of this law will be "voluntary" is absurd: the political Islamic movement is renowned for threatening, intimidating, mutilating, maiming and killing those who refuse: women and girls are always its first victims. If this court is established, intimidation and threats against women in Canada will increase.

Here in the United States, the Humanist/Freethought community has just had its rights violated by the threat of Islamic violence. The just-released April-May 2006 issue of *Free Inquiry*, published by the Council for Secular Humanism, will not be stocked by Borders Books and Music or by Waldenbooks. (Hence it will not be read by thousands of people, and sales will be lost.) This is because the issue includes four of the Danish cartoons depicting the Muslim prophet Muhammad.

“Far from commanding any special respect or protection from the State, religions must be exposed to relentless criticism, like all non-rational traditions and beliefs.” (Anatole Kaletsky of *The Times*.) If all people (not just religious people) are to have freedom of belief and freedom of expression, then it is logically necessary that no one (such as fundamentalist Christians or Muslims) be protected from ideas or images that offend their “religious sensibilities.” The dogmas and ethics of religious groups should be entirely open to critical analysis.

The Islamic Crusade has come to our country. It has come to our community. It is time for Humanists, Freethinkers, and others of goodwill to speak out and to take action. Islamic (and Christian) fundamentalists are threatening our secular democracies: they are opposed to freedom of belief, freedom of expression, and to women’s rights.

There are two visions of America. One precedes our founding fathers and finds its roots in the harshness of our puritan past. It is very suspicious of freedom, uncomfortable with diversity, hostile to science, unfriendly to reason, contemptuous of personal autonomy. It sees America as a religious nation. It views patriotism as allegiance to God. It secretly adores coercion and conformity. Despite our constitution, despite the legacy of the Enlightenment, it appeals to millions of Americans and threatens our freedom.

The other vision finds its roots in the spirit of our founding revolution and in the leaders of this nation who embraced the age of reason. It loves freedom, encourages diversity, embraces science and affirms the dignity and rights of every individual. It sees America as a moral nation, neither completely religious nor completely secular. It defines patriotism as love of country and of the people who make it strong. It defends all citizens against unjust coercion and irrational conformity.

This second vision is our vision. It is the vision of a free society. We must be bold enough to proclaim it and strong enough to defend it against all its enemies.

—Rabbi Sherwin Wine

A free society must be the goal of our nation, of all Western nations, and ultimately of all nations of the world.

John Dearing
President of CSS

Voice of an Angel

OK. That does it! I’ve been sitting here thinking of what I wanted to write about and after hearing the same excuses from people on the news, I just can’t take this anymore. The issue I am bothered with is Immigration.

The excuse I hear being made is that immigrants do jobs that Americans won’t. But let’s finish that sentence and add the words “at those low wages”! The fact is the US Congress has not raised the minimum wage since 1997. There is no way anyone can support a family on \$5.25 an hour. Now if these jobs started paying a living wage, there would be LOTS of Americans lining up for them. Americans simply aren’t willing to do work that doesn’t pay fairly — and can we blame them?

The REAL problem is the Americans who hire immigrant for cheap labor and complain that they can’t find anyone else to do the work. IF YOU PAY THEM THEY WILL COME! I hear daily how if it weren’t for immigrants our toilets wouldn’t get cleaned and our lawns would not be mowed.

Well, I am here to tell you that I get my toilets cleaned and lawn mowed by American Citizens to whom I pay a living wage. I pay \$15/hour to my house cleaner and \$25 to my landscaper each time he comes — it takes him about 75mins/week. That’s a living wage! Now if I wanted to break the law I could hire an illegal immigrant for half the price, and when I am caught I should be punished. And that is where the punishment should lie — on the people who hire illegals.

If you can’t afford to hire a landscaper or house cleaner at \$15-\$20/hour, then you need to get up and learn how to use that lawn mower and toilet brush yourself. No more excuses! No more breaking the law! There ARE Americans out there who will do the work, but you MUST pay them fairly! I know — I employ such folks myself!

I don’t believe we should be severely punishing the Illegal Immigrants. I DO believe they are breaking the law, and if caught they should be deported. There are legal ways to enter this country. I know life might be very hard for them at home, but that’s no excuse for breaking the law. It just really gnaws at me how some people feel they have some sort of “right” to break the law if it suits them. No one is above the law, not even the President — although I think he needs to be reminded of this!

We need Congress to raise the minimum wage SIGNIFICANTLY! We need laws that have REAL punishments for people who hire illegal immigrants. These employers are trying to get away with slave wages — they should be ashamed of themselves!

The bottom line is we need to treat people like human beings. To be honest I don’t know what to do with all the folks who are here illegally. It bothers me greatly that some seem to feel like they are entitled to be here, no

(continued on page 9)

Atheism Doesn't Mean Amoral

by Mollie Bradley-Martin, 3/31/2006

<http://www.liberalgirlnextdoor.blogspot.com/>

[Editor's Note: *"The Liberal Girl Next Door"* is my new favorite blog to read each day. Mollie Bradley-Martin, it's author, is a very well-spoken liberal and atheist. The following was one of her recent posts. Her father, Mark Bradley, then wrote the response on the following page. For the study Mollie refers to in the first paragraph below, see page 7.]

I was stunned when I read the results of a survey that was recently conducted by the University of Minnesota's department of sociology about atheism. It seems that Americans are distrusting of atheists although, from the study, it appears that they have little idea what it means. According to most of the 2000 Americans surveyed, we are self-centered, prone to criminal behavior, materialistic, untrustworthy, don't have core values, don't care about our fellow citizens let alone the rest of humanity and you shouldn't let your sons and daughters marry us. Glad to know we're so highly regarded by our fellow Americans.

Not to toot my own horn, but I care very deeply about the world around me, I follow the law, and I am generous with my friends, family, neighbors and community. I also try to consume as little as possible, I use public transportation, drive my car little and much prefer to spend time with people than acquiring things. I share many of the same core values as religious people, treat others as I would myself, do no harm, share, in fact I would say that I adhere to the words of Jesus much better than most Christians. I do it not because I believe they are the words of God, but because I believe deeply in the inherent dignity of living things. God doesn't make us good, we choose that for ourselves and our behavior is how we are judged by society. Then why is there such a disconnect between what atheists believe, and what others believe of them?

This survey does give some insight into why science is under attack. Scientists are predominantly atheists with 93% of members of the National Academy of Sciences either not believing or doubting the existence of God. This is not proof that they are bad human beings, but rather their experience tells them that what is not provable, is not something you want to have blind faith in. But if the majority of the country considers them suspect as people, why would they trust the science that they produce, whether about global warming, fine particulate contamination or stem cells? If science breeds atheism, then in a "Christian society" science must not be trusted. We seem to be going back further in time and at a much more rapid pace than we ever could have imagined.

There seems to be a sense that if you don't believe in God, you must believe instead in the opposite of God. I guess this is a function of our polarized society and our vain attempts to order the world into black and white. I have

no problem with others having faith in God, I have faith in things too. I just don't kid myself that there are any absolutes. I have faith that the world will keep spinning, until it stops. I have faith that my husband will come home each night, until he doesn't. I have faith that people are good and decent, until they show me otherwise. I have faith. I just can't make that leap to having blind faith in anything, even God. But that doesn't mean I reject everything in the Bible.

Rejecting God doesn't mean rejecting the morality that Christians believe comes from Him, I follow the commandments regarding social behavior, honor thy mother and father, thou shall not kill, commit adultery, steal, bear false witness, or covet thy neighbor's house and wife, but I do so because they're good ideas, not because God tells me to.

So where does this leave us? While 40% of people in the United Kingdom don't believe in God, in the United States, that number is only 5% according to a Gallup Poll conducted in 2005 (although a BBC poll from 2004 has that number at 10%). The U.S. is still a pretty religious country and atheists, while fairly common in Western Europe, Australia, Canada and New Zealand, make up a very small segment of the population in this country and clearly, we are a group not trusted by our fellow citizens. It seems to me that atheists are misunderstood and we have much work to do in educating our fellow Americans about our beliefs, but interestingly enough, it is Christians, not atheists, who are feeling persecuted, even though they are, by far, in the majority.

This week, Christians are gathering in Washington D.C. to formulate a strategy for fighting back in the "War on Christians", but who is persecuting them? Atheists? Not likely, considering we are a disconnected and highly unorganized group. What are they so afraid of? If the word "God" is erased from our money, our courtrooms and our public places, does that really have any effect on their faith? Do they need non-believers to validate their belief in God? Having "God" on our money and in our public squares has not made me believe in His existence, so how could it possibly have the opposite effect?

The separation of Church and State is a protection for all of us. Government can't mandate religion and it can't infringe upon religious institutions either. Legislating morality is un-American and it doesn't work, this is what atheists know and what Christians must learn. Atheism doesn't mean amoral, it just means that external forces are not necessary for the formation of, and adherence to, a moral code. In most cases, we share a common vision of American society. It's just how we get there where the difference is found.

My Daughter, the Apostate:

A Father's Lament at his Child's Enlistment in the "War Against Religion"

by Mark W. Bradley, 4/1/2006

I was shocked and dismayed beyond words the other day to discover that my own beloved daughter, the filial fruit of my loins, has been enlisted as a soldier in the vast swarming army of Godless atheists fiendishly plotting to smother the last dying gasps of religion here in America. This melancholic revelation was not something I learned of through, say, malicious family gossip or a poison-pen letter slipped into my mailbox at midnight by a scientologist neighbor I barely know. No, this untoward utterance issued forth from the mouth (or rather the keyboard) of the blasphemously blogging Baal-worshiper herself. Truth be told, ever since she took on the urban terrorist persona of "the liberalgirlnextdoor", I've lived in constant fear of just such an outcome. Still, my morbid anticipation did little to cushion the staggering blow to my solar plexus. I am, as you can imagine, emotionally debilitated.

Mollie was, after all, raised in a devoutly religious household. Our family were strict practitioners of the original "Old Tyme Religion" — Fundamentalist Scandinavian Polytheism. The deity to whom our ancestral clan-grouping owed its traditional allegiance was Svenhart the Sword-wielding Berserker of Mercy, but during my early youth, I found my true calling as a high priest of Thunderbolt-thrusting Thor, Creator of Bloody Stumps. Over time, the god opened my heart, and I began to read the Nordic sagas (especially Beowulf) with a new and faith-based understanding. I adopted Thor as my personal deity, dropped out of junior high school, and started my own polygamous family.

Eventually, after eight arduous years of neighborhood plundering (not to mention the entrail-reading of other people's pets on the sacrificial altar of a specially-constructed plywood temple in my basement), Thor came to me in a thunderous and terrifying dream. His scarlet mane and braided beard were as the fiery flames of an Icelandic volcano, and he bestrode the heavens on the back of a man-devouring osprey clad in silver chain-mail and golden helm. With the ear-splitting voice of a thousand tornadoes he issued unto me commandments that I was loathe to refuse, lest I be cast from Valhalla into the Pit of Doom.

When I awoke that night (on the eve of my twenty-first birthday) drenched in a cold sweat, I immediately bestirred my nine-year-old daughter and five-year-old son, and the three of us began the nocturnal felling of dozens of telephone poles in our small-town with which to build a Towering Temple of Thor's Testimony in the driveway of a local Unitarian minister. Upon completion of the tower, I allowed my darling Mollie the honor of climbing up the seven-story facade and crowning the structure with a double-headed bronze battle-ax engraved

with the words "He Will Crush the Bones of Little Children with a Wave of His Bloody Hand"... I will never forget the look of pride on that angelic face, awash as it was in the brilliant blue of Pictish woad, even as I watched it get smaller through the rear window of the ambulance that transported me away from the scene and toward my new lodgings at the State Hospital, where I spent several confusing and turbulent years...

But never mind that. Part of the disappointment I feel at my daughter's recent fall from grace stems from the fact that she adhered so faithfully for so long to the somewhat unusual (but surprisingly mainstream) religious values I painstakingly instilled in her. This, of course, in contrast to my treacherous son Charles, who (at the tender age of thirteen) inexplicably fled the bosom of our family as we toured Norse religious sites in Sweden. In a willful act of disregard for the wishes of Odin, that obstreperous ingrate declined the prestigious honor of ritual strangulation and posthumous submersion in a peat bog, preferring instead the coward's way out — a cheap bid for political asylum! I tell you, you try to raise your kids right, you give them all the advantages you never had, and in the end they turn right around and kick you in the teeth...

But enough of my personal tribulation. What all these trials have taught me is that religious faith is the foundation of a truly meaningful life. I'm just sorry my wayward children have lost sight of that timeless truth. Now that they've made a conscious decision to join the forces of atheism, I can only view them as mortal enemies — minions in the army of darkness arrayed against those us who remain steadfast in defense of institutionalized religion.

In that light, and in spite of our superficial differences, I call upon all God-, goddess-, and gods-fearing people of faith to join in a united defense of our collective religious principles against the overwhelming onslaught of Agnosticism, Atheism, and all other forms of insidious godlessness that threaten to swamp our sacred churches, our sacrificial ziggurats, our monolithic stone burial chambers, and our mysterious crop circles in an unholy tidal wave of secular rationalism...

Mark W. Bradley is a schoolteacher and political satirist in Sacramento, California. He can be contacted at: markwbradley@comcast.net

"What a state of society is this in which freethinker is a term of abuse, and in which doubt is regarded as a sin!"

— W. Winwood Reade, "The Martyrdom of Man," 1872

Caribbean Coral Suffers Record Die-off

World's coral reef loss 'an underwater holocaust'

by Associated Press, 3/31/2006

WASHINGTON (AP) — A one-two punch of bleaching from record hot water followed by disease has killed ancient and delicate coral in the biggest loss of reefs scientists have ever seen in Caribbean waters.

Researchers from around the globe are scrambling to figure out the extent of the loss. Early conservative estimates from Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands find that about one-third of the coral in official monitoring sites has recently died.

"It's an unprecedented die-off," said National Park Service fisheries biologist Jeff Miller, who last week checked 40 stations in the Virgin Islands.

"The mortality that we're seeing now is of the extremely slow-growing reef-building corals. These are corals that are the foundation of the reef ... We're talking colonies that were here when Columbus came by have died in the past three to four months."

Some of the devastated coral can never be replaced because it only grows the width of one dime a year, Miller said.

Coral reefs are the basis for a multibillion-dollar tourism and commercial fishing economy in the Caribbean. Key fish species use coral as habitat and feeding grounds. Reefs limit the damage from hurricanes and tsunamis. More recently they are being touted as possible sources for new medicines.

If coral reefs die "you lose the goose with golden eggs" that are key parts of small island economies, said Edwin Hernandez-Delgado, a University of Puerto Rico biology researcher.

On Sunday, Hernandez-Delgado found a colony of 800-year-old star coral — more than 13 feet high — that had just died in the waters off Puerto Rico.

"We did lose entire colonies," he said. "This is something we have never seen before."

On Wednesday, Tyler Smith, coordinator of the U.S. Virgin Islands Coral Reef Monitoring program, dived at a popular spot for tourists in St. Thomas and saw an old chunk of brain coral, about 3 feet in diameter, that was at least 90 percent dead from the disease called "white plague."

"We haven't seen an event of this magnitude in the Caribbean before," said Mark Eakin, coordinator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Coral Reef Watch.



This old chunk of brain coral is at least 90 percent dead from the disease called "white plague."

The Caribbean is actually better off than areas of the Indian and Pacific ocean where mortality rates — mostly from warming waters — have been in the 90 percent range in past years, said Tom Goreau of the Global Coral Reef Alliance. Goreau called what's happening worldwide "an underwater holocaust."

And with global warming, scientists are pessimistic about the future of coral reefs.

"The prognosis is not good," said biochemistry professor M. James Crabbe of the University of Luton near London. In early April, he will investigate coral reef mortality in

Jamaica. "If you want to see a coral reef, go now, because they just won't survive in their current state."

For the Caribbean, it all started with hot sea temperatures, first in Panama in the spring and early summer, and it got worse from there.

New NOAA sea surface temperature figures show the sustained heating in the Caribbean last summer and fall was by far the worst in 21 years of satellite monitoring, Eakin said.

"The 2005 event is bigger than all the previous 20 years combined," he said.

What happened in the Caribbean would be the equivalent of every city in the United States recording a record high temperature at the same time, Eakin said. And it remained hot for weeks, even months, stressing the coral.

The heat causes the symbiotic algae that provides food for the coral to die and turn white. That puts the coral in critical condition. If coral remains bleached for more than a week, the chance of death soars, according to NOAA scientists.

In the past, only some coral species would bleach during hot water spells and the problem would occur only at certain depths. But in 2005, bleaching struck far more of the region at all depths and in most species.

(continued on page 7)

University of Minnesota Study: Atheists Identified as America's Most Distrusted Minority

Press release, 3/28/2006

What:

U of M study reveals America's distrust of atheism

Who:

Penny Edgell, associate professor of sociology

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MINNEAPOLIS / ST. PAUL (3/28/2006) — American's increasing acceptance of religious diversity doesn't extend to those who don't believe in a god, according to a national survey by researchers in the University of Minnesota's department of sociology.

From a telephone sampling of more than 2,000 households, university researchers found that Americans rate atheists below Muslims, recent immigrants, gays and lesbians and other minority groups in "sharing their vision of American society." Atheists are also the minority group most Americans are least willing to allow their children to marry.

Even though atheists are few in number, not formally organized and relatively hard to publicly identify, they are seen as a threat to the American way of life by a large portion of the American public. "Atheists, who account for about 3 percent of the U.S. population, offer a glaring exception to the rule of increasing social tolerance over the last 30 years," says Penny Edgell, associate sociology professor and the study's lead researcher.

Edgell also argues that today's atheists play the role that Catholics, Jews and communists have played in the past — they offer a symbolic moral boundary to membership in American society. "It seems most Americans believe that diversity is fine, as long as every one shares a common 'core' of values that make them trustworthy — and in America, that 'core' has historically been religious," says Edgell. Many of the study's respondents associated atheism with an array of moral indiscretions ranging from criminal behavior to rampant materialism and cultural elitism.

Edgell believes a fear of moral decline and resulting social disorder is behind the findings. "Americans believe they share more than rules and procedures with their fellow citizens — they share an understanding of right and wrong," she said. "Our findings seem to rest on a view of atheists as self-interested individuals who are not concerned with the common good."

The researchers also found acceptance or rejection of atheists is related not only to personal religiosity, but also to one's exposure to diversity, education and political orientation — with more educated, East and West Coast Americans more accepting of atheists than their Midwestern counterparts.

The study is co-authored by assistant professor Joseph Gerteis and associate professor Doug Hartmann. It's the first in a series of national studies conducted the American Mosaic Project, a three-year project funded by the Minneapolis-based David Edelstein Family Foundation that looks at race, religion and cultural diversity in the contemporary United States. The study will appear in the April issue of the American Sociological Review.

Caribbean Coral...

(continued from page 6)

A February NOAA report calculates 96 percent of lettuce coral, 93 percent of the star coral and nearly 61 percent of the iconic brain coral in St. Croix had bleached. Much of the coral had started to recover from the bleaching last fall, but then the weakened colonies were struck by disease, finishing them off.

Eakin, who oversees the temperature study of the warmer water, said it's hard to point to global warming for just one season's high temperatures, but other scientists are convinced.

"This is probably a harbinger of things to come," said John Rollino, the chief scientist for the Bahamian Reef Survey. "The coral bleaching is probably more a symptom of disease — the widespread global environmental degradation — that's going on."

Crabbe said evidence of global warming is overwhelming.

"The big problem for coral is the question of whether they can adapt sufficiently quickly to cope with climate change," Crabbe said. "I think the evidence we have at the moment is: No, they can't."

"It'll not be the same ecosystem," he said. "The fish will go away. The smaller predators will go away. The invertebrates will go away."

Let Cooler Heads Prevail

The Media Heat Up Over Global Warming

by George F. Will, *Washington Post*, 4/2/2006

[Editor's Note: *George Will may have backed off his once-enthusiastic endorsement of George Bush, but that doesn't mean he's grown a brain. In this column, he argues that global warming's not so bad! For CSS member Ev Sherr's response, see next page.*]

So, "the debate is over." Time magazine says so. Last week's cover story exhorted readers to "Be Worried. Be Very Worried," and ABC News concurred in several stories. So did Montana's governor, speaking on ABC. And there was polling about global warming, gathered by Time and ABC in collaboration.

Eighty-five percent of Americans say warming is probably happening, and 62 percent say it threatens them personally. The National Academy of Sciences says the rise in the Earth's surface temperature has been about one degree Fahrenheit in the past century. Did 85 percent of Americans notice? Of course not. They got their anxiety from journalism calculated to produce it. Never mind that one degree might be the margin of error when measuring the planet's temperature. To take a person's temperature, you put a thermometer in an orifice or under an arm. Taking the temperature of our churning planet, with its tectonic plates sliding around over a molten core, involves limited precision.

Why have Americans been dilatory about becoming as worried — as very worried — as Time and ABC think proper? An article on ABC's Web site wonders ominously, "Was Confusion Over Global Warming a Con Job?"

It suggests there has been a misinformation campaign implying that scientists might not be unanimous, a campaign by — how did you guess? — big oil. And the coal industry. But speaking of coal...

Recently, Montana Gov. Brian Schweitzer flew with ABC's George Stephanopoulos over Glacier National Park's receding glaciers. But Schweitzer offered hope: Everyone, buy Montana coal. New technologies can, he said, burn it while removing carbon causes of global warming.

Stephanopoulos noted that such technologies are at least four years away and "all the scientists" say something must be done "right now." Schweitzer, quickly recovering from hopefulness and returning to the "be worried, be very worried" message, said "it's even more critical than that" because China and India are going to "put more carbon dioxide in the atmosphere with conventional coal-fired generators than all of the rest of the planet has during the last 150 years."

That is one reason why the Clinton administration never submitted the Kyoto accord on global warming for Senate ratification. In 1997 the Senate voted 95 to 0 that the accord would disproportionately burden America while being too permissive toward major polluters that are America's trade competitors.

While worrying about Montana's receding glaciers, Schweitzer, who is 50, should also worry about the fact that when he was 20 he was told to be worried, very worried, about global cooling. Science magazine (Dec. 10, 1976) warned of "extensive Northern Hemisphere glaciation." Science Digest (February 1973) reported that "the world's climatologists are agreed" that we must "prepare for the next ice age." The Christian Science Monitor ("Warning: Earth's Climate is Changing Faster Than Even Experts Expect," Aug. 27, 1974) reported that glaciers "have begun to advance," "growing seasons in England and Scandinavia are getting shorter" and "the North Atlantic is cooling down about as fast as an ocean can cool." Newsweek agreed ("The Cooling World," April 28, 1975) that meteorologists "are almost unanimous" that catastrophic

famines might result from the global cooling that the New York Times (Sept. 14, 1975) said "may mark the return to another ice age." The Times (May 21, 1975) also said "a major cooling of the climate is widely considered inevitable" now that it is "well established" that the Northern Hemisphere's climate "has been getting cooler since about 1950."

In fact, the Earth is always experiencing either warming or cooling. But suppose the scientists and their journalistic conduits, who today say they were so spectacularly wrong so recently, are now correct. Suppose the Earth is warming and suppose the warming is caused by human activity. Are we sure there will be proportionate benefits from whatever climate change can be purchased at the cost of slowing economic growth and spending trillions? Are we sure the consequences of climate change — remember, a thick sheet of ice once covered the Midwest — must be bad? Or has the science-journalism complex decided that debate about these questions, too, is "over"?

About the mystery that vexes ABC — Why have Americans been slow to get in lock step concerning global warming? — perhaps the "problem" is not big oil or big coal, both of which have discovered there is big money to be made from tax breaks and other subsidies justified in the name of combating carbon.

Perhaps the problem is big crusading journalism.

Are we sure the consequences of climate change — remember, a thick sheet of ice once covered the Midwest — must be bad?

Newspaper Letters by CSS Members

It's crunch time on global warming Mid-Valley Sunday 4/8/2006

In regard to George Will's April 2 column, ("Cause of warming? Journalism!"):

When contemplating the potential consequences of global warming, the chief question is, to quote Clint Eastwood, do we "feel lucky"? There is no dispute among scientists.

The carbon dioxide content of the atmosphere is now a third higher than it has ever been during the last several glacial-interglacial periods, and it is heading steadily higher. We are nearing the point of no return for some uncontrollable feedback processes kicking in, such as the disappearance of summer ice in the Arctic Ocean and melting of Greenland and Antarctic ice sheets.

If we don't act now to slow the build-up of greenhouse gases, then within the lifetime of our children, a third of Florida and a good deal of other prime coastal real estate could be under water. Trusting to "luck" that the signs of warming are just due to natural climate variability is no longer a credible — or responsible — position.

Evelyn B. Sherr, Corvallis [CSS member]

Creationists run afoul of the facts Corvallis Gazette-Times 3/21/2006

I found it quite ironic to find a letter to the editor exclaiming there was no evidence for evolution on the same day that evidence was announced in March 17 article, "Clues show universe's growth," explaining the first trillionth of a second of the big bang.

This confirmation of physicist Alan Guth's great theory of inflation, described most eloquently in his book, "The Inflationary Universe," is but one of thousands of pieces of evidence that explain the evolution of the universe in terms of cosmology, and continuing, in terms of biology, through the evolution of species on our tiny planet. One has only to look at the changes in influenza viruses over time to see evolution in progress.

Does Mr. Bromley not believe that the bird flu is now in the midst of evolving, and so we should not pursue a vaccine and be vigilant in following the flu's progress? What of Neotoma, the rats that have eyes that no longer function because they live in dark caves where they are no longer needed; or penguins that have wings but no longer fly or people who have appendixes which apparently are no longer needed for us to live healthy lives or the DNA similarities in all living things.

Mr. Bromley wrote that he loves science, but he seems to not really understand science. I do not pretend to understand creationism, but I know that if you take a faith-based belief system and try to support it with a scientific foundation, your house will crumble.

William Switzer, Corvallis [CSS member]

Ask 'illegals' why they are illegal Corvallis Gazette-Times, 3/28/2006

The illegal immigrant issue confuses me. In the midst of huge rallies, hours of debate and decades of strife, it seems that little thought has been given to "Why is this a problem and how can we remove the cause?" We have always had — and depended upon — immigrants. Trying to stop that flow goes against the very grain of our foundation as a nation. Most of them find their way through our system to become legal residents.

So why are so many people (this is not just an Hispanic issue) coming to and staying in this country illegally, rather than legally?

Should the regulations or processes of the Immigration and Naturalization Service be changed so that it is easier to enter the country legally?

Is there a better way to introduce the topic of becoming an American citizen or resident to the populace?

Why is there such a protest about identifying and treating these people as criminals for being here illegally? It seems rather redundant and self-evident: being here illegally is against the law!

I believe the immigrants themselves have the answer; why don't we ask them?: "Why don't you have a 'green card'?"

Really listen to the response. Then, devise a system that addresses those responses and reduces or eliminates the identified barriers. This cannot possibly be more complicated, expensive, disrespectful, time-consuming or ineffective than the measures I am hearing proposed in news reports.

Kathryn Switzer, Corvallis [CSS member]

Voice of an Angel (continued from page 3)

matter what laws they break. It bothers me that some of these people have been here for over 10 years and STILL do not speak English. (I don't mean just the Spanish speakers — when I worked in Salem I found a Russian community where many did not speak English, even after 10+ years.) I just think it's disrespectful to live in a new country and not learn the language.

It bothers me that all this bothers me! I keep asking myself am I being racist? I honestly don't think that's ever been an issue for me. I am slightly comforted by the fact that I DO ask myself the question and actually take the time to examine how I really feel. I am hoping that probably means I am not racist.

Is there any REAL solution to all this? I'm not sure there is one that will please most people — and that's what REALLY bothers me.

Bush's Grand Game: A "PNAC Primer" Update

by Bernard Weiner (Co-Editor of *The Crisis Papers*), 4/4/2006

[Editor's Note: *In my humble opinion, you can't really understand what Bush & company are REALLY all about — or put 9/11 in any sort of context — unless you've done your homework on PNAC, the "Project for a New American Century". Consider this lengthy (but engrossing!) six-page article to be the Cliff Notes.]*

When the Bush Administration keeps hauling out its "we didn't-know-nothin'" spin — about Katrina, 9/11, Iraq, torture — in effect they're using incompetence as their defense. How can you try to censure or impeach us, they're saying, when we didn't know what was happening, what to do or how to do it?

Their incompetence by this time has been well-documented and par for the Bush course. But, as the evidence demonstrates, in each of those cases they knew a lot more than they let on, having received adequate warnings of the scenarios that were about to unfold.

They knew the levees might well be breached in New Orleans and did nothing; more than 1000 died. They knew a major al Qaida attack was coming in late-Summer 2001, probably by air and aimed at icon American targets in New York and Washington, and did nothing; nearly 3000 died. They knew their own advisers had alerted them that Saddam had no WMD and no connection to the 9/11 attacks, but they went ahead anyway and lied the Congress and American people into Iraq; tens of thousands of U.S. troops and Iraqi civilians have died and are continuing to do so. They knew, because they had approved the "harsh" interrogation methods, that tortures were being carried out on prisoners in U.S. care, but they did nothing (until photos leaked to the press); more than 100 detainees have died, and many thousands more have been brutalized and/or humiliated. They knew that eavesdropping on American citizens was illegal without court-sanctioned warrants, but they went ahead anyway, convinced nobody would ever learn of their law-breaking.

All of that is reprehensible, and will be added to the list of charges for the eventual impeachment hearings of Bush and Cheney, and/or to the criminal trials of those two and their subordinates. But what I propose to talk about here are not specifics of the high crimes, misdemeanors and thorough-going bunglings. To do that is to focus on the trees while ignoring the forest; we need to go deeper and find out who planted the seeds.

In one of their major reports, written in 2000, PNAC noted that "the process of [military] transformation, even if it brings revolutionary change, is likely to be a long one, absent some catastrophic and catalyzing event — like a new Pearl Harbor."

AN IDEOLOGY OF GREED & CONQUEST

To get a handle on how Bush&Co. took America into its current domestic and foreign crises, one must first understand that their policies and actions did not originate after Bush was installed in the White House in January of 2001. The philosophy of greed and power-amassment already was in place years prior to that.

And so it's time to re-examine The Project for The New American Century, about which still too little is known by the American public. There were a number of us writing about PNAC three years ago — William Rivers Pitt, myself, Neil Mackay, John Pilger, TJ Templeton and others — but, after an initial flurry of interest by the media, discussion about that neo-con think tank mostly dissolved.

Much of the following takes off from my original 2003 essay "How We Got Into This Imperial Pickle: A PNAC Primer." A PNAC Primer" — which is the most widely reprinted article I've ever written. That piece has been updated to reflect the new evidence that has surfaced in the past several years.

THE ORIGINS OF THE CRISIS

Most of us Americans saw the end of the Cold War as a harbinger of a more peaceful globe, and we relaxed knowing that the Communist world was no longer a threat to the U.S. The Soviet Union, our partner in MAD (Mutually Assured Destruction) and Cold War rivalry around the globe, was no more. This meant a partial vacuum in international affairs. Nature abhors a vacuum.

The only major vacuum-filler still standing after the Cold War was the United States. The U.S. could continue the so-called "soft imperialism" approach, the kind of diplomatic, well-disguised defense of U.S. interests (largely corporate) carried out under Bush#1, Reagan, Clinton, et al. Or one could go the Karl Rove route of speeding up the process and accomplishing those same domestic and foreign ends overtly — with an attitude of arrogance and in-your-face bullying — within maybe one or two Republican administrations.

Some of the ideological roots of today's Bush Administration power-wielders could be traced back to the political philosopher Leo Strauss (short version: act aggressively, do whatever you have to do to win), and to GOP rightist Barry Goldwater and his rabid anti-communist followers

in the early-1960s. But, for simplicity's sake let's stick closer to our own time.

In the early-1990s, a group of ideologues and power-politicians, most of whom had been in positions of authority in the Reagan Administration, found themselves on the outside looking in during the Clinton era, and were relegated to the fringe of the Republican Party's far-right. The members of this group in 1997 would found PNAC, The Project for the New American Century (PNAC); their aim was to prepare for the day when Republicans regained control of the White House, and, it was hoped, the other two branches of government as well. When that day came, their vision of how the U.S. should move in the world would be in place and ready to go, straight off-the-shelf into official policy.

PNAC was not a rag-tag group of lightweight amateurs. The PNAC founders were heavy hitters, with juice: Donald Rumsfeld, Dick Cheney, James Woolsey, Bill Kristol, Paul Wolfowitz, Richard Perle, James Bolton, Zalmay M. Khalilzad, William Bennett, Dan Quayle, Jeb Bush, et al., most of whom were movers-and-shakers in previous Administrations, savvy as to how to exercise power to the max in Washington. But even given their reputations and clout, the openly militarist views of this group — attacking other countries “pre-emptively,” for example — were regarded as too extreme to be taken seriously by the generally mainstream, small-government, isolationist conservatives who controlled the Republican Party.

THE EARLY DAYS OF PNAC

To prepare the ground for the PNAC-like ideas that were circulating in the HardRight, several wealthy billionaires and corporations helped set up far-right think-tanks, and bought up various media outlets — newspapers, magazines, TV networks, radio talk shows, cable channels, etc. — in support of that day when all the political tumblers would click into place and the HardRight cabal and their supporters could assume control.

That moment arrived with the Supreme Court's selection of George W. Bush in 2000. The temporary “outsiders” from PNAC were once again powerful “insiders,” placed in important positions from which they could exert maximum pressure on U.S. policy: Cheney is Vice President, Rumsfeld is Defense Secretary, Wolfowitz up until last year was Deputy Defense Secretary (now president of the World Bank), I. Lewis Libby (now under indictment in the Plamegate scandal) was Cheney's Chief of Staff, Elliot Abrams was put in charge of Middle East policy at the National Security Council (and is now a Deputy Secretary of State), Dov Zakheim was named comptroller for the Defense Department, John Bolton (now U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations) was Undersecretary of State, Richard Perle was chair of the important Defense Policy Board at the Pentagon, former CIA director James Woolsey was on that panel as well, etc.

One doesn't have to guess what the PNAC guys might be thinking, since they're quite open and proud of their theories and strategies.

etc. PNAC's chairman, Bill Kristol, is the editor of The Weekly Standard. In short, PNAC had a lock on foreign/military policy-creation in the Bush Administration.

But, in order to unleash their foreign/military campaigns without taking all sorts of flak from the traditional wing of the conservative GOP, they needed a context that would permit them free rein. The events of 9/11 rode to their rescue. In one of their major reports, written in 2000, PNAC noted that “the process of [military] transformation, even if it brings revolutionary change, is likely to be a long one, absent some catastrophic and catalyzing event — like a new Pearl Harbor.”

The Bush Administration, which came to see 9/11 as an “opportunity,” used 9/11 and the fear that it generated in the general populace as their cover for enacting all sorts of draconian measures domestically and as their rationalization for launching military campaigns abroad. The Patriot Act, drafted earlier, was rushed through a frightened Congress in the days following 9/11 and the mysterious anthrax attack; few members even had read the huge document. The Authorization to Use Military Force (AUMF) to go after al Qaida in Afghanistan now is hauled out by the White House to justify torture, domestic eavesdropping, and anything else the “commander-in-chief” wants to authorize during “wartime.”

THE DOMESTIC RAMIFICATIONS

Today, the Bush manipulators, led by Karl Rove, continue to utilize fear, hyped-up patriotism and a permanent “war on terrorism” as the basis for their policy agenda, just as they did in 2004 to get Bush re-elected. This, in order to continue to fulfill their primary objectives, not the least of which is to roll back and, where possible, decimate and eliminate domestic social programs that the far-right has hated since the New Deal/Great Society days, and to free corporate ambitions from government regulation. In short, a great leap backward to turn-of-the-(20th)-century laissez-faire policy.

By and large, these long-established social programs (Social Security, Medicare, Head Start, etc.) are popular with Americans, so Bush&Co. can't attack them frontally. However, if all the monies are tied up in wars, defense, tax cuts, etc., they can go to the public and, in effect, say: “We'd love to continue to fund education and environmental protection and drugs for the elderly, but you see there's simply no extra money left over after we go after the bad guys. It's not our fault.”

Up until recently, that stealth strategy has worked. But, as Bush's fast-falling approval ratings suggest, the public is not buying that line so unquestioningly any more. Even so, Rove seems wedded to what's worked so well for the White House in the past, and so continues to use fear of terrorism as the main selling-point to the American public.

Don't get me wrong. Islamist fanatics dedicated to killing are real and deadly and must be stopped. The question is: How to do that in ways that enhance rather than endanger America's long-term national interests, and in ways that protect the very liberties and freedoms the terrorists allegedly are against, and what the neo-cons claim to be defending? The Bush approach is to use a howitzer in hunting for gnats; after all, Bush said, the Constitution is just a goddamned piece of paper."

One doesn't have to guess what the PNAC guys might be thinking, since they're quite open and proud of their theories and strategies. Indeed, their writings lay out quite openly what they're up to, but few took such extreme talk seriously. Now that they're in power, actually making the policy they only dreamed about a decade or so ago, with all sorts of scarifying consequences for America and the rest of the world, we need to educate ourselves quickly as to how PNAC, and other HardRight think-tanks, work and what their future plans might be.

Given the absolute mess the Bush Administration has made in Iraq, the neo-cons, whose ideology underpinned the invasion and occupation of that country, are somewhat in disfavor these days. But, importantly, they haven't given up on their ultimate goal of transforming the geopolitics of various key regions in the world, and installing U.S.-friendly governments, by force if necessary. The policy of setting up new "democracies," however, comes with a caveat: Your country had better elect the right candidates, meaning those that will accommodate U.S. desires. Look how the Bush Administration is punishing Hamas in Palestine, Prime Minister Al-Jaafari in Iraq, President Chavez in Venezuela. All democratically elected but not quite what the Bush White House had in mind.

PNAC'S PROUD PAPER TRAIL

So let's take a quick, chronological look at PNAC, to see how we got from there to here. Some of these PNAC documents and strategies, which now are official U.S. policy, you may have heard about before, but I've expanded and updated as much as possible.

1. In 1992, then-Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney had a strategy report drafted for the Pentagon, written by Paul Wolfowitz, then Under-Secretary of Defense for Policy. (Both men would later help found PNAC.) In the report, the U.S. government was urged, as the world's sole remaining Superpower, to move aggressively and militarily around the globe. The report called for pre-emptive attacks and ad hoc coalitions, but said that the U.S. should be ready to act alone when "collective action cannot be orchestrated." The central strategy was to "establish and protect a new order" that accounts "sufficiently for the interests of the advanced industrial nations to discourage them from challenging our leadership," while at the same time maintaining a military dominance capable of "detering potential competitors from even aspiring to a larger regional or global role." Wolfowitz outlined plans for military intervention in Iraq

as an action necessary to assure "access to vital raw material, primarily Persian Gulf oil" and to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and threats from terrorism.

Somehow, this report leaked to the press, whereupon the negative response was immediate. Senator Robert Byrd led the Democratic charge: "The basic thrust of the document seems to be this: We love being the sole remaining superpower in the world, and we want so much to remain that way that we are willing to put at risk the basic health of our economy and well-being of our people to do so." Clearly, the objective political forces that could support this policy free of major resistance hadn't yet coalesced in the U.S. And so President Bush the Elder repudiated the paper and sent it back to the drawing boards.

2. Various neo-con/HardRight intellectuals outside the government were spelling out the new PNAC policy in books and influential journals. Zalmay Khalilzad (formerly associated with big oil companies, currently U.S. ambassador to Iraq) wrote an important volume in 1995, "From Containment to Global Leadership: America & the World After the Cold War"; the import of this book was to urge the U.S. to move aggressively in the world and thus to exercise effective control over the planet's natural resources. A year later, in 1996, neo-conservative leaders Bill Kristol and Robert Kagan, in their Foreign Affairs article "Towards a Neo-Reaganite Foreign Policy," came right out and said the goal for the U.S. had to be nothing less than "benevolent global hegemony," a euphemism for total U.S. domination, but "benevolently" exercised, of course.

3. In 1998, PNAC unsuccessfully lobbied President Clinton to attack Iraq and remove Saddam Hussein from power. A January letter from PNAC urged America to initiate that war even if the U.S. could not muster full support from the Security Council at the United Nations. Sound familiar? Clinton replied that he was focusing on dealing with al-Qaida terrorist cells. But PNAC's lobbying was able to convince a GOP-dominated Congress to pass the "Liberation of Iraq Act," with nearly \$100 million earmarked for Iraqi opposition groups.

LAYING OUT "GLOBAL HEGEMONY" PLAN

4. In September of 2000, PNAC, anticipating a GOP victory in the upcoming presidential election, issued its white paper on "Rebuilding America's Defenses: Strategy, Forces and Resources for the New Century." The PNAC report was quite frank about why the U.S. would want to move toward imperialist militarism, a Pax Americana, because with the Soviet Union out of the picture, now is the time most "conducive to American interests and ideals. ... The challenge of this coming century is to preserve and enhance this 'American peace'."

As Neil Mackay observed: "In its own words," he wrote, the PNAC report is a "blueprint for maintaining global

U.S. pre-eminence, precluding the rise of a great-power rival and shaping the international security order in line with American principles and interests.' This 'American grand strategy,' it says, must be advanced 'as far into the future as possible'."

And how to preserve, enhance and advance this Pax Americana? The answer, William Rivers Pitt noted, lies in following a five-fold plan: "Reposition permanently based forces to Southern Europe, Southeast Asia and the Middle East; Modernize U.S. forces, including enhancing our fighter aircraft, submarine and surface fleet capabilities; Develop and deploy a global missile-defense system, and develop a strategic dominance of space; Control the 'International Commons' of cyberspace; Increase defense spending to a minimum of 3.8 percent of gross domestic product, up from the 3 percent currently spent."

Most ominously, Pitt, wrote, "this PNAC document described four 'Core Missions' for the American military. The two central requirements are for American forces to 'fight and decisively win multiple, simultaneous major theater wars,' and to 'perform the "constabulary" duties associated with shaping the security environment in critical regions.' Note well that PNAC does not want America to be prepared to fight simultaneous major wars. That is old school. In order to bring this plan to fruition, the military must fight these wars one way or the other to establish American dominance for all to see."

In serving as world "constable," the PNAC report went on, no other countervailing forces will be permitted to get in the way. Such actions "demand American political leadership rather than that of the United Nations," for example. No country will be permitted to get close to parity with the U.S. when it comes to weaponry or influence. Therefore, more U.S. military bases will be established in the various regions of the globe. Post-Saddam Iraq would serve as one of those advance military bases. Currently, it is estimated that the U.S. now has more than 150 military bases and deployments in different countries around the world, with the most recent major increase being in the Caspian Sea/Afghanistan/Middle East areas, the so-called "arc of oil" states in that area of the world.

5. George W. Bush was moved into the White House in January of 2001. Shortly thereafter, a report, "Strategic Energy Policy Challenges for the 21st Century," was commissioned from the James Baker III Institute for Public Policy — yep, that James Baker, the Bush consigliere. The report advocated a more aggressive U.S. posture in the world and called for a "reassessment of the role of energy in American foreign policy," with access to oil repeatedly cited as a "security imperative." It's possible that inside Cheney's secret energy-panel papers, which he refuses to release to Congress or the American people, are references

to foreign-policy plans for how to gain military control of oilfields across the globe. We do know now that maps were rolled out at those energy-panel meetings, which detailed which foreign oil-companies might get a slice of the Iraq oil pie.

"SWEEP IT ALL UP, RELATED OR NOT"

6. In February of 2001, Secretary of State Colin Powell and National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice said publicly that Iraq was contained and posed no military threat to its neighbors or the U.S. But mere hours after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, Rumsfeld ordered his aides to begin planning for an attack on Iraq, even though his intelligence officials told him it was an al-Qaida operation and there was no connection between Iraq and the attacks. "Go massive," the aides' notes quote him as saying. "Sweep it all up. Things related and not." Rumsfeld leaned heavily on the FBI and CIA to find any shred of evidence linking the Iraq government to 9/11, but they

weren't able to do so. So he set up his own fact-finding group in the Pentagon, the Office of Special Plans, that would provide him with whatever shaky connections it could find or surmise. Paul O'Neill, Bush's Secretary of the Treasury, reported that he was astonished that the first Cabinet meetings in January 2001 were focusing on war with Iraq. The leaked Downing Street Memos also supply proof of

how far along the war-plans were developed, years before the invasion began.

William Rivers Pitt offered some intriguing possibilities about why this Bush&Co. obsession with attacking Iraq:

"The purpose of this is threefold: 1) To acquire control of the oilheads so as to fund the entire enterprise; 2) To fire a warning shot across the bows of every leader in the Middle East; 3) To establish in Iraq a military staging area for the eventual invasion and overthrow of several Middle Eastern regimes, including some that are allies of the United States...

"At the end of the day, this is not even about oil. The drive behind this war is ideological in nature, a crusade to 'reform' the religion of Islam as it exists in both government and society within the Middle East. Once this is accomplished, the road to empire will be open, ten lanes wide and steppin' out over the line."

And, of course, inherent in all these PNAC plans is for the U.S. to act in concert with its one surefire ally in the region, Israel, which has to be supported and protected economically and militarily. (Jews and non-Jews alike in PNAC worked hard to maintain U.S. support for Israel.) The U.S. has a friend it can count on, Israel has a protector against its Arab neighbors. A two-country backscratching system.

In the latest White House/Downing Street Memo, we learn that he even considered provoking Saddam into providing a casus belli by flying a plane low over Iraq painted with United Nations insignia on it, in hopes that Iraq would shoot it down.

“PRE-EMPTIVE” WARS OF CHOICE

7. Feeling confident that all plans were on track for moving aggressively in the world, the Bush Administration in September of 2002 published the “National Security Strategy of the United States of America.” The official policy of the U.S. government, as proudly proclaimed in this major document, is virtually identical to the policy proposals in various PNAC white papers and similar ones from other think tanks, such as the American Enterprise Institute, the operational hub of Washington’s neo-cons.

Chief among these proposals are: 1) “Pre-emptive” wars should be launched, even if there is no meaningful provocation or imminent threat, whenever the U.S. thinks a country may be amassing too much power and/or could provide some sort of competition in the “benevolent hegemony” region. A later corollary rethinks the country’s atomic policy: nuclear weapons would no longer be considered defensive, but could be used offensively in support of political/economic ends; so-called “mini-nukes” could be employed in these regional wars. 2) International treaties and opinion are to be ignored whenever they interfere with U.S. imperial goals. 3) The new policies “will require bases and stations within and beyond Western Europe and Northeast Asia.”

In short, the Bush Administration seems to see the U.S., admiringly, as a New Rome, an empire with its foreign legions, and threat of “shock-and-awe” attacks, including with nuclear weapons, keeping the outlying colonies, and potential competitors, in line. Those who aren’t fully in accord with these goals better get out of the way; “you’re either with us or against us.”

“FIXING INTELLIGENCE AROUND THE POLICY”

8. Paul O’Neill’s wonderment at the early emphasis on making war on Iraq was well-placed. Bush and British prime minister Tony Blair secretly were colluding precisely to launch that war, even while they were telling their skeptical publics that there were no plans to do so. We now know that Bush told some U.S. Senators in March of 2002 “Fuck Saddam, we’re taking him out,” and that Blair and Bush agreed in July 2002 to launch such a war. (Four years earlier, when talking with his speechwriter about a possible run for President, then-Governor Bush said of Iraq: “If I have a chance to invade, if I had that much capital, I’m not going to waste it.”)

Even today, Bush hauls out his retread lie that he did everything possible to avoid war and was hoping to forestall it through diplomacy. In the latest White House/Downing Street Memo, we learn that he even considered provoking Saddam into providing a casus belli by flying a plane low over Iraq painted with United Nations insignia on it, in hopes that Iraq would shoot it down. Likewise, Bush continues to lie that Saddam would not let the U.N. inspectors back in to verify that he had no WMD; Saddam

did let them in, the inspectors weren’t finding anything, and Bush quickly launched his attack.

Neither country had the proof required about Saddam’s supposed caches of WMD, so, according to the top-secret Downing Street Memos, which were leaked to the British press in mid-2005, it was decided to “fix the intelligence around the policy.”

In other words, Bush&Co. would move the war plans forward and, in the interim, try to cobble together some reasonable-sounding “intelligence” that could justify the invasion. Hence, Cheney’s red-hot anger that the CIA couldn’t, or wouldn’t, come up with the proof required, so Rumsfeld then established his own in-house Office of Special Plans, staffed with PNAC political types rather than intelligence analysts. The required “intelligence” was pasted together from unreliable raw data and rumors from dubious exiles supplied by Ahmad Chalabi’s Iraqi National Congress. That “intelligence” was stove-piped directly to Cheney in the White House, thus avoiding having to vet it through the government’s professional analysts, and the green light was turned on, with Powell delivering the laughable pack of lies to the U.N. Security Council in February 2003. The Council wouldn’t vote for a specific authorization for war and so Bush hastily launched “shock-and-awe” bombing and the ground-invasion of that country before the international community could organize itself effectively to resist.

Bush two months later, standing under a huge “Mission Accomplished” banner, declared that the U.S. “has prevailed” over the Iraqi enemy. Expecting to be welcomed as “liberators,” and with no Plan B to rely on in case that didn’t happen, the U.S. soon became bogged down fighting a mostly nationalist insurgency that continues until this day, one that grew in ferocity because the U.S. was responsible not only for an enormous loss of Iraqi civilians as “collateral damage,” numbered in the tens of thousands, but also because of lack of employment for young men and the much-publicized torture and humiliation of thousands of detained Iraqis. Iraq then became a magnet, and perfect training ground, for jihadist fighters from all over the Middle East.

SUMMARY & PNAC’S FUTURE PLANS

Everyone loves a winner, and American citizens are no different. Bush’s approval numbers were unusually high after his “Mission Accomplished” speech. The situation is quite different today, with Bush’s numbers down into the low-30s (Cheney is at 18%!), and with a strong majority believing the Iraq War cannot be won.

By following the PNAC precepts, the costs have been huge in troops and treasure, and in damage to America’s reputation. Bush&Co. may well be losing the larger war around the globe: the U.S. now lacks moral stature and standing in much of the world, is revealed as a liar for all to see (no WMDs in Iraq, no connection to 9/11, no quick handing-over the interim reins of government to the Iraqis as initially promised), has destroyed a good share of the

United Nation's effectiveness and prestige, is needlessly alienating our traditional allies, is infuriating key elements of the Muslim world (especially in the Middle East), and providing political and emotional ammunition for anti-U.S. terrorists, etc.

Already, we're talking about half a trillion — trillion, with a T! — dollars in costs for the Iraq War and reconstruction. And PNAC is deeply involved in preparing the ground for Bush's next war, which may either be a ground invasion of Iran or, more likely, a joint Israeli/U.S. or U.S./U.K. air assault on that country's fledgling nuclear facilities and scientific laboratories. The propaganda assault against Iran already has begun, and it is eerily similar to the pre-Iraq war propaganda. It would appear that the evidence is once again being "fixed around the policy." The consequences of such an assault on Iran — unlike Iraq, Iran is a formidable Mideast power — are barely addressed.

One can believe that maybe PNAC sincerely believes its rhetoric — that instituting U.S.-style "free-markets" and "democratically-elected" governments in Iraq and the other authoritarian-run countries of the Islamic Middle East will be good both for the citizens of that region and for American interests, but even if that were true, it's clear that these neo-con incompetents are not operating in the world of Middle Eastern realities.

These are armchair theoreticians, most of whom made sure not to serve in the military in Vietnam, who truly believed, for example, that the Iraqis would welcome the invading U.S. forces with bouquets of flowers and kisses when they "liberated" their country from the horribleness of Saddam Hussein's reign. Most Iraqis, especially the majority Shias, were happy to be freed from Saddam's long reign of terror. But, as it stands now, U.S. military forces are more likely to remain trapped in a political/religious quagmire for years there, given that so many of the Shia population, along with the rebellious minority Sunnis, just want the occupying soldiers to leave.

BIG ON IDEAS, SMALL ON REAL-WORLD BRAINS

Despite the utter cockup that the Bush Administration has made of Iraq, PNAC theorists continue to believe that remaking the political structure of the Middle East should proceed as planned. It will be done by force if necessary, although they hope the example of what the U.S. did to Iraq will make war unnecessary.

These are men of big ideas who don't really think. They certainly don't think through what takes place in the real world, when the genies of war and religious righteousness are let out of the bottle. The military planners did great with the actual invasion, but when the Saddam

government collapsed, and with it law and order, and much of the population remained sullen and resentful towards the U.S., the Bush Administration had no prepared way of dealing with this new situation on the ground. They were dangerously slow to react, and had to change Occupation administrators several times; many of the appointees dispatched by the White House as political favors were young novices with no expertise or smarts about the complexities of Iraqi cultural and political life.

No, friends, the PNAC boys and their AEI-type allies are dangerous ideologues playing with matches in a region soaked in gasoline, and the U.S. is going to get burned badly even more in years to come unless the Bush Administration's hold on power is broken. Since censure and impeachment at this stage are problematic (though we must continue to agitate for them, making those topics part of the daily discourse), the surest way to accomplish

this is to defeat the Administration's party at the polls in November 2006. That would result in Democrats taking over the House, thus breaking the HardRight momentum that has done, and is doing, such great damage to America's reputation abroad and to our country internally, especially to our Constitution and the economy.

Burdened with an unpopular president and a corruption-ravaged party, the GOP looks weak in the early run-up to the November voting. But this election defeat of the Republicans will happen only if there

is a huge grassroots campaign to defeat them, and if there is genuine reform of the voting process. Right now, the GOP continues effectively to control the voting machinery and the vote-counting software, and may well have manipulated the election results in 2002 and 2004. We must work tirelessly to ensure electoral integrity and transparent ballot-counting.

We don't need or want an emperor in our country. We don't need huge tax cuts for the wealthy when the economy is stagnating or tanking. We don't need more "pre-emptive" wars, we don't need more shredding of constitutional due process. Instead, we need opposition leaders with big ideas who are capable of creative thinking. We need peace and justice in the Middle East to help alter the chemistry of the soil in which Islamist terrorism grows. We need jobs and economic growth at home, and we need authentic and effective "homeland security" consistent with our civil liberties. In short, we need a new Administration, which means that we need to get on with our serious work to make all this change happen. ASAP.

Organize, organize!, ORGANIZE! The first primaries are only several months away.

In serving as world "constable," the PNAC report went on, no other countervailing forces will be permitted to get in the way. Such actions "demand American political leadership rather than that of the United Nations," for example. No country will be permitted to get close to parity with the U.S. when it comes to weaponry or influence.

Fossil Called Missing Link From Sea to Land Animals

by John Noble Wilford, *New York Times*, 4/6/2006

Scientists have discovered fossils of a 375-million-year-old fish, a large scaly creature not seen before, that they say is a long-sought missing link in the evolution of some fishes from water to a life walking on four limbs on land.

In two reports today in the journal *Nature*, a team of scientists led by Neil H. Shubin of the University of Chicago say they have uncovered several well-preserved skeletons of the fossil fish in sediments of former streambeds in the Canadian Arctic, 600 miles from the North Pole.

The skeletons have the fins, scales and other attributes of a giant fish, four to nine feet long. But on closer examination, the scientists found telling anatomical traits of a transitional creature, a fish that is still a fish but has changes that anticipate the emergence of land animals — and is thus a predecessor of amphibians, reptiles and dinosaurs, mammals and eventually humans.

In the fishes' forward fins, the scientists found evidence of limbs in the making. There are the beginnings of digits, proto-wrists, elbows and shoulders. The fish also had a flat skull resembling a crocodile's, a neck, ribs and other parts that were similar to four-legged land animals known as tetrapods.

Other scientists said that in addition to confirming elements of a major transition in evolution, the fossils were a powerful rebuttal to religious creationists, who have long argued that the absence of such transitional creatures are a serious weakness in Darwin's theory.

The discovery team called the fossils the most compelling examples yet of an animal that was at the cusp of the fish-tetrapod transition. The fish has been named *Tiktaalik roseae*, at the suggestion of elders of Canada's Nunavut Territory. *Tiktaalik* (pronounced tic-TAH-lick) means "large shallow water fish."

"The origin of limbs," Dr. Shubin's team wrote, "probably involved the elaboration and proliferation of features already present in the fins of fish such as *Tiktaalik*."

In an interview, Dr. Shubin, an evolutionary biologist, let himself go. "It's a really amazing, remarkable intermediate fossil," he said. "It's like, holy cow."

Two other paleontologists, commenting on the find in a separate article in the journal, said that a few other transitional fish had been previously discovered from approximately the same Late Devonian time period, 385 million to 359 million years ago. But *Tiktaalik* is so clearly an intermediate "link between fishes and land vertebrates," they said, that it "might in time become as much an evolutionary icon as the proto-bird *Archaeopteryx*," which bridged the gap between reptiles (probably dinosaurs) and today's birds.

The writers, Erik Ahlberg of Uppsala University in Sweden and Jennifer A. Clack of the University of Cambridge in England, are often viewed as rivals to Dr. Shubin's team in the search for intermediate species in the evolution from fish to the first animals to colonize land.

H. Richard Lane, director of paleobiology at the National Science Foundation, said in a statement, "These exciting discoveries are providing fossil 'Rosetta Stones' for a deeper understanding of this evolutionary milestone — fish to land-roaming tetrapods."

The science foundation and the National Geographic Society were among the financial supporters of the research. Besides Dr. Shubin, the principal discoverers were Edward B. Daeschler of the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia and Farish A. Jenkins Jr., a Harvard evolutionary biologist. Casts of the fossils will be on view at the Science Museum of

London.

Michael J. Novacek, a paleontologist at the American Museum of Natural History in Manhattan, who was not involved in the research, said: "Based on what we already know, we have a very strong reason to think tetrapods evolved from lineages of fishes. This may be a critical phase in that transition that we haven't had before. A good fossil cuts through a lot of scientific argument."

Dr. Shubin's team played down the fossil's significance in the raging debate over Darwinian theory, which is opposed mainly by some conservative Christians in this country, but other scientists were not so reticent. They said this should undercut the argument that there is no evidence in the fossil record of one kind of creature becoming another kind.

The skeletons have the fins, scales and other attributes of a giant fish, four to nine feet long. But on closer examination, the scientists found telling anatomical traits of a transitional creature, a fish that is still a fish but has changes that anticipate the emergence of land animals — and is thus a predecessor of amphibians, reptiles and dinosaurs, mammals and eventually humans.

One creationist site on the Web (<http://emporium.turnpike.net/C/cs/evid1.htm>) declares that “there are no transitional forms,” adding: “For example, not a single fossil with part fins, part feet has been found. And this is true between every major plant and animal kind.”

Dr. Novacek responded: “We’ve got Archaeopteryx, an early whale that lived on land, and now this animal showing the transition from fish to tetrapod. What more do we need from the fossil record to show that the creationists are flatly wrong?”

Duane T. Gish, a retired official of the Institute for Creation Research in San Diego, said, “This alleged transitional fish will have to be evaluated carefully.” But he added that he still found evolution “questionable because paleontologists have yet to discover any transitional fossils between complex invertebrates and fish, and this destroys the whole evolutionary story.”

Dr. Shubin and Dr. Daeschler began their search on Ellesmere Island in 1999. They were attracted by a map in a geology textbook showing an abundance of Devonian rocks exposed and relatively easy to explore. At that time, the land had a warm climate: it was part of a supercontinent straddling the Equator.

It was not until July 2004, Dr. Shubin said, that “we hit the jackpot.” They found several of the fishes in a quarry, their skeletons largely intact and in three dimensions. The large skull had the sharp teeth of a predator. It was attached to a neck, which allowed the fish the unfishlike ability to swivel its head.

If the animal spent any time out of water, said Dr. Jenkins, of Harvard, it needed a true neck that allowed the head to move independently on the body.

Embedded in the pectoral fins were bones that compare to the upper arm, forearm and primitive parts of the hand of land-living animals. The joints of the fins appeared to be capable of functioning for movement on land, a case of a fish improvising with its evolved anatomy. In all likelihood, the scientists said, Tiktaalik flexed its proto-limbs mainly on the floor of streams and might have pulled itself up on the shore for brief stretches.

In their report, the scientists concluded that Tiktaalik was an intermediate between the fishes Eusthenopteron and Panderichthys, which lived 385 million years ago, and early tetrapods. The known early tetrapods are Acanthostega and Ichthyostega, about 365 million years ago.

Tiktaalik, Dr. Shubin said, is “both fish and tetrapod, which we sometimes call a fishapod.”

“Christianity is not in accordance with the cultivated mind; it can only be accepted by suppressing doubts, and by denouncing inquiry as sinful. It is therefore a superstition, and ought to be destroyed.”

— W. Winwood Reade, “The Martyrdom of Man,” 1872

The Borders of Free Speech

by R. Joseph Hoffmann, Council for Secular Humanism e-newsletter, April 2006

According to Beth Bingham, a spokesperson for Borders bookstores, the decision not to stock the April/May issue of Free Inquiry was made out of concern for customer safety. The issue contained four of the 12 controversial “cartoons” of the prophet Muhammad and commentaries written by me and an Islamic dissident, Ibn Warraq.

Few people know that Borders Books and Music, a vine, not a chain, that now extends from North America to southern Europe, existed as a solitary college bookseller in Ann Arbor, Michigan in 1982 — a University of Michigan tradition that prided itself on the quality and variety of its stock and the willingness to take risks that no other bookstore would take.

When I was a young assistant professor at U. of M., shopping at Borders was a lunchtime delight — the antithesis of the depressing chain-sameness that already trademarked outlets like Walden (now Borders’s adopted child) and B. Dalton. In Borders, you could read out-of-the-way translations of Xenophon, radical theology, buy the latest copy of Dissent or Mother Jones, sit in Windsor chairs, talk to friends (or ignore them), and buy art reproductions upstairs for five dollars — from what seemed an bottomless bin of choices.

I thought I had arrived, academically speaking, when in 1987, Borders stocked my first Oxford University Press title without so much as being asked — a translation and commentary on the anti-Christian polemicist, Celsus. That’s the sort of place Borders used to be. Borders stocked for the “serious reader” who wanted to be challenged, informed, or offended. In 1983, you would have starved trying to find “devotional” or “inspirational” titles or schlock offerings in Christian spirituality, self-improvement, Christian living, and New Age theosophy. And yet, wandering through Borders in Ithaca, New York, only yesterday, I found (only an estimate) five feet of shelf space devoted to the squishiest of squishy titles in religion for every one foot devoted to books that could actually teach the browser something useful, critical, informative — rather than reinforce the religious sensibilities he brought with him to the browse.

Borders has learned what sells. It is, according to its Web site, “a Fortune 500 company with annual sales of \$3.9 billion.” It has learned all about the world outside Ann Arbor. It knows that The Da Vinci Code has become a cult, that Mary Magdalene (and anything written about her, true or false) is one hot bitch, and that Lee Strobel (The Case for Christ) and Ted Haggard (The Jerusalem Diet), who claims the allegiance of the 30,000,000-member-strong New Life Christian Evangelical alliance, are worth the space. Presumably that’s why six feet of shelf space can be devoted to manga comics for ‘tween-agers and not a foot can be found for Free Inquiry.

Study: Prayer Doesn't Affect Heart Patients

by Associated Press, 3/30/2006

<http://www.cnn.com/2006/HEALTH/03/30/prayer.study.ap/index.html>

NEW YORK (AP) — In the largest study of its kind, researchers found that having people pray for heart bypass surgery patients had no effect on their recovery. In fact, patients who knew they were being prayed for had a slightly higher rate of complications.

Researchers emphasized their work does not address whether God exists or answers prayers made on another's behalf. The study can only look for an effect from prayers offered as part of the research, they said.

They also said they had no explanation for the higher complication rate in patients who knew they were being prayed for, in comparison to patients who only knew it was possible prayers were being said for them.

The work, which followed about 1,800 patients at six medical centers, was financed by the Templeton Foundation, which supports research into science and religion. It will appear in the American Heart Journal.

Dr. Herbert Benson of Harvard Medical School and other scientists tested the effect of having three Christian groups pray for particular patients, starting the night before surgery and continuing for two weeks. The volunteers prayed for "a successful surgery with a quick, healthy recovery and no complications" for specific patients, for whom they were given the first name and first initial of the last name.

The patients, meanwhile, were split into three groups of about 600 apiece: those who knew they were being prayed for, those who were prayed for but only knew it was a possibility, and those who weren't prayed for but were told it was a possibility.

The researchers did not ask patients or their families and friends to alter any plans they had for prayer, saying such a step would have been unethical and impractical.

The study looked for any complications within 30 days of the surgery. Results showed no effect of prayer on complication-free recovery. But 59 percent of the patients who knew they were being prayed for developed a complication, versus 52 percent of those who were told it was just a possibility.

Dr. Harold G. Koenig, director of the Center for Spirituality, Theology and Health at the Duke University Medical Center, who did not take part in the study, said the results did not surprise him.

"There are no scientific grounds to expect a result and there are no real theological grounds to expect a result either," he said.

Science, he said, "is not designed to study the supernatural."

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