



Willamette Freethinker



Volume 14, Number 2 — February 2007

A publication of Corvallis Secular Society

<http://CorvallisSecular.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

Goodbye, Molly

I have often talked about my two main heroes; the two people whose work and writings influenced me above all others: Isaac Asimov, and Carl Sagan.

If I had selected a third hero, though, that person would have been Molly Ivins.

Growing up in Texas, Molly's local and national political observations were equally of interest to me. Molly INTRODUCED me to politics; her writing is how I became interested in politics in the first place.

Molly had a warm, cheerful, joking writing style that couldn't help but draw you in. If you read enough of her writing, though, you could tell — she had to laugh, to keep from screaming.

Sometimes, I wish she had allowed herself to scream a little more often.



I was fortunate enough to meet Molly a few years ago, when she came to Eugene to give a lecture as part of a book promotion tour. She was obviously exhausted, but her speech was excellent, and afterwards she went to a local coffee shop where she signed books and chatted with her fans.

Molly Ivins died on January 31st, after her breast cancer, which she had been fighting for years, "came back with a vengeance". She was 62 years old.

The biggest tragedy is that, after covering the Bush family for decades, she died too soon to witness and chronicle the last two years of "Dubya's" disastrous presidency.

It's too damn bad. She would have found it hysterical.

Reed Byers

Editor, *Willamette Freethinker*

Announcements

This month's meeting will be dedicated to taking care of CSS business. We will discuss who we are as a group, and any changes we'd like to make in the future.

As part of this, Angela will give her final financial report, and then retire as Treasurer for the group. Her continuing health issues, and the side effects of the medications she takes to mitigate those health issues, has made it impossible for her to do her job effectively.

It is our hope that one of the attendees of this meeting will be willing and able to volunteer to take over this duty, which mostly involves keeping the books, collecting the dues, reserving and paying for Corl House, and paying for newsletter runs.

CSS Meetings and Events

Calendar:

Saturday, Feb 17 th	2:00-4:00	CSS regular meeting
Saturday, Mar 17 th	1:00-4:00	CSS potluck
Saturday, Apr 21 st	2:00-4:00	CSS regular meeting

Regular meeting time:

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

Regular meeting location:

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

In this issue:

- From the President p.2
- Ancient Greek Gods' New Believers p.4
- Newspaper Letters p.5
- Missing Molly Ivins p.6
- Last Warning: 10 Years to Save World p.7
- Book Reviews p.8
- Mary Cheney Publicly Defends Pregnancy p.10

From the President

The Islamification of North America

Islam is an enemy of Humanism and of democracy. It has an absolute intolerance of criticism, of other religions and worldviews, and of democratic values (such as the freedom of expression, the equality and rights of women, and the separation of government and religion). In my view, Islam is a virulent mental disease – an anti-intellectual, anti-human pandemic, more harmful than any biological disease humanity has ever faced.

This is clear from an examination of the Quran (Koran), the Islamic holy book. It is also clear from the history and present activities of Muslims. The Quran is the central religious text of Islam. Muslims believe the Quran, in its original Arabic, to be the literal word of God that was revealed to Muhammad, and believe it to be God's final revelation to humanity. A search for "unbeliever" at <http://www.hti.umich.edu/k/koran/> (click on *Simple Searches*, key in "unbeliever", press *Search*) returns 125 matches. Among these are:

Allah's curse is on the unbelievers. [2.89]. — And kill them wherever you find them ... such is the recompense of the unbelievers. [2.191]. — O you who believe! fight those of the unbelievers who are near to you and let them find in you hardness.... [9.123]. — Surely we have prepared hell for the entertainment of the unbelievers. [18.102]. — We have prepared burning fire for the unbelievers. [48.13]. Muhammad is the Apostle of Allah, and those with him are firm of heart against the unbelievers. [48.29]. — Surely We have prepared for the unbelievers chains and shackles and a burning fire. [76.4].

See also The Skeptic's Annotated Quran, <http://skepticsannotatedbible.com/quran/index.htm> .

"The Islamification of Europe" < http://corvallissecular.org/newsletter/2006/wf2006_11.pdf , pp 2-4 > was my column for last November. In it, I described the massive influx of Muslims into Europe and their refusal to integrate into European society. If this were a military invasion, Europe would be at war. But it is a quiet invasion: mass immigration and excessive fertility. Europeans, and especially their governments, are in denial. Clearly, "A Muslim has no nationality except his belief," and they believe that "Assimilation is cultural rape." I say quite deliberately that European nations are allowing Muslims to destroy the secular, humanistic and democratic traditions that have grown there. Does Europe have a death wish? Imagine an Islamic Europe! The younger of us may well live to see it. I wrote then, and I repeat here:

"No nation that controls its population is obligated to take in the endless reproductive excess of other countries. Nor is it obligated to abandon its secular,

democratic values to theocratic extremists from other nations."

North America is not yet nearly as infected with Islam as is Europe, but the trend has begun. The United States is involved in a "War on Terrorism." One reason I feel we are faring so poorly in this "war" is that we refuse to call it what it is: a "War on Islam." Unfortunately, George Bush, quite possibly the worst military leader in U.S. history, largely ignored the terrorists (Al-Qaeda) and instead attacked Iraq, which was at that time militarily and economically contained, and which had no link with the terrorist attacks. (But Iraq *does* have oil ... and *is* next door to Iran!)

The terrorist attacks of recent years were by Muslims, inspired by their religion to value war as a demonstration of loyalty to Allah. Thousands of believers, indoctrinated as children, are eager to engage in suicide attacks. While sometimes speaking of civil rights, Muslim organizations are pursuing the radical ideal of the *Khalifate* [world dominion by Muslims] and *sharia* [Islamic law]. Remember: under sharia, apostates (Muslims who leave their religion) are killed.

The Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR) "is an advocacy group which states that its mission is 'to enhance understanding of Islam, encourage dialogue, protect civil liberties, empower American Muslims, and build coalitions that promote justice and mutual understanding.'" It tries to present a moderate image. However, it sometimes reveals its true colors. In 1998, CAIR's co-founder, Omar Ahmed, told an audience in Fremont, California, that "Islam isn't in America to be equal to any other faith, but to become dominant." "The Koran should be the highest authority in America, and Islam the only accepted religion on Earth," Ahmed said then. According to frontpagemag.com*, "Also in 1998, CAIR co-hosted a rally at Brooklyn College in which radical leaders called for 'jihad' and referred to Jews as 'pigs and monkeys.' Today, CAIR routinely defends Muslims suspected of suspicious or illegal behaviors. The organization recently sought special state provisions to allow Muslim cab drivers to bar passengers carrying alcohol and those with seeing eye dogs. CAIR retained legal counsel and called for an airline boycott when Muslim clerics were recently removed from a U.S. Airways flight after their aggressive behavior aroused suspicions." This is moderate Islam?

CAIR and other Islamic organizations in the U.S. have used intimidation to silence criticism and win concessions for claimed "Islamophobia." They have used the threat of legal action to silence critics. They have used economic actions to get their way. For example, "when Muslim groups charged that featuring Serge Trifkovic's book *The Sword of the*

Prophet on National Review Online defamed Islam, they pressured the Boeing Corporation to revoke its advertising commitments from the online journal. "The threat of violence cowed the American press into refusing to reprint the very newsworthy European Mohammed cartoons last year.

"The failure to stand firm against this type of subterfuge undermines our constitutional rights and ultimately our national security by silencing important discourse and questions about Islam. By not engaging in the debate that must take place to face this threat, we are aiding and abetting its cultural infiltration into all aspects of our society. The Islam of the Koran, as practiced by radical Muslims, is an intolerant religion which enforces a code of barbarism where women and non-Muslims are second-class citizens, homosexuals and adulterers are stoned to death, suspected thieves face amputations, daughters who 'dishonor' their families are murdered, apostates are killed and religious practice is enforced by police."*

Humanists seek to live in peace with all peoples of the world. If Muslims will renounce violence, embrace democracy, support the separation of government and religion, recognize the right of everyone to accept or renounce any religious or secular worldview they wish, and recognize and promote equal rights for all, then we can work with them. Until then, we cannot. Tolerance and respect for the rights of others must be a two-way street. We must not abandon our secular, democratic values to theocratic extremists, be they from within our borders or from without.

If we don't have the courage to face and fight the threats to freedom from Islam (and other religions), we will lose those freedoms. As Mark Twain said in 1860: "The shabbiest of all lies is the lie of silent-assertion ... it happens when politicians, presidents, the media and all leaders obfuscate, deny, suppress or ignore a social wrong or anything deleterious occurring inside American society."

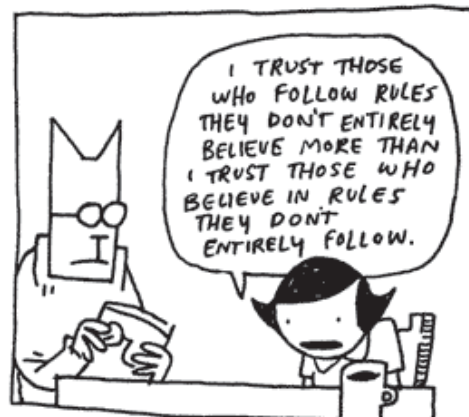
Without religion, there would be no terrorist attacks; the New York World Trade Center towers would be standing. There would be no theocracies. Disputes could be settled by peaceful means. There would be no anti-science (anti-evolution) movement. Human population could be brought down to a sustainable level, allowing our destruction of our environment to stop. Universal free education and health care could be provided. And the list goes on. In the words of John Lennon, "You may say that I'm a dreamer, But I'm not the only one. I hope someday you'll join us, And the world will live as one."

Imagine a world without religion. Oh, happy day!

John Dearing
President of CSS

* <http://www.frontpagemag.com/Articles/ReadArticle.asp?ID=26725>

Cat and Girl



This year, both Groundhog Day and the State of the Union address occur on the same day. As Air America Radio pointed out, "It is an ironic juxtaposition of events: one involves a meaningless ritual in which we look to a creature of little intelligence for prognostication while the other involves a groundhog."

Ancient Greek Gods' New Believers

by Malcolm Brabant, BBC News, Athens

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/6285397.stm>

Followers of the 12 Greek Gods, who, according to mythology, ruled the Ancient World from Mount Olympus, have cast a thunderbolt at their Orthodox opponents.

After successfully staging a landmark ceremony at the Temple of Olympian Zeus in Athens, their leader pledged to fight for the right to conduct baptisms, marriages, and funerals according to the rites of the ancient religion.

"We are a legitimate religion. But the authorities don't let us do this, but we shall claim this right through the European Union," said Doretta Peppas, the high priestess, who led the prayers next to the 15 remaining columns of the temple.

The move is bound to aggravate the highly conservative Greek Orthodox church, which strongly disapproves of what it regards as paganism.

First service

"They are a handful of miserable resuscitators of a degenerate dead religion who wish to return to the monstrous dark delusions of the past," said Father Efstathios Kollas, the President of Greek Clergymen.

Hundreds of followers of Zeus, Hera, Poseidon, Artemis, Aphrodite and Hermes stood in a circle, a mile from the Acropolis, in what was the first official religious service allowed in the grounds of an Ancient Greek temple.

Previous rites have been performed covertly, but the culture ministry was obliged to grant permission for the event after a court last year legitimised the religion, which was eclipsed 1600 years ago by Christianity.

"I feel very emotional," said Ms Peppas, a writer. "We have been persecuted for 16-and-a-half centuries but now we are here. This is our human right. And we shall carry on worshipping at our temples. They have now been put to proper use.

"This is as important to us, as prayers are for Muslims, Christians or Hindus," said Apollonius, a former taverna owner from Melbourne, Australia.

He abandoned the Church for the 12 Gods, because 'they make me feel whole, they make me feel part of the universe.'

Ancient ceremony

Ms Peppas said she turned to the ancient religion because she could not countenance the concept of just one God outside the world.

Her co-religionists believe that the Olympian gods exist in the world and control various elements of nature.

For example, Poseidon is the God of the Sea; Hera, the Goddess of Marriage; and Aphrodite is the Goddess of Love and Romance.

The ceremony was an attempt to emulate those carried out in Athens in the 4th Century BC, when the Greeks were preparing for the games at Olympia.

Believers dressed as ancient warriors left their spears, swords and shields at the entrance before entering the Temple.

This was supposed to represent the truce between warring states that took place during the games.

And it was a symbolic message sent to the rest of the world calling for peace in 2008 when the Olympic Games takes place in Beijing.

The international publicity surrounding the Temple of Zeus ceremony may galvanise the all-powerful Orthodox Church to step up its opposition.

But one of the participants has appealed for tolerance.

Wearing a crown of daisies and a flowing white gown, a red haired woman who identified herself only as Artemis said: "This is the land which has given birth to freedom and democracy. If we really want to say that we are democratic and we have freedom, then we have to be allowed to practise our religion."



Doretta Peppas led the prayers around the temple.



Apollonius abandoned Christianity for the 12 Gods.

Newspaper Letters

Eugene Register-Guard, 1/19/2007

Change birth notice policy

The Register-Guard's Jan. 8 editorial says "Hallelujah!" to the proposed legislation to repeal the military's "dumb and offensively discriminatory" Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy that required service members to keep their sexual orientation camouflaged. The editorial quoted former Clinton administration Secretary of Defense William Cohen's analysis that, "We're becoming a much more open, tolerant society for diverse opinions and orientations" and concluded with, "Now, more than ever, the nation needs the services of every courageous, qualified, patriotic American."

What this nation also needs are strong families raising happy, healthy children who are confident in themselves and their place in this world. If The Register-Guard really stands by its own editorial, it's time the newspaper followed its words with action and changes its dumb and offensively discriminatory policy of refusing to print birth announcements from gay and lesbian parents.

Victoria Smithweiland
Eugene

Corvallis Gazette-Times, 02/04/2007

Genesis and the universe

On Jan. 21, a letter complained OSU needed to give Christians a break from secular science. It accused a guest speaker, saying "Edward Larson's real agenda was to ridicule Christians."

Perhaps this is true; I wasn't there. I was here to read the ridicule against science in this paper.

I do not want to mock any theist. I do say some are just as guilty of being unfair. The letter, for example, smeared both science and religion when it claimed "current scientific theory" agrees with the order of the creation account in the Book of Genesis.

Genesis Chapter 1 incorrectly states the Earth existed before the rest of the universe. It claims God creates day and night, but without stars to emit daylight. It wrongly claims the oceans existed before the land. God doesn't get around to space until Genesis 1:8, which incorrectly describes our sky as a "firmament" — a solid dome capping the Earth.

Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 are not cohesive. The former claims God created humans after all other life, while the latter claims God created humans first. The appearance of entire life kingdoms is in the wrong order, or missing altogether. Both chapters differ noticeably in style. Thus, many scholars do not believe Moses wrote Genesis at all, rather that it was patched together from separate myths written by different people, possibly centuries apart.

So I think that Sunday's letter is hypocritical for stating, "It takes less faith to believe in Christ and in creation than it does to believe all this secular-progressive hogwash spewed from the podium at OSU!"

Not only is that disrespectful, but the letter put the Bible in a position to be disrespected by attributing scientific aspects it does not have. All people ought to show the same respect and awareness for other people's beliefs that they expect for their own.

Brian Ranzoni
Albany

Corvallis Gazette-Times, 1/24/07

History, Quran facts muddled in letter

Regarding Charles R. Nelson's Jan. 23 letter, "Ellison erred by swearing on Quran":

I'm glad he mentioned the Barbary Coast pirates. A little further research will reveal the Treaty of Tripoli (1796) article 11 that states "the Government of the United States of America is not, in any sense, founded on the Christian religion," ratified by the U.S. Senate and signed into law by President John Adams.

Also, Article VI of the U.S. Constitution states that "no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office," so Keith Ellison may of course be sworn into office using any copy of the Quran.

Torsten Pihl
Corvallis

Logic silent in same-sex union debate

Monday night, I attended the "Is same-sex marriage Christian" debate between Prof. Todd Miles and Rev. Wesley Mullins held in LaSells Stewart Center and sponsored by the Oregon State University Socratic Club. As was expected, most of the evening was taken up trading biblical quotes and their interpretations, none of which would matter much to a non-Christian.

Both participants in this debate made one thing very clear, marriage is a religious matter. Some members of the audience seemed close to grasping this idea with questions asked — the notion of separating church and state was brought up. Yet nobody proposed getting government out of the marriage business, leaving governmental concerns to civil unions or some other named sanction.

Perhaps everyone was just too close to the forest to see the trees.

Robert G. Gourley
Corvallis

Missing Molly Ivins

by Paul Krugman, *New York Times*, 2/2/2007

Molly Ivins, the Texas columnist, died of breast cancer on Wednesday. I first met her more than three years ago, when our book tours crossed. She was, as she wrote, “a card-carrying member of The Great Liberal Backlash of 2003, one of the half-dozen or so writers now schlepping around the country promoting books that do not speak kindly of Our Leader’s record.”

I can’t claim to have known her well. But I spent enough time with her, and paid enough attention to her work, to know that obituaries that mostly stressed her satirical gifts missed the main point. Yes, she liked to poke fun at the powerful, and was very good at it. But her satire was only the means to an end: holding the powerful accountable.

She explained her philosophy in a stinging 1995 article in *Mother Jones* magazine about Rush Limbaugh. “Satire has historically been the weapon of powerless people aimed at the powerful,” she wrote. “When you use satire against powerless people it is like kicking a cripple.”

Molly never lost sight of two eternal truths: rulers lie, and the times when people are most afraid to challenge authority are also the times when it’s most important to do just that. And the fact that she remembered these truths explains something I haven’t seen pointed out in any of the tributes: her extraordinary prescience on the central political issue of our time.

I’ve been going through Molly’s columns from 2002 and 2003, the period when most of the wise men of the press cheered as Our Leader took us to war on false pretenses, then dismissed as “Bush haters” anyone who complained about the absence of W.M.D. or warned that the victory celebrations were premature. Here are a few selections:

Nov. 19, 2002:

“The greatest risk for us in invading Iraq is probably not war itself, so much as: What happens after we win? There is a batty degree of triumphalism loose in this country right now.”

Jan. 16, 2003:

“I assume we can defeat Hussein without great cost to our side (God forgive me if that is hubris). The problem is what happens after we win. The country is 20 percent Kurd, 20 percent Sunni and 60 percent Shiite. Can you say, ‘Horrible three-way civil war?’”

July 14, 2003:

“I opposed the war in Iraq because I thought it would lead to the peace from hell, but I’d rather not see my prediction come true and I don’t think

we have much time left to avert it. That the occupation is not going well is apparent to everyone but Donald Rumsfeld. We don’t need people with credentials as right-wing ideologues and corporate privatizers — we need people who know how to fix water and power plants.”

Oct. 7, 2003:

“Good thing we won the war, because the peace sure looks like a quagmire.

“I’ve got an even-money bet out that says more Americans will be killed in the peace than in the war, and more Iraqis will be killed by Americans in the peace than in the war. Not the first time I’ve had a bet out that I hoped I’d lose.”

So Molly Ivins — who didn’t mingle with the great and famous, didn’t have sources high in the administration, and never claimed special expertise on national security or the Middle East — got almost everything right. Meanwhile, how did those who did have all those credentials do?

With very few exceptions, they got everything wrong. They bought the obviously cooked case for war — or found their own reasons to endorse the invasion. They didn’t see the folly of the venture, which was almost as obvious in prospect as it is with the benefit of hindsight. And they took years to realize that everything we were being told about progress in Iraq was a lie.

Was Molly smarter than all the experts? No, she was just braver. The administration’s exploitation of 9/11 created an environment in which it took a lot of courage to see and say the obvious.

Molly had that courage; not enough others can say the same.

And it’s not over. Many of those who failed the big test in 2002 and 2003 are now making excuses for the “surge.” Meanwhile, the same techniques of allegation and innuendo that were used to promote war with Iraq are being used to ratchet up tensions with Iran.

Now, more than ever, we need people who will stand up against the follies and lies of the powerful. And Molly Ivins, who devoted her life to questioning authority, will be sorely missed.



Was Molly smarter than all the experts? No, she was just braver.

Last Warning: 10 Years to Save World

by Jonathan Leake, Environment Editor, *The UK Sunday Times*, 1/28/2007

Scientists say rising greenhouse gases will make climate change unstoppable in a decade.

The world has just 10 years to reverse surging greenhouse gas emissions or risk runaway climate change that could make many parts of the planet uninhabitable.

The stark warning comes from scientists who are working on the final draft of a new report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

The report, due to be published this week, will draw together the work of thousands of scientists from around the world who have been studying changes in the world's climate and predicting how they might accelerate.

They conclude that unless mankind rapidly stabilises greenhouse gas emissions and starts reducing them, it will have little chance of keeping global warming within manageable limits.

The results could include the destruction of the Amazon rainforest and the Great Barrier Reef, the forced migration of hundreds of millions of people from equatorial regions, and the loss of vast tracts of land under rising seas as the ice caps melt.

In Europe the summers could become unbearably hot, especially in southern countries such as Greece, Spain and Italy, while Britain and northern Europe would face summer droughts and wet, stormy winters.

"The next 10 years are crucial," said Richard Betts, leader of a research team at the Met Office's Hadley Centre for climate prediction. "In that decade we have to achieve serious reductions in carbon emissions. After that time the task becomes very much harder."

Among the scientists' biggest fears is that rising temperatures and levels of greenhouse gases could soon overwhelm the natural systems that normally keep their levels in check.

About half the 24 billion tons of carbon dioxide generated by human activities each year are absorbed by forests and oceans — a process without which the world might already be several degrees warmer.

But as CO₂ levels rise and soils dry, microbes can start breaking down accumulated organic matter, so forests become net producers of greenhouse gases. The sea's power to absorb CO₂ also falls sharply as it warms.

The latest research suggests the threshold for such disastrous changes will come when CO₂ levels reach 550 parts per million (ppm), roughly double their natural levels. This is predicted to happen around 2040-50.

"At the moment the real impact of our emissions is buffered because CO₂ is absorbed by natural systems. However, if we reach this threshold they could be magnified instead," said Betts. "It means we must start the action needed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the next few years."

"The next 10 years are crucial," said Richard Betts, leader of a research team at the Met Office's Hadley Centre for climate prediction. "In that decade we have to achieve serious reductions in carbon emissions. After that time the task becomes very much harder."

His warnings were backed up by Dr Malte Meinshausen, a researcher at the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research in Germany. He has used computer modelling to work out what might happen if greenhouse gas emissions were cut immediately, in 10 years' time or later.

His results showed that immediate action might allow mankind to hold CO₂ levels at 450ppm — well below the 550ppm danger level. However, Meinshausen and his colleagues recognise that this is unrealistic

because the world's governments are in such disarray over global warming. The best hope, they say, is that a global plan will emerge in the next few years, most likely from the renegotiations of the Kyoto treaty on reducing emissions.

"We have to make sure carbon emissions peak no later than 2015 and then fall at around 3% a year. If we let them keep rising after that date it becomes much harder to bring them under control," said Meinshausen.

His views were echoed by Dr Carol Turley of Plymouth Marine Laboratories who has been studying how rising CO₂ levels are acidifying the ocean. When the gas dissolves in water it creates carbonic acid. "Rising acidity makes it much harder for marine organisms to build shells," she said.

Turley, like the other scientists, has contributed to the IPCC report but all commented this weekend on the basis of already-published research. "If we do not take action in the next decade, by 2100 swathes of the ocean could have been stripped of creatures from plankton to coral reefs," she said. "Such changes would devastate ecosystems and fisheries."

Book Reviews

[Editor's Note: I've edited this newsletter for over ten years now — but this month is the first time I have ever received free books to review! And not just one, but TWO books from different authors and publishers, in the same month! Looks like we're moving up in the world...]

Here I Stand, by Edd Doerr

[This review was published on Pottspub.com, with additional information from HumanistStudies.org]

Edd Doerr, president of Americans for Religious Liberty and immediate past president of the American Humanist Association, is the author of over 3,500 published books, sections of books, articles, columns, book and film reviews, translations, letters, short stories and poems. His latest book, *Here I Stand*, was published in late 2006, and is available from the author for \$12 at P.O. Box 6656, Silver Spring, MD 20916, or from Potts Publishing: <http://store.pottspub.com/>

Here I Stand is a compact synthesis of much that Edd Doerr has written over many years on church-state problems and other topics of interest to those of us who respect the U.S. Constitution. As, apart from the letters to the editor, most of it has not previously been published, nearly everything in it is fresh.

The never ending plague of church-state problems (school prayer, creationism in science classes, reproductive rights, school vouchers, etc.) is a huge distraction from such real life planetary problems as overpopulation, resource depletion, shrinking biodiversity, war/peace, the growing gap between the superrich and everyone else both nationally and globally, the decline of democracy in the US, racism, homophobia, preventable epidemics, pollution, global warming, and incipient fascism.

In addition to essays and an interesting section on his congressional testimony, the book contains a hundred of his letters to the editors of numerous periodicals, all published within a two year period.

Edd Doerr must be one of the most prolific letter writers on record.

This 116-page book is a valuable quick read for all who are concerned with our growing church-state problems.



Edd Doerr, author

[The following is from the preface to *Here I Stand*.]

"Here I stand. I can do no other." Martin Luther's proclamation a half millenium ago is the best title I could think of for this book. Although not expansive enough to be called a "summing up", it nonetheless encapsulates my thinking on the topics with which I have been involved for well over half of my life.

Here you will find an address I gave in 2005 in New York, a chapter I contributed to a book, an article reprinted from the Americans for Religious Liberty journal, an essay on the necessity of cooperation to further common goals, testimony at a congressional hearing, a couple of poems that relate to the other material in this book, and a hundred letters to the editor that have been published over the last two years in a variety of publications, and other material. (Let me add that the letters pertaining to my professional work were generally signed with my title of president of Americans for Religious Liberty, while those dealing with views outside this realm were strictly personal.)

As this book contains my fourth collection of letters to editors, it should be obvious that I find this medium a very useful one for trying to influence public opinion. One letter seen by tens of thousands of people may be more significant than a book with only a handful of readers. I would like to encourage readers to follow this example.

Lest I be thought limited in my interests, I should add that life would be incomplete without music, poetry and literature. I've published some 350 poems, some fiction — an example of which may be found as Appendix III — and have been immersed in music as a performer and listener for nearly all of my life.

I must add that anything I have accomplished over the years is due largely to the fact that I have been standing on the shoulders of giants too numerous to even begin to list.

The Quotable Atheist, by Jack Huberman

[This article was first published on Alternet.com]

The following is an excerpt from Jack Huberman's new book, *The Quotable Atheist: Ammunition for Nonbelievers, Political Junkies, Gadflies, and Those Generally Hell-Bound* (Nation Books, 2007).

The world (not just America) is deeply divided. The main fault line is where the tectonic plates of religion and of reason/ secularism/ modernity/ science/ Enlightenment meet and grind against each other, making an absolutely unbearable noise. It's sort of like ... forget it, I can't describe it.

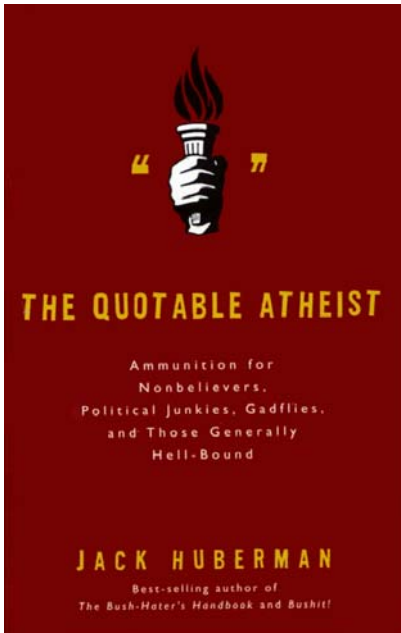
My aim in compiling *The Quotable Atheist* was to heal our broken planet, essentially by eliminating the religious part. Not with nuclear weapons or lesser acts of mass murder, no — that's the religious style, nowadays, in certain quarters — but through argument, persuasion, and most of all (since I know perfectly well that argument is utterly useless against dumb, blind faith, and just wanted to pay it lip service), the steady application of powerfully abrasive ridicule which will slowly but surely erode away the offending continent. I'm serious. Do I really believe this book will convert believers and turn them from the path of self-righteousness to the path of righteousness? Yes. A few. Three, I estimate. Two for sure. But the point is this:

For years, millions of fine, upstanding American atheists and agnostics have watched and stewed as the religious right expanded its influence throughout public life, and as America closed its mind and opened its heart to angels, aliens, ghosts, psychics, Jesus, astrology, Kabbalah, Genesis, Revelation. ... As Sam Harris wrote in *The End of Faith*, "Unreason is now ascendant in the United States — in our schools, in our courts, and in each branch of the federal government. Only 28 percent of Americans believe in evolution; 68 percent believe in Satan. Ignorance in this degree, concentrated in both the head and belly of a lumbering superpower, is now a problem for the entire world."

Meanwhile, religion continues to be granted far too much respect and too little critical examination in our culture and mainstream media. We need to change the cultural climate so as to make supernatural, occult, and faith-based claptrap feel unwelcome and to make adults ashamed of the blithe surrender of their otherwise sound minds to idiocy. We need climate change. Bullshit levels are rising globally, threatening to submerge intellectually low-lying areas. Much of the United States is already inundated. Temperatures are rising; IQs are dropping. Four of the five stupidest years on record have occurred since 2000.

I would of course have preferred a declaration by the president of the United States — purportedly God's messenger on earth — stating that neither God nor WMDs ever existed and that most religious beliefs are untrue and harmful, and urging citizens to bring their minds back up at least to an eighteenth-century stage of development. (I have proposed this plan in a letter to George W. Bush, but haven't heard back yet. They must be hashing out the details.) Failing that, it is up to atheist/secularist groups and individuals to do what we can to stop global worming (people groveling like worms before nonexistent deities). That's where this book comes in.

As a number of these collected quotes say (far more wittily): Religion in general is based on falsehoods — comforting beliefs in a heavenly parent or big brother; hopes of surviving death — and on utility or expedience: socially cohesive tribal myths; politically useful codes of law and behavior; divine ordination of rulers (including certain presidents); attempts to explain, influence, or placate nature and the elements; the wish to raise ourselves above (i.e., deny our place among) the animals. Religion may help people feel their lives have a loftier purpose than the mere satisfaction of material wants and sensual desires, but it does it with smoke and mirrors, at the cost of our respect for truth and of our integrity and dignity.



In his new book, *The Quotable Atheist*, author Jack Huberman has collected powerful quotations against organized religion and belief in God from figures such as Richard Dawkins, Phyllis Diller, Frederick Douglass, Michael Moore, Katha Pollitt, and yes, Jerry Falwell.

Mary Cheney Publicly Defends Her Pregnancy

by Katharine Q. Seelye, *New York Times*, 1/31/2007

Mary Cheney, the lesbian daughter of Vice President Dick Cheney, today for the first time publicly defended her decision to become pregnant and asserted that same-sex couples are equally capable of raising children as heterosexual couples.

"When Heather and I decided to have a baby, I knew it wasn't going to be the most popular decision," Ms. Cheney said, referring to her partner of 15 years, Heather Poe. She then gestured to her middle — any bulge disguised by a boxy jacket — and asserted: "This is a baby. This is a blessing from God. It is not a political statement. It is not a prop to be used in a debate, on either side of a political issue. It is my child."

Ms. Cheney, 37, was speaking at a panel discussion sponsored by Glamour magazine at Barnard College in Manhattan. The baby, whose sex she has not publicly disclosed, is due this spring and will be the sixth grandchild for the vice president and his wife. Ms. Cheney, who is vice president of consumer advocacy for AOL and lives in Virginia, has not said how she became pregnant.

Her father became testy last week during a CNN interview when the host Wolf Blitzer asked what he thought of conservatives — specifically James C. Dobson, founder of Focus on the Family — who are critical of his daughter Mary's pregnancy.

In refusing to answer, Mr. Cheney told Mr. Blitzer that he was "over the line."

Ms. Cheney said in a brief interview after the panel that she was not speaking for her father, but that when she saw the interview, she also felt Mr. Blitzer had crossed a line. "He was trying to get a rise out of my father," she said.

Today at the panel discussion, inside a stuffy room decorated by portraits of stern-looking former Barnard presidents, Cindi Leive, the editor of Glamour, asked Ms. Cheney if she had anything to say to critics like Mr. Dobson.

Mr. Dobson wrote in Time magazine last month that years of social research "indicates that children do best on every measure of well-being when raised by their married mother and father." He also wrote that his group believes that "birth and adoption are the purview of married heterosexual couples." (Two of the researchers whom Mr. Dobson cited in his article have complained that Mr. Dobson distorted their views and said they disagreed with his conclusions.)

Ms. Cheney noted Mr. Dobson's distortions of the research he cited and added: "Every piece of remotely responsible research that has been done in the last 20 years has shown there is no difference between children raised by same-sex parents and children raised by opposite-sex parents; what matters is being raised in a stable, loving environment."

She said Mr. Dobson was entitled to his opinion, "but he's not someone whose endorsement I have ever drastically sought."

To Join or Subscribe:

If you enjoy reading this newsletter, and are concerned about the growing threat to the principle of Separation of Church and State in this country, then please consider joining Corvallis Secular Society, subscribing to this newsletter, or making a donation:

Newsletter subscription: \$18/year (\$1.50/month)

Full CSS membership: \$30/year (\$2.50/month)
(includes newsletter)

PLEASE MAKE CHECKS OUT TO "CSS", AND MAIL TO OUR TREASURER (SEE BOTTOM-RIGHT SECTION).

Memberships and newsletter subscriptions are on a calendar-year basis (i.e. they always expire in December), and we prefer they not be renewed for more than one year at a time. People subscribing mid-year only need to pay for the remaining issues for that year. This is to keep our bookkeeping as simple as possible.

Thank you for supporting our efforts to promote atheism, humanism, and freethought in Oregon's Willamette Valley.

Contacting Us:

President

Use this address for:
Comments/questions
about CSS.
(Please NO payments).

John S. Dearing
126 NW 21st St.
Corvallis, OR. 97330
(541) 754-2557
President@CorvallisSecular.org

Vice President / Editor

Use this address for:
newsletter submissions.

Reed H. Byers
3035 SE 24th Ave.
Albany, OR. 97322
(541) 924-9128
Editor@CorvallisSecular.org

Treasurer / Webmaster

Use this address for:
Membership/subscription
payments, or comments
about the CSS web page.

Angela C. Byers
3035 SE 24th Ave.
Albany, OR 97322
(541) 924-9128
Webmaster@CorvallisSecular.org

Disclaimer: This newsletter contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available in our efforts to advance understanding of humanist, environmental, political, human rights, economic, democracy, scientific, and social justice issues, etc. We believe this constitutes a 'fair use' of any such copyrighted material as provided for in section 107 of the US Copyright Law. In accordance with Title 17 U.S.C. Section 107, the material in this newsletter is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving the included information for research and educational purposes. For more information go to: <http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/17/107.shtml> If you wish to use copyrighted material from this newsletter for purposes of your own that go beyond 'fair use', you must obtain permission from the copyright owner.