



Willamette Freethinker



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

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

From the Editor Senate Prayer Incident

On July 12th, the United States Senate opened with a Hindu prayer for the first time in it's history.

And three right-wing Christian activists from "Operation Save America" immediately started screaming about Jesus being the One True God, disrupting the prayer until they were arrested and dragged from the court.

[The video can be found at:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EZ9To30Hz7A>]

SIGH Where to begin?

I could congratulate the Dems for attempting to be inclusive, and for quickly getting rid of the disruption.

I could question why none of the Senators publicly apologized to the man for the disruption, or publicly disavowed the message of the activists that this is One Nation Under the Christian God and Everyone had Better Get Used To It.

But mostly, this is just another demonstration of why Church and State are supposed to be SEPARATE. Our government has winked and nudged and smiled and flirted with Christianity for so long, that if it even GLANCES at another religion for a moment or two, Christianity feels betrayed.

Well you know what? Our government's supposed to be ABSTINENT! We're NOT putting a ring on Christianity's finger. We're NOT going steady with Christianity while sneaking a peak at other religions as they walk by. We're not even supposed to be casually dating religions to see if we can get to second base.

Our government must resist the urge to "fool around" with any religion at all, because they're all dirty, dirty whores who want nothing better than to get their hands on the hot man-seed of our Governmental Authority, and give birth to demon hybrid Church-State monsters who will devour our freedom and drag us back into the Dark Ages...

And I REALLY should have stopped that metaphor a paragraph or two sooner... ☺

Reed Byers
Editor, *Willamette Freethinker*

CSS Meetings and Events

*** ATTENTION! ***

**THE MEETING TIME
HAS BEEN CHANGED!**

Frank Pasqual will be joining us this month to share the results of his research (the project that many CSS members received and filled out questionnaires for last year). [See John's column on page 2 for more about the study.]

HOWEVER, to help accomodate his busy schedule, we have changed the meeting time to 1pm, instead of the usual 2pm. PLEASE REMEMBER, and plan to attend if at all possible. This promises to be very interesting!

Calendar:

Saturday, Jul 21 st	1:00-3:00	CSS regular meeting
Saturday, Aug 18 th	2:00-4:00	CSS regular meeting
Saturday, Sep 15 th	1:00-4:00	CSS potluck

Regular meeting time:

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

Regular meeting location:

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

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From the President

Pacific Northwest Secular Affiliates Study: Comments on the Preliminary Report of Findings

Last fall, members of Pacific Northwest secular groups participated in a survey. This survey was conducted by **Frank L. Pasquale, Ph.D.**, a cultural anthropologist. According to the Center for Inquiry, "His career has spanned scholarship, international business, and cultural education. He has pursued life-long interests in culture, religion and irreligion, ethics and morality, and church-state separation. He has contributed articles on these and other topics to *Free Inquiry*, *Secular Humanist Bulletin*, *Sightings*, *The Oregonian*, *Oregon's Future*, and *Humanism Northwest*, among others. He is currently at work on research concerning the nonreligious in the United States and a book on study and neglect of the nonreligious in the behavioral and social sciences.

"Dr. Pasquale graduated from Northwestern University in 1972 with a B.A. in Psychology. He received an M.S. in Social Psychology at Western Washington University, and returned to Northwestern for his M.A. and Ph.D. in cultural anthropology, studying under Francis L. K. Hsu. His academic research has focused on attribution of responsibility and cultural factors in moral development, social behavior, and mental health." Dr. Pasquale is based in Portland, Oregon.

On May 31, Dr. Pasquale sent to the representatives of the groups surveyed a 29-page preliminary report of his findings. The following are extracts and paraphrases of his report. He wrote in his introduction:

"This is an exceptionally well-educated population, most of whom have reacted to a religious background (rather than being raised in an explicitly-secular home). Here, as elsewhere, males tend to view themselves as "religious" or "spiritual" less, on average, than females. The more closely people's worldviews are probed, the less clear-cut (e.g., "religious"/"transcendental" or "nonreligious"/"secular") many of these appear. There is no evidence here for an early childhood trauma or parental loss "explanation" of atheism or general disbelief in "God," and fear of death is generally very low and, contrary to some popular views, the *older* and *less* "religious" or "spiritual" these respondents are, the *less* the reported fear of death."

Surveys were distributed to 1,597 individuals on the mailing lists of 22 atheist, freethought, humanist (secular, Judaic, and Unitarian), rationalist/skeptic, and similar groups in Oregon, Washington, and southern British Columbia in Fall of 2006. Considering duplicate memberships (some people belonged to two or more of the surveyed groups, and completed only one survey, as requested), Dr. Pasquale reports that there was a roughly 60% participation rate.

The group types/affiliations were divided into: Humanist, Secular; Humanist, Judaic; Humanist, Unitarian; Atheist; Skeptic or Rationalist; and Freethought. (No individual group findings were presented.) Only the Judaic and Unitarian Humanists had more women respondents than men respondents. Overall, 56% of those surveyed were men, and 44% women (with 10 not providing this information.)

The age of members were predominantly between 50 and 79. The mean age for Secular Humanist groups, for example, was 65.61. Respondents were overwhelmingly European-Americans. Typical of all Americans, about three-quarters spent their childhood and adolescence outside the Pacific Northwest. A well-educated group, three-quarters have college degrees.

Individuals surveyed overwhelmingly describe themselves as "not at all religious (in supernatural or transcendental terms)." Some indicate a willingness to use "religion/religious" without supernatural or transcendental ideas. A substantial percentage indicate a willingness to use "spiritual/ity" in secular or naturalistic senses. Respondents were asked what descriptive terms they use to describe their way of thinking. "Humanist(ic)" was most frequently chosen. "Atheist(ic)" was second. More ambiguous terms, like "agnostic," "naturalistic," "nontheist," and "unbeliever" were chosen by substantially fewer respondents.

Individuals were asked to what "the degree of order or patterning we perceive in nature is most likely attributable." Among the 886 respondents to this item, 96.4 percent answered "properties that are intrinsic to the nature of the physical universe or all that exists, and nothing more" or "a coherent organizing principle that we cannot, or do not yet, fully comprehend, that is pervasive throughout the physical universe or all that exists". On this basis, this is a substantially naturalistic group. Predictably, strong majorities rejected notions of a transcendent entity and continuing personal essence as meaningless/non-existent or unknowable. Weaker majorities rejected the notions of ultimate purpose or an impersonal force. Interestingly, a significant minority of these secular respondents indicated that they maybe/sometimes or probably/definitely accept the existence of an impersonal connecting force.

The majority of respondents report religious backgrounds or upbringings. In answer to a question about parents' religious or philosophical orientation, 82.9 percent reported religious identities or philosophies. Only 11.4 percent described their parents as explicitly secular, humanist, agnostic, atheist, or "no religion." An additional 5.4 percent reported one religious and one (explicitly) non-religious parent. Perceived mothers' religiosity was

significantly greater than fathers', with more fathers perceived as strongly nonreligious.

Roughly 40 percent of respondents indicated no formal religious education in their youths, while slightly more than half did. Two-thirds of those reporting full-time religious schooling had Roman Catholic backgrounds. With respect to the strength of religious expectations, roughly 40 percent indicated "none at all" or "lax or voluntary," 40 percent experienced weekly services or generally "strict/strong" religious upbringings, and 20 percent reported attendance at occasional or special religious services.

Respondents who considered themselves "not religious" (in "supernatural or transcendental terms") were asked when they decided this. While the majority decided or realized they were "nonreligious" early in life, nearly a quarter did so after the age of 30 (some quite late in life). Written texts provided by many respondents suggest that a gradual process of struggling with inconsistencies in "religious" beliefs and behavior, and/or increasing unease about the role and effects of religions in the world in recent years, were important factors in shifts made later in life. The average age of decision or realization is almost precisely the same for males (21.85) and females (21.86).

It has been suggested for decades, in spite of scanty evidence, that "atheism," or affirmative disbelief in God, is disproportionately the result of parental loss or conflict early in life. Dr. Pasquale's research finds no such correspondence. "Evidence for an early parental loss/trauma explanation for 'atheism' is not found here — either among the substantially nonreligious full sample, self-described 'atheists,' or those who explicitly reject belief in a transcendental being."

Respondents were asked to indicate whether they had experienced conflict about religion with parents, siblings, children, spouse(s), friends, or at work. Those with Roman Catholic backgrounds reported conflict over religion comparatively more often, and those with Jewish backgrounds, comparatively less. Very few with secular backgrounds (parents "not religious," "atheist," or "agnostic" and no religious education) indicated religious conflict with parents, siblings, or their children, but more did so with spouse(s), friends, and at work (roughly at parity with others).

A majority indicated that they have become increasingly nonreligious, vocal, or involved (in nonreligious or skeptic organizations) due to a resurgence of religion in recent times. When asked to what extent they would say they are "angry about the role, dominance, and/or effects of religion in the world," nearly 80 percent of respondents indicated some degree of anger. About three-quarters of respondents considered religion more harmful than positive. This was especially true of atheist and freethought affiliates, while a significant minority of humanists and skeptics were of the opinion that "religion is too complex a phenomenon to generalize about in this way."

Respondents were asked about the reality or effectiveness of several phenomena, including communication with the dead, telepathic communication, healing effects of prayers by unknown others, prediction of events in or through dreams, existence of "Bigfoot" or "Sasquatch," existence of ghosts or haunting, the healing efficacy of acupuncture, past visits to Earth by UFO's or alien beings, and hypnosis/hypnotic states. Preliminary results indicate that skepticism is consistently high among respondents for all phenomena except for hypnosis (as expected), acupuncture, and homeopathy; greater numbers of respondents indicate uncertainty about Bigfoot/Sasquatch, acupuncture, homeopathy, and UFOs/alien visits to Earth compared with other phenomena (based on the frequency of "don't know" responses), and skeptic/rationalist affiliates live up to their name, exhibiting consistently and comparatively strong doubt, on average, about all phenomena.

Reasons given for supporting or participating in groups varied in several ways. Overall, respondents indicated that group affiliation offers a source of information and intellectual stimulation. This was equally true for all but Judaic Humanists, who rated this significantly lower than other affiliates. In general, the lowest rated motivations were outwardly-oriented ones (e.g., educating the public, philosophical activism/advocacy, and collaboration to benefit the community/world).

Individuals were asked to what extent they considered their own lives worthwhile, the meaningfulness of human life in general, and what gives them (personally) the greatest sense of meaning in life. Respondents resoundingly indicated that they consider their lives worthwhile.

When it comes to generalized meaning attributed to human life, however ("Do you feel that human life or existence is, in general ... not at all [or] very meaningful?"), things change. Of the 679 respondents to this question, the majority still responded affirmatively. However, a substantial minority did not. Moreover, 291 respondents chose an optional item indicating that "this is not a meaningful question to me." Accompanying texts clearly indicate that for the overwhelming majority of these individuals, whatever meaning there is in human life is assigned by human beings to their own lives. Many express discomfort speaking about "meaningfulness" of life at all

My comments

Dr. Pasquale emphasizes that analysis of the data is ongoing. Yet his preliminary report of findings is valuable. Very little research by social scientists has been done on the nonreligious segment of our population. (I leave it to the reader to speculate on the reasons for this.) Dr. Pasquale's study of Pacific Northwest secular groups is thus all the more welcome.

As noted above, Dr. Pasquale reports that there was a roughly 60% participation rate. Considering how little

(continued on page 4)

Voice of an Angel

No Wonder I Don't Understand Religion at All!

[Editor's Note: *Regarding "Non-Catholics Wounded by Not Recognizing Pope", page 6.*]

So, apparently Pope Benedict has decreed that non-Catholics are not full Christians. This all makes my head hurt because the weird thing for me is, I was raised never understanding what the word "Christian" meant.

I grew up Catholic, and asking questions about other religions was frowned upon. I recall countless times when my mother or her mother was asked: "Are you Christian?" They would immediately reply, "Oh No! We're CATHOLIC!"

Then, on the flip side, my father's mother would occasionally go on about how she disapproved of our being raised Catholic, because they weren't "true Christians". When I attended church with my father's parents, I found it strange how everyone carried around a Bible and read from it. The people at the church seemed to pride themselves on how many verses they could quote. It was "Jesus this" and "Jesus that" — they just couldn't stop talking about Jesus.

As a Catholic, we treated the Bible as part of the home decor. It sat upon the piano where it was rarely touched. We were taught that the Priest read passages during church and then he would then tell us what it all meant. As a child, I had no clue what he was talking about. I sat there bored out of my mind finding the entire thing very silly, especially since I didn't believe in any of that nonsense.

It seemed to me that the Catholics weren't big on Jesus. After all it was the "Holy Trinity" that was top banana. Heck, I think we talked about Mary as much as Jesus. So, when my family avidly denounced being "Christian", it kind of made sense to me. Being a Christian seemed to mean you were big on Christ (Jesus) and from my observations, this did NOT describe the Catholic Church that I had come to know.

The end result was I grew up thinking there were three religions: Catholics, Christians and "others". I heard people tossing about names like Baptist, Episcopalian and such, but I never understood what it all meant. It wasn't until I was in college that I studied the "other" religions.

When Reed and I were first dating and we got to talking about my family's religion, I told him that my father's parents were Christian. Reed then asked me what sort of Christian. I had no clue what he was referring to and explained my Catholic and Christian confusion to him. I was 30 years old before anyone explained that Catholics ARE Christian (I STILL have a hard time with that) and there are many "brands" of Christians.

I guess it all boils down to the fact that it's not what you call yourself that matters, people will know you by how you act. I would venture to guess that declaring Christian denominations outside the Roman Catholic Church as not full churches of Jesus Christ is not a very Christian thing to do.

But then again, I'm an Atheist — what do I know...

Angela Byers

CSS Webmaster / Assistant Editor

From the President (continued from page 3)

research has been done on the nonreligious, I can't help wondering why about 40% of Pacific Northwest secularists *declined* to anonymously express their opinions. If you are one who refused to participate, I would be interested in learning why.

A significant minority of respondents indicated that they maybe/sometimes or probably / definitely accept the existence of an impersonal connecting force. I am skeptical of this concept, and I would like to be informed of the nature of and evidence for this "impersonal connecting force."

The ages of those surveyed were predominantly 50 to 79; respondents were overwhelmingly European-Americans; and significantly more men than women are members of Pacific Northwest secular groups. In addition to trying to reach more people in general, we may want to target younger people, minorities, and women as new members.

The majority of respondents report religious backgrounds or upbringings, while the percentage of our population that is nonreligious is growing. The next generation of secular people, then, will probably include a larger portion of second-generation atheists and humanists. How will this change the nature of nonreligious groups and individuals?

I thank Dr. Pasquale for his hard, and ongoing, work in researching the nonreligious and skeptical segment of our population. Perhaps the best way to honor his effort is for local and national secular organizations to study his results in an attempt to discover ways to increase their numbers and influence.

John Dearing

President of CSS

Freethinkers' Fourth a Blast!



Jerry Andrus shares his world-class illusions with anyone nearby.

Martin Daniels lights our fire!...



Setting up the picnic tables...

Vatican: Non-Catholics ‘Wounded’ by Not Recognizing Pope

by Reuters, 7/10/2007

VATICAN CITY (Reuters)— The Vatican on Tuesday said Christian denominations outside the Roman Catholic Church were not full churches of Jesus Christ.

A 16-page document, prepared by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, which Pope Benedict used to head, described Christian Orthodox churches as true churches, but suffering from a “wound” since they do not recognize the primacy of the Pope.

But the document said the “wound is still more profound” in the Protestant denominations — a view likely to further complicate relations with Protestants.

“Despite the fact that this teaching has created no little distress ... it is nevertheless difficult to see how the title of ‘Church’ could possibly be attributed to them,” it said.

The Vatican text, which restates the controversial document “Dominus Iesus” issued by the then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger in 2000, said the Church wanted to stress this point because some Catholic theologians continued to misunderstand it.

Ratzinger was elected Pope in April 2005. The document is his second strong reaffirmation of Catholic tradition in four days, following a decree on Saturday restoring the old Latin Mass alongside the modern liturgy.

The document stressed that dialogue with other Christians remained “one of the priorities of the Catholic Church.”

The document, issued by Benedict’s successor in doctrinal matters, Cardinal William Levada, complemented the Latin

Mass decree in aiming to correct what it called “erroneous or ambiguous” interpretations of the Second Vatican Council, which took place from 1962 to 1965.

Church modernizers interpreted the Council as a break from the past while conservatives, like Benedict, see it in continuity with 2,000 years of Catholic tradition.



“Despite the fact that this teaching has created no little distress ... it is nevertheless difficult to see how the title of ‘Church’ could possibly be attributed to [Protestants]”

The document said the Council’s opening to other faiths recognized there were “many elements of sanctification and truth” in other Christian denominations, but stressed only Catholicism had all the elements to be Christ’s Church fully.

The text refers to “ecclesial communities originating from the Reformation,” a term used to refer to Protestants and Anglicans. Father Augustine Di Noia, under-secretary for the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, said the document did not alter the commitment for ecumenical dialogue, but aimed to assert Catholic identity in those talks.

“The Church is not backtracking on ecumenical commitment,” Di Noia

told Vatican radio.

“But, as you know, it is fundamental to any kind of dialogue that the participants are clear about their own identity. That is, dialogue cannot be an occasion to accommodate or soften what you actually understand yourself to be.”

The New Bush Bumper Stickers

1. Cheney/Satan '08
2. 1/20/09: End of an Error
3. That's OK; I Wasn't Using My Civil Liberties Anyway
4. Lets Fix Democracy in This Country First
5. If You Want a Nation Ruled By Religion, Move to Iran!
6. Bush. Like a Rock. Only Dumber.
7. If You Can Read This, You're Not Our President
8. Of Course It Hurts: You're Getting Screwed by an Elephant
9. Hey, Bush Supporters: Embarrassed Yet?
10. George Bush: Creating the Terrorists Our Kids Will Have to Fight.
11. America: One Nation, Under Surveillance
12. They Call Him "W" So He Can Spell It
13. Jail to the Chief
14. No, Seriously, Why Did We Invade Iraq?
15. Bush: God's way of proving Intelligent Design is bullshit

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White House is Accused of Putting Politics Over Science

by Gardiner Harris, *New York Times*, 7/10/2007

WASHINGTON, July 10—Former Surgeon General Richard H. Carmona told a Congressional committee today that top officials in the Bush administration repeatedly tried to weaken or suppress important public health reports because of political considerations.

Dr. Carmona, who served as surgeon general from 2002 to 2006, said White House officials would not allow him to speak or issue reports about stem cells, emergency contraception, sex education, or prison, mental and global health issues because of political concerns. Top administration officials delayed for years and attempted to “water down” a landmark report on secondhand tobacco smoke, he said in sworn testimony before the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

He was ordered to mention President Bush three times on every page of every speech he gave, Dr. Carmona said. He was asked to make speeches to support Republican political candidates and to attend political briefings, at least one of which included Karl Rove, the president’s senior political adviser, he said.

And administration officials even discouraged him from attending the Special Olympics because, he said, of that charitable organization’s longtime ties to the Kennedy family.

“I was specifically told by a senior person, ‘Why would you want to help those people?’ ” Dr. Carmona said.

The Special Olympics is one of the nation’s premier charitable organizations to benefit disabled people.

Dr. Carmona joins a list of present and former Bush administration officials who assert that politics often trumped science within what had previously been nonpartisan government health and scientific agencies.

His testimony comes two days before the Senate confirmation hearings of his designated successor, Dr. James W. Holsinger Jr., who was nominated this year by President Bush. Two members of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions have already declared their opposition to Dr. Holsinger’s nomination because of a 1991 report he wrote that concluded that homosexual sex is unnatural and unhealthy.

Dr. Carmona’s testimony may further complicate Dr. Holsinger’s nomination.

Bill Hall, a spokesman for the Department of Health and Human Services, said the Bush administration disagreed with Dr. Carmona’s statements about political pressure. “It has always been this administration’s position that public

health policy should be rooted in sound science,” Mr. Hall said.

But Representative Henry A. Waxman, the chairman of the House oversight committee, sharply criticized the Bush administration, saying it was putting politics above health issues.

“Political interference with the work of the surgeon general appears to have reached a new level in this administration,” Mr. Waxman said in his opening statement, adding, “The public expects that a surgeon general will be immune from political pressure and be allowed to express his or her professional views based on the best available science.”

In his testimony, Dr. Carmona said that at first he was so politically naïve that he had little idea how inappropriate the Bush administration’s actions were. He eventually consulted six previous surgeons general — Republican and Democrat — and all agreed, he said, that he faced more political interference than they did.

On issue after issue, Dr. Carmona asserted, the Bush administration made decisions about important public health issues based solely on political considerations, not scientific ones.

“I was told to stay away from those because we’ve already decided which way we want to go,” Dr. Carmona said.

He described attending a meeting of top officials in which the subject of global warming was discussed. The other officials concluded that global warming was a liberal cause and dismissed it, he said.

“And I said to myself: ‘I realize why I’ve been invited. They want me to discuss the science because they obviously don’t understand the science,’ ” he said. “I was never invited back.”

He said the science is clear that effective sexual education efforts must offer what he called a “comprehensive approach.”

“However, there was already a policy in place to only support sexual education efforts that discussed only abstinence, he said.

After serving one full term as surgeon general, Dr. Carmona was not asked by the White House to serve another. Before becoming surgeon general, he was in the Army Special Forces, earned two purple hearts in the Vietnam War, was a trauma surgeon and a leader of the Pima County, Ariz., SWAT team. He is now vice chairman of Canyon Ranch, a resort and residential development company.

Fridge Notes for the Fourth of July

by William Edelen, July 8, 2007

<http://www.williamedelen.com/july012007.html>

In the discussion time of my Sunday Symposium we have a small ritual. When anyone says something worth remembering, or I say something equally important, we say "that's for your refrigerator door." Everyone has a fridge door library of notes. For this month of July it is a wonderful opportunity to make a dent in the historical ignorance of the political and Christian knee jerk right wingers who are always babbling about our "Christian" founding presidents. They continue to publish phony, fundamentalist, quotes that are laughable to any historically enlightened person with an I.Q. above 3.

These fridge quotes are in defense of historical accuracy, facts, honesty and integrity. The right wing knee-jerks are like the elderly woman, who when first told about evolution replied: "well...I pray to God it is not true...but if it is true, then I pray to God that nobody ever hears about it."

THE ENCYCLOPEDIA BRITANNICA ... Vol 2, p420, 1968 Mortimer J. Adler, editor in chief "Great issues in American Life" quote: "One of the embarrassing problems for the nineteenth century champions of the Christian faith was the fact that not one of the first six presidents of the United States was a Christian. They were Deists."

DEISM... There is no personal God, but only an impersonal force, energy, 'providence' Jesus was nothing more than a nomadic teacher and the bible is nothing but literature and bad literature at that filled with thousands of contradictions and falsehoods.

GEORGE WASHINGTON approved the Treaty of Tripoli. The "Philadelphia Gazette" on June 17, 1797 printed the entire 12 articles of the Treaty with the notice that the Senate and President JOHN ADAMS had approved the Treaty UNANIMOUSLY. Not even one dissenting vote. Article 11 of that printed treaty begins with this statement: "THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA IS NOT, IN ANY SENSE, FOUNDED ON THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION."

GEORGE WASHINGTON "Being no bigot, I am disposed to HUMOR Christian ministers and the church. hoping that their fights will not endanger the peace of society" (Ltr. to Sir Edward Newenham)

JOHN ADAMS... "The doctrine of the divinity of Jesus has made a convenient cover for absurdity. Creeds, Confessions, Doctrines and Oaths are all trumpery." In the "Jefferson-Adams" Letters they both constantly joke about the stupidity of the Doctrine of the Trinity. "This would be the best of all possible worlds if there were no religion in it." Jefferson-Adams Letters

THOMAS JEFFERSON "Millions of innocent men, women and children, since the introduction of Christianity, have been burnt, tortured, fined and imprisoned. What has been the effect of this coercion? To make one half the world fools...and the other half hypocrites." (Ltr. to Thomas Whitmore) "Christian creeds and doctrines, the clergy's own fatal inventions, through all the ages has made of Christendom a slaughter house". Notes on Religion, passed in the Assembly of Virginia, 1786.

JAMES MADISON Father of the Constitution and Bill of Rights: "During 15 centuries, the legal establishment of Christianity has been on trial. What have been the fruits of this trial? In all places, pride and indolence in the clergy...ignorance and servility in the laity...and in both clergy and laity...superstition, bigotry and persecution." (From his speech to the General Assembly of Virginia, 1785) "A just government instituted to perpetuate liberty does not need the clergy or the church." (From the same speech.)

ABRAHAM LINCOLN though not a founding president shared exactly the same views. That most brilliant Pulitzer Prize biography of this giant is Carl Sandburg's *Abraham Lincoln* in which he writes that "Lincoln's views were such as would place him entirely outside of Christianity. Lincoln found Christian dogma and doctrine repugnant." In a letter to the clergy of Washington D.C., he stated: "The bible is not my book...nor Christianity my religion."

A few gems that you might add to your Founding Presidents collection:

EMILE ZOLA "Civilization will thrive when the last stone...from the last church...falls on the head of the last priest."

RALPH WALDO EMERSON "Christian creeds and doctrines are a disease of the intellect."

SUPREME COURT OF WISCONSIN, Weiss vs. District Board, March 18, 1890..."The Source and cause of fights and malignancy, persecution, wars and all evil...is religion. Let it once enter our public schools and they would be destroyed.

July is a celebration of Deism. The Deism of the brilliant authors of our Declaration of Independence, our Constitution and our Bill of Rights. One of the most destructive characteristics of our contemporary world is the deliberate, conscious, falsification and invention of histories to suit an immediate political agenda and purposes. It is impossible to have an honest future until we are first honest about our past.

Newspaper Letters

Corvallis Gazette-Times

7/12/2007

Are fireworks just pretty, dirty bombs?

Citizens who engaged in the bedazzling pyrotechnic displays this holiday season should be aware that there is much more to ornamental explosives than colorful sparks, percussive thumps and gentle waterfalls of color.

The journal Environmental Science & Technology reported that firework displays held over large bodies of water can raise levels of perchlorate up to 1,028 times above background levels. Perchlorate is known to disrupt thyroid function, which can lead to hormonal irregularity in adults and delayed development and decreased learning potential in children. Is this a chemical we want to be adding to our shared water resources?

In addition to perchlorate, fireworks contain copious amounts of heavy metals, which are dispersed post-explosion as ashen fallout. A standard fireworks display dusts unaware viewers with lead, barium, cadmium, potassium nitrate, sulfur dioxide, strontium and various copper compounds. The fallout from these heavy metals is a fine powdery dust that is easily inhaled. One source estimates that the combined total of fireworks lit off in the United States this July created approximately 90 tons of airborne lead pollution. These components represent a serious threat to human and environmental health.

It is also ironic that 98 to 99 percent of all our fiery patriotic displays are manufactured in a communist country — China. The Charlotte Observer reports that “Chinese revenue from fireworks is up 50 percent since 2000, to \$900 million last year.” Why should we celebrate our independence from England by generating toxic substances and forking over almost a billion dollars to China each year?

Alexander Goldner,
Corvallis

Bush Bumper Stickers...

(continued from page 7)

16. Bad President! No Banana.
17. We Need a President Who's Fluent In At Least One Language
18. We're Making Enemies Faster than We Can Kill Them
19. Is It Vietnam Yet?
20. Where Are We Going? And Why Are We In This Handbasket?
21. You Elected Him. You Deserve Him.
22. Impeach Cheney First
23. When Bush Took Office, Gas was \$1.46
24. Pray For Impeachment

Corvallis Gazette-Times

6/8/2007

U.S. health care system below par

Some random facts about our health care system:

- Our per capita health care cost is twice that of most other developed countries.
- Our government directly/indirectly pays 50 to 60 percent of the bill. Do the math. Our government pays more than other governments for health care.
- “They” have universal access. We don’t.
- Twenty to 30 percent of your healthcare insurance premiums are “lost” to overhead and profits instead of going to providers.
- Your doctor loses 10 percent of his/her revenue to the cost of billing (multiple insurance companies).
- The working poor, who can’t afford health insurance, are paying taxes to cover the healthcare cost of Medicare recipients, who, as a group, are our wealthiest citizens.
- Those same working poor also subsidize the cost of health insurance for those who get insurance through their employers. (Health insurance for employers is a tax deduction.)
- Next to loss of a job, health care costs are the second leading cause of bankruptcy. More than one half of those unfortunate people had health insurance at the onset of the illness. It either wasn’t adequate, or they lost it.
- Poverty is a significant predictor of poor health, even if one has access to health care.
- The best predictor of poverty is lack of quality education.
- By necessity, our government is starting to spend more on health care than education.
- Countries with the widest income gap have the worst health care statistics, such as life expectancy and infant mortality.

We can do better.

Paul Hochfeld,
Emergency physician,
Corvallis

25. The Republican Party: Our Bridge to the 11th Century
26. What Part of “Bush Lied” Don't You Understand?
27. One Nation under Clod
28. 2004: Embarrassed 2005: Horrified 2006: Terrified
29. Bush Never Exhaled
30. At Least Nixon Resigned

O4R Position Statement on Evolution and Intelligent Design

Oregonians for Rationality supports the teaching of evolution and opposes attempts to present "Intelligent Design" (ID) as a legitimate part of scientific knowledge:

Why Evolution Should Be Taught

Geneticist Theodosius Dobzhansky observed: Nothing in biology makes any sense except in the light of evolution. Biological evolution ties all biological observations into a unified scientific whole. Teaching biology without reference to evolutionary underpinnings changes it from a science to mere cataloging.

Different forms of life came to be through evolution. This has been the accepted scientific explanation since the publication of Charles Darwin's book *The Origin of Species*. Darwin's basic insight into the evolutionary process, though augmented by modern experimental methods, has never been disproved.

Creationist Wheel of Fortune: Where every spin lands on *Bankrupt!*

EVOLUTION

That can't possibly be *evolution!* There are too many gaps!

That must mean the answer to the puzzle is *Creation!*



Why "Intelligent Design" Should Not Be Taught

ID does not deserve to be called "science" for three important reasons:

1. ID IS NOT BASED ON SCIENTIFIC OBSERVATIONS

ID is not needed to explain complex biological structures. While it claims that some biological structures are too complex to have evolved by means of natural selection, this claim assumes we know how much complexity can arise by natural processes. ID proponents claim they have calculated this limit; however, their calculations are highly influenced by the assumptions they make. Scientists have found no reason why natural selection cannot account for the complexity of biological structures.

2. ID PRESELECTS ONLY OBSERVATIONS THAT SUPPORT ITS CONCLUSIONS.

Science uses observations to construct hypotheses that make testable predictions. ID starts from its conclusions and selects only observations that support them, ignoring those that conflict.

3. ID CANNOT BE TESTED.

Science deals only with explanations that can be tested against the predictions they make. ID makes no predictions that can be tested by real world observations.

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

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

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