Middle East Conflict Intensifies As Blah Blah Blah, Etc. Etc.

AMERICAN ATHEIST NEWS AND THOUGHT



American Atheists Essential Reading List

Books on this list have been selected to provide introductory information on topics of interest to Atheists. They address a wide range of important subjects such as: the history of Atheist thought, the origins of modern religion, the role religion plays in modern culture and politics, Atheist parenting, and the ongoing battle for the separation between church and state. While these titles represent only a fraction of the books available from American Atheist Press, collectively they provide a broad overview of Atheist thought.

	\$18.00 of a "natura	352 pp. al" Atheist.	paperback
stock# 5200	\$14.00	237 pp.	paperback
stock# 5096	\$6.00	57 pp.	stapled
stock# 5588 as a manual for A	\$12.00 Atheist pare	157 pp. nts.	paperback
stock# 5400 unding fathers c	\$6.00 reated a Ch	70 pp. ristian natio	stapled on.
stock# 5412 t philosophy and	\$18.00 I history.	288 pp.	paperback
stock# 5008 oralities and obs	\$17.00 cenities.	372 pp.	paperback
stock# 5376 recitation in sch	\$18.00 lools in the	302 pp. United Stat	paperback es.
stock# 5589 opponent of su	\$15.00 perstition.	262 pp.	paperback
stock# 5372 ave a clear view o	\$6.00 of religion.	30 pp.	stapled
stock# 5419 elf-defeating.	\$10.00	42 pp.	paperback
stock# 7026 tence of any hist	\$20.00 orical Jesus	544 pp.	paperback
stock# 5197 I enriched our liv	\$7.00 es.	80 pp.	paperback
stock# 5064 red.	\$3.00	20 pp.	stapled
stock# 5440 cluding the Chri	\$8.00 stian cross.	55 pp.	stapled
stock# 8310	\$1.00	24 pp.	pamphlet
	stock# 5200 stock# 5588 as a manual for A stock# 5400 unding fathers of stock# 5412 t philosophy and stock# 5008 oralities and obs stock# 5376 recitation in sch stock# 5372 recitation in sch stock# 5372 ave a clear view of stock# 5419 elf-defeating. stock# 5419 elf-defeating. stock# 7026 tence of any hist stock# 5197 d enriched our liv stock# 5064 red. stock# 5440 red. stock# 5440 recluding the Chri stock# 8310	stock# 5200 \$14.00 stock# 5596 \$6.00 stock# 5588 \$12.00 as a manual for Atheist pare stock# 5400 \$6.00 unding fathers created a Chastock# 5412 \$18.00 to philosophy and history. stock# 5008 \$17.00 oralities and obscenities. stock# 5376 \$18.00 recitation in schools in the stock# 5589 \$15.00 opponent of superstition. stock# 5372 \$6.00 ove a clear view of religion. stock# 5419 \$10.00 elf-defeating. stock# 7026 \$20.00 tence of any historical Jesus stock# 5197 \$7.00 denriched our lives. stock# 5064 \$3.00 ored. stock# 5440 \$8.00 occluding the Christian cross.	stock# 5200 \$14.00 237 pp. stock# 5200 \$14.00 237 pp. stock# 5588 \$12.00 157 pp. stock# 5588 \$12.00 157 pp. as a manual for Atheist parents. stock# 5400 \$6.00 70 pp. unding fathers created a Christian nation stock# 5412 \$18.00 288 pp. t philosophy and history. stock# 5008 \$17.00 372 pp. oralities and obscenities. stock# 5376 \$18.00 302 pp. recitation in schools in the United State stock# 5589 \$15.00 262 pp. opponent of superstition. stock# 5372 \$6.00 30 pp. ave a clear view of religion. stock# 5419 \$10.00 42 pp. elf-defeating. stock# 7026 \$20.00 544 pp. tence of any historical Jesus. stock# 5197 \$7.00 80 pp. d enriched our lives. stock# 5064 \$3.00 20 pp. red. stock# 5440 \$8.00 55 pp. cluding the Christian cross. stock# 8310 \$1.00 24 pp.

Please see the order form located in the center of the magazine for member discounts and shipping & handling.

www.atheists.org

MARCH 2008 Vol 46, No.3



ISSN 0516-9623 (Print) ISSN 1935-8369 (Online)

Editor, American Atheist Press Frank Zindler

Editor, American Atheist Magazine
Ellen Johnson

Ellen Jonnsor

Designer Elias Scultori

Cover Design

Tim Mize

Editorial Assistants

Gil and Jeanne Gaudia

Published monthly (except June & December) by American Atheists Inc.

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 5733 Parsippany, NJ 07054-6733

phone — 908.276.7300 FAX — 908.276.7402

editor@americanatheist.org www.atheists.org

©2008 by American Atheists Inc. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without written permission is prohibited.

American Atheist Magazine is indexed in the Alternative Press Index.

American Atheist Magazine is given free of cost to members of American Atheists as an incident of their membership.

Subscription fees for one year of the American Atheist magazine: Print version only: \$40 for 1 subscription and \$25 for each additional gift subscription Online version only: \$35 (Sign up at www.atheists.org/aam.) Print & online: \$55

Discounts for multiple-year subscriptions: 10% for two years 20% for three or more years

Additional postage fees for foreign addresses: Canada & Mexico: add \$10/year All other countries: add \$30/year

Discount for libraries and institutions: 50% on all magazine subscriptions and book purchases

American Atheist Magazine

CONTENTS

4 From The President

American Atheist's Utah Lawsuit Against Latin Crosses On Public Property by Ellen Johnson

- 5 Representing You
- 5 Middle East Conflict Intensifies As Blah Blah Blah, Etc. Etc. The Onion
- From Mormonism To Atheism by Kim M. Clark
- 8 My Hand Shall Be Against The Prophets by Barrett Brown
- 16 Divine Beings By The Bushel

by Guy P. Harrison

19 Freethought Firefighters International

Anne MacCrea Interviews Bruce Monson, Founder of FFI

22 Leap Of Faith

by Jeff Bercovici

Origin Of 'Breathable' Atmosphere Half A Billion Years Ago Discovered

25 Book Review

The price of submission is too high – Infidel by Gina Liggett

31 State Director Listing

On the Cover

Left to right: Paul DiPilla (Firefighter-Paramedic), Chris Laurich (Firefighter), Bruce Monson (Firefighter-Paramedic), Ty Mather (Driver/Engineer)

American Atheist's Utah Lawsuit Against Latin Crosses On Public Property



Ellen Johnson

he Utah Highway Patrol Association (UHPA), which is a non-government entity, began erecting twelve-foot-tall Christian crosses as memorials to fallen troopers in 1998 on the Utah highway right-of-ways. The UHPA put the logo of the Utah Highway Patrol (UHP), which is a government entity, on these Christian crosses which now number thirteen. By affixing The Utah Highway Patrol's official logo to every Christian cross, they thereby gave an official government endorsement of religion.

In December of 2005 American Atheists filed suit to have the crosses declared unconstitutional, but on November 20, 2007, U.S. District Court Judge, David Sam, handed down a perplexing decision which held that, when used as a memorial, these religious symbols are secular and not religious.

The UHPA had erected the first three of the huge crosses on private property, but when they couldn't find enough private land for the remaining ten, they asked the state for permission to put them on public property and the state said yes. They should have said no.

Even though the crosses were installed and funded by the UHPA, the public will still see this action as an endorsement by the state because only state approved objects may be on the highways.

The Christian crosses manage to violate five laws as well as ignoring the diversity of troopers who may not want their names on a Christian symbol: They violate the United States Constitution, the Utah State Constitution, the Utah Department of Transportation rules, the Utah Highway Advertising rules and the Lady Bird Johnson Highway Beautification Act of 1965.

The crosses do not respect the diversity of troopers. For instance, Mormons do not utilize the cross in their religious practices. They do not wear lapel pins or necklaces with crosses. They do not appear in or on any Mormon buildings, chapels, temples, etc. And Mormons do not use it to mark their books, vestments, etc. Jews wouldn't put the name of their relatives on a Christian cross and certainly Muslims and Atheists wouldn't either.

The UHP maintains that the crosses are both religious and secular. When they are placed on the roadside, they say they become more secular than religious. Admittedly, when one sees a small cross down by the ground along the highway with some flowers next to it, one knows what happened at that spot. But when one drives along the highways in Utah and sees a twelve-foot-tall stark-white steel cross all by itself embedded in the ground one has to wonder, "What's that all about?" As our attorney Brian Barnard has noted, it looks more like the front of a Baptist church than a roadside memorial. It looks like a billboard for Christianity. And that's a shame because it makes

honoring the fallen trooper almost an afterthought. The memorial is all cross and very little of a personal tribute.

Private citizens and groups cannot commandeer public land for private purposes in Utah. If a citizen puts up a roadside memorial, whether it is a cross or a wreath or anything else, it is removed.

Even if the religious symbols were to be moved to private property there would still be a problem as long as the official logo of the Utah Highway Patrol is on them.

Nevertheless, despite the myriad of problems associated with these religious symbols, there is no reason why we can't all come together and design a spectacular memorial for these fallen Utah troopers. But the UHPA doesn't want to cooperate and that is unfortunate. They are dragging this out and putting the families through this unnecessary ordeal. The situation could have been over a long time ago but the UHPA is fixated on securing a Christian religious symbol on public property and they won't budge.

Using convoluted logic, they claim that the fact that Mormons do not use the cross is evidence that it's a secular item. By this reasoning, since Jews do not wear Miraculous Medals, these are not religious symbols either. But in fact, Mormons don't utilize a cross because their religion places emphasis on the resurrection and the on-going life of Christ, not the crucifixion. They believe that Christ appeared on earth after his resurrection and visited the indigenous people of Central America.

If this decision is to ever be upheld by the US Supreme Court and become the law of the land, America will see twelve-foot-tall Christian crosses permanently embedded along our nation's highways and other public lands. Supporters of these crosses shouldn't be so happy about that. For if the Supreme Court upholds these billboards for Christianity then those supporters will begin to see something they never dreamed of, e.g., twelve-foot-tall Atheist symbols, Muslim crescents, and Jewish stars as well as any other symbol that any other family cares to use for their loved one. A deceased Atheist trooper's family would be able to have a twelve-foot by twelve-foot steel Atheist symbol permanently embedded on highway property. I can't say I'd mind that. What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander.

We have appealed the decision to the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals. We thank you for your continued financial support for our work. When the government engages in these activities they collaborate in keeping organized religion alive and we are working very hard to sever that connection.

We will continue to keep you informed. *

representing YOU

- 11/27/07 Ellen Johnson appeared on the FOX Network's Hannity & Colmes TV program to talk about our Utah Cross case decision.
- **11/26/07** Ellen Johnson was interviewed for an article in USA Today on The Golden Compass movie.
- **11/26/07** Ellen Johnson was a guest on The Peter Heck Radio Show to talk about Atheism.
- **11/28/07** Ellen Johnson appeared on the CBS News Early Show to talk about the Golden Compass.
- **11/29/07** Ellen Johnson was quoted in USA Today on The Golden Compass movie.
- **11/29/07** Ellen Johnson was interviewed for the Family News & Focus radio program on The Golden Compass movie.
- **12/02/07** Dave Silverman was quoted in an interview about The Golden Compass movie in the NJ Courier-Post newspaper.
- **12/04/07** Connecticut State Director Dennis Paul Himes was quoted in the JournalInquirer.com about the Solstice display erected by the Connecticut Valley Atheists in Center Park in Vernon.
- **12/05/07** Alabama State Director Blair Scott was interview by FOX 6 News in Birmingham about The Golden Compass movie.
- **12/05/07** Ellen Johnson was interviewed by Poland's largest Newspaper Dziennik on religious extremism in America.
- **12/03/07** Alabama State Director Blair Scott has his letter to the editor published in Tuscaloolsanews.com. Huntsville Times and the Anniston Star Newspaper.
- **12/06/07** Ellen Johnson was interviewed by the Teaneck, NJ Suburbanite Newspaper for an article on crèches and menorahs on public property.
- **12/06/07** Dave Silverman was a guest on the Head-On Radio Show with Bob Kinkaid to talk about Mitt Romney's Mormonism.
- **12/12/07** Connecticut State Director Dennis Himes was a guest on The Collin McEnroe Show on WTIC 1080 in Hartford to talk about the Vernon Atheist Solstice display.
- **12/17/07** Ellen Johnson gave an interview with ABCNews.com about how Atheists celebrate the Winter Solstice.
- **12/18/07** Ellen Johnson was on KABC radio's McIntyre In The Morning" program to talk about a lawsuit over alleged "anti-Christian" comments by a public school teacher.
- **12/21/07** National Media Spokesman Dave Silverman appeared on a CNN Special called "What Would Jesus Do?" to comment on what Atheists do at this time of year.
- **12/24/07** AA Legal Director Edwin Kagin was a guest on THE NEWS HOUR WITH JIM LEHRER.
- **12/24/07** AA Legal Director Edwin Kagin was a guest on the FOX Network's Neal Cavuto Program to discuss Republican Presidential Candidate Mike Huckabee's Christmas TV ad.

Middle East Conflict Intensifies As Blah Blah Blah, Etc. Etc.

by the onion—www.theonion.com (Humor)

MIDDLE EAST—With the Iraq war in its fifth year, the war in Afghanistan in its sixth, and conflict between Israel and the rest of the region continuing unabated for more than half a century, intelligence sources are warning that a new wave of violence in the Middle East may soon blah blah, etc. etc., you know the rest.

"Tensions in the region are extremely high," said U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Ryan Crocker, who added the same old same old while answering reporters' questions. "We're disappointed by the events of the last few months, but we're confident that we're about to [yakety yakety yak]."

The U.N. has issued a strongly worded whatever denouncing someone or something presumably having to do with the vicious explosive things that raged across this, or shattered the predawn calm of that, or ripped suddenly through the other, killing umpteen innocent civilians in a Jerusalem bus or Beirut discotheque or Fallujah mosque or whatever it was this time.

In the aftermath of a whole series of incidents, there have also been troubling reports of just fill in the blanks. Middle East experts say the still somehow worsening situation has inflamed age-old sectarian tensions between the Sunnis, Shiites, Semites, Kurds, Turks, Saudis, Persians, Wahhabis, radicals, extremists, Baathists, mullahs, clerics, et al, which is likely to lead to more gurgle-gurgle over the coming weeks and months.

A certain number of U.S. troops were also killed somewhere in some tragic fashion, while a much greater number were wounded. Meanwhile, impoverished or oppressed supporters of whichever faction carried out the attack or ambush probably celebrated, angering an angry U.S. public that is already angry. Locals are calling for an investigation into excessive force or outright corruption by military or political officials on one of the 15 sides of the various conflicts, although the implicated party has categorically denied wrongdoing, just like they always do, without fail, every time this happens, which is daily, it seems.

And in Afghanistan, the Taliban.

In Israel, Palestinians and Israelis escalated tensions and so on and so on ad infinitum, ad eternum, and some say, ad absurdum, and although Hamas released a statement condemning Israeli forces for the resulting civilian deaths, Israeli officials say the teens were armed with rocket launchers, though it doesn't really matter.

Also, Ahmadinejad, Iran's nuclear program, bin Laden at large, Moqtada al-Sadr, Moqtada al-Sadr's militia, Fallujah, renegade mullahs, embedded and/or beheaded journalists, oil revenues, stockpiles of former Soviet armaments, freedom, racism, Halliburton, women's role in Islamic society, the Quran, withdrawing troops, economic disparities, Sikhs, Pakistanis, oil, rebuilding, stories of hope, the Saudi royal family, the Holy Land, insurgents, and the tragedy of Sept. 11th.

In an attempt to increase public support of whatever the fuck it is he thinks he's doing, President Bush trotted out the same old whoop-de-do you've heard over and over at a solemn-yet-resolute speech attended by soldiers, or religious leaders, or firemen, or some mix of ethnic-looking people from one of those countries.

"We have to give this plan time to wop bop a loo bop, a wop bam boom, ah ah ting tang walla walla bing bang," President Bush may as well have said. "May God [help/bless/save] the United States of America." *

Reprinted with permission of THE ONION © Copyright 2007 Onion Inc.

From Mormonism To Atheism The Reflections of a Studied Skeptic by Kim M. Clark

ensing that I was largely unmoved by his convictions and religious overtures (an adroit observation of which he was not disabused), my exasperated patient at last conceded, "Kim, all I want is the truth."

"No, my friend," I silently reflected, "What you want is the assurance that your existence has divine purpose and that somehow your essence will survive the harshness of death. Your church is true, not for empirical reasons, but only in the sense that its doctrines assuage paralyzing fears and renders comfort where haunting doubt is otherwise left to torment a listless mind."

If "the unexamined life is not worth living," then so, too, are unexamined beliefs not worth believing. [1] Let us recall that in his heralded work The Fall, Camus saw truth as a "lucid intoxication," [2] and that "like light, [it] blinds." [3] He further noted that "Falsehood, on the contrary, is a beautiful twilight that enhances every object." [4] Unwittingly, perhaps, man tends to beautify what he sees, morphing his perceptions into something more splendid, familiar, or palatable. In other words, lavishly apply the makeup and even the most pernicious falsehoods are allowed to parade as truth.

Religious views must not be seen as templates of reality, no matter how rabid the desire or sincere the intent. For anyone to say that they believe, or that they disbelieve, is, for me, an utterly meaningless and pointless disclosure. It is the basis of our beliefs which sets us apart and not the sincerity or strength of our convictions. Voltaire reasoned that as a watch proves a watchmaker, so too does the universe prove a god. [5] But if that were true then we are left with an even more perplexing question: Who created the watchmaker? Or to believers who speak of an anthropomorphic or compositional god, we ask, "Who composed the Composer?" The problem soon becomes one of infinite regress.

Evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins invites reflection by way of a provocative question posed by writer Douglas Adams: "Isn't it enough to see that a garden is beautiful without having to believe that there are fairies at the bottom of it too?" [6] If by ascribing to the Judeo-Christian-Islamic god mythological origins and attributes makes me an Atheist, then so, too, may the believing reader be con-

sidered heretical for having ever uttered animadversions of the Greek god Apollo. Carl Sagan reminds us that in the eyes of the Roman Empire, Christians were Atheists for not accepting "the divinity of apotheosized emperors or Olympian gods." [7]

As a child reared under the religious canopy of Mormonism, I was destined to frame probing and pointed questions with the regularity of a Swiss time piece. My father did his best, I suppose, to endure the overtones of incredulity that originated from my parched lips and reeling mind. "Son, it's okay to question," he assured me, "but never doubt that what the Church teaches is true." (Latter-day Saints hold to the belief that God would never allow Church leaders to lead them astray.) "But if denied the freedom to doubt," I wondered, "What purpose does the question serve?" After 40 years of waiting, I have not yet received a credible answer.

I do not oppose the discovery of God any more than I oppose the discovery of a unified field theory. What I oppose are premature declarations and celebrations. Unlike scientists who are held accountable to the most rigorous and imposing standards of investigation, and whose research is always subject to independent testing and peer review; organized religion only scoffs at such vexing protocols, refusing to defend or debate what for them is sacrosanct. No amount of evidence will tarnish or rebuff religious convictions. If the scriptures teach that Jesus walked on water, then, by damned, he walked on water. Amazingly, not a mewling of suspicion or protest is heard to emerge from the pews. Sadly, it seems, in the cathedral, temple, or synagogue; evidence, reason, and logic have no voice. With hubristic certainty, ecclesiastical authority speaks a posteriori of a yet-to-be-proven God, to include a command of what his Lordship thinks, says, and does. Even God's gender ("Heavenly Father") and eternal ambitions^[8] are said to be known by a privileged few. Conspicuously absent in their confident rhetoric, however, are bona fide specifics and the hard evidence to which disciplined and critical thinkers are accustomed. A discerning Scott Atran adduces that religion is here to stay, for with uncanny persistence, "Religion survives science and secular ideology ... because of what it affectively and collectively secures for people."[9] In the light of such awareness, Atran believed that "All human societies pay a price for religion's material, emotional, and cognitive commitments to unintuitive, factually impossible worlds." [10] It seems apparent, to even the most myopic observer, that people value security more than they value truth. We will agree with Socrates when he reminds Gorgias that the physician's sage advice is no match for the tasty delights of a pastry chef. [11]

For Keats, "What the imagination seizes as beauty must be truth." How splendidly convenient! Likewise, some will see in Fibonacci numbers and the Golden Ratio (a.k.a. the Divine Proportion) evidence of deliberate design, if not the very fingerprint of God. But too often we see something that simply isn't there. I cringe whenever I hear what believers "know to be true." Let's be honest, shall we? What the believer professes to know is little more than what he believes; and since his beliefs are all he knows, such beliefs (in his mind, at least) are granted the currency of knowledge. But at best, such knowledge is an apparent knowledge, and appearances are seductively deceiving, as the clergy have so capably demonstrated. Never underestimate the power of a determined mind and a designing heart.

Then, again, it could be said that I, too, am a believer. I believe that to walk alone by faith is to abdicate an onerous responsibility to knowledge, in that faith seeks to excuse and abet a malignant complacency. In religious circles faith has shamefully become a convenient and accredited substitute for knowledge. Why bother with knowledge when, according to Jesus, the submissive faith of a child is the truest measure of one's discipleship? Although touted as a virtue, faith is an insidious fire fanned by zealous acolytes whose insatiable drive for a contrived purity blinds their narrow and ametropic vision of reality. I believe that faith is the invocation of a leadership gasping for breath in an atmosphere befouled by false confidence and baleful arrogance. Under the protective light of faith, counterfactual beliefs are held to be inviolable and are, therefore, immune to the corrective measures of falsification. In short, faith operates outside the bounds of reason and logic. No longer willing to mask his contempt, this writer will be excused for smiling as the ostrich regales us with a colorful description of the landscape, as seen through eyes whose head is buried in the sand.

Bertrand Russell reminds us that "Knowledge is certain and infallible; opinion is not merely fallible, but is necessarily mistaken, since it assumes the reality of what is only appearance."[13] Falling in love with religious beliefs is tantamount to knowing in a way that is false. With other doting romantics, I long to believe that the swell of warm emotion one feels at the moment of a tender embrace portends an eternal repose. But such yearnings, however passionate and common, more likely reflect a neurochemical cascade than they do the dulcet whispering of God's voice to a soft and vulnerable heart. Based upon the evidence, I soberly choose to conduct my existence as a contemplative disbeliever than as an intoxicated plebe groomed only to march with gilded precision. Moreover, I would characterize myself as a studied Atheist, not because I wish to be seen as a contumacious intellectual, but because I have studied my way out of religion's suffocating miasma and sculpted instead a sanctuary in which my mind is free to think and to ponder. Having rid myself of a fantastical hope for an afterlife, I am able to live in the "here and now" and thus make full use of what precious time my existence affords.

I have gleaned more from my secular studies than was ever realized from (what turned out to be) unidirectional petitions to God. My own heuristic has demonstrated that one may no more discourse with God than with a yet-to-be-conceived child. The exercise of praying may be harmless, but from such an investment one must not expect a bountiful harvest. Whereas in my youth I was censured for minting unpopular questions, the advice I offer my own children and grandchildren is far less pedantic but equally direct: Challenge everything I have taught you and everything I have written. But I've also shared with those nearest and dearest that a life devoted alone to questioning and challenging authority is terribly dull, if not tediously irrelevant. I state with conviction that a life without color and élan becomes a vacuous event rehearsed upon a barren stage.

There is timeless wisdom in the words of Oxford philosopher Daniel Robinson, who eloquently wrote, "I must reserve the right to question and to doubt. I will retain this skeptical bias as an obligation owed to my own rationality, my own integrity. I am prepared to follow the golden cord leading me out of the labyrinth, no matter how many twists and turns there are, because once I let go of that, my intellect is (no longer) my own." [14] *

Notes

- [1] Plato, Apology, 38a.
- [2] Albert Camus, *The Plague, The Fall, Exile and the Kingdom, and selected Essays*, 331 (Published by Alfred A. Knoph, Everyman's Library, 2004).
- [3] Ibid., 341.
- [4] Ibid.
- [5] See *The Portable Voltaire*, 472 (Ben Ray Redman, Editor; Penguin Books, Copyright © 1949 by Viking Penguin Inc).
- [6] Richard Dawkins, The God Delusion, v (Houghton Mifflin Company, Copyright © 2006 by Richard Dawkins).
- [7] Carl Sagan, The Varieties of Scientific Experience: A Personal View of the Search for God, 148; Edited by Ann Druyan (The Penguin Press, New York, 2006; Copyright © Democritus Properties, LLC, 2006).
- ^[8] "For behold, this is my work and my glory to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man" (*Pearl of Great Price*, Moses 1:39).
- [9] Scott Atran, In Gods We Trust: The Evolutionary Landscape of Religion, 17 (Oxford University Press, Copyright © 2002 by Oxford University Press, Inc.).
- [10] Ibid., 264.
- [11] See Plato, Gorgias, 464d.
- [12] Citation found in *The Joy of Thinking: The Beauty and Power of Classical Mathematical Ideas*, Part 1 of 2, p. 97; Professors Edward B. Burger & Michael Starbird (The Teaching Company®, Copyright © The Teaching Company Limited Partnership, 2003).
- [13] Bertrand Russell, The History of Western Philosophy, 129 (A Touchstone Book; Published by Simon & Schuster, Copyright 1945 by Bertrand Russell, Copyright renewed © 1972 by Edith Russell).
- Daniel N. Robinson, *The Great Ideas of Philosophy, 2nd Edition*, Part 1 of 5, p. 32 (The Teaching Company®, Copyright © The Teaching Company Limited Partnership, 2004).

Kim is an optometric physician with practices in Utah and Oregon. He and his wife Cindy are the parents of four children and three grandsons. He is currently writing The Allure of Purpose: Contrived Philosophies of Mythos & Apotheosis which he hopes to publish at a time known only to Zeus. He may be reached at: drkimclark@earthlink.net.



My Hand Shall Be Against The Prophets by Barrett Brown

((o, dig this."

Clearly, CNN anchorperson Kyra Phillips was about to lay something heavy on the American viewing public.

"A man was bulldozing a bog in central Ireland the other day when he noticed something unusual in the freshly turned soil. Turns out he'd unearthed an early medieval treasure: an ancient book of psalms that experts date to the years 800 to 1000. Experts say it will take years of painstaking work to document and preserve this book, but eventually it will go on public display. Now here's the kicker. The book, about 20 pages of Latin script, was allegedly found opened to Psalm 83. Now, if you're a scholar, as you know, Psalm 83: 'God hears complaints that other nations are plotting to wipe out the name of Israel."

This would have been a hell of a kicker if it were true; the well-dressed president of Iran had just recently made a campaign promise to "wipe Israel off the map," and thus the said psalm would have neatly applied to the international situation in 2006. It would have also neatly applied to the international situation in 1948, 1967, 1972, as well as every other year since, as one could gather from a glance at the operating charter of the Palestinian Authority. Plotting to wipe out the name of Israel has been a popular pastime among Arabs for quite a while, rivaling even the driving of Mercedes-Benzes and the wearing of gaudy gold chains. Perhaps more to the point, it was a popular pastime among Israel's dozens of tribal opponents several thousand years ago, when Psalm 83 was written.

But as it turned out, the psalm to which the miraculous manuscript was open—no doubt due to the divine intervention of Yahweh Himself—had nothing to do with complaints, plots, or the wiping out of anyone's moniker. Psalm 83 by the Latin reckoning of that period actually corresponded to Psalm 84 of the Greek reckoning from which our modern psalms are taken. And so the psalm in question actually concerned an annual Hebrew pilgrimage and how swell it was to undertake. This was explained in due course by the archaeologists involved, but the various news outlets had already reported the more newsworthy Israel angle—newsworthy in the modern sense, not in the sense of it actually being true—and if the reader is familiar with the way these things work, the reader will consequently be unsurprised that few corrections were printed or reported.

In the dynamics of American cable news, though, a miracle is a miracle whether it's a miracle or not, and the Incident of Psalm

83 made for a swell segue into Kyra Phillips' live interview with a modern-day prophet and another modern-day prophet's co-author. The latter was Jerry Jenkins, who collaborated with Evangelical minister Tim LaHaye in the ominously successful *Left Behind* series. The former was the increasingly popular Joel C. Rosenberg, lone author of several bestselling prophecy-oriented "techno thrillers" and whose own contribution to the ominousness of the times lies not so much in the success of his books among the sort of people one might expect to read them, but rather in the success of his books with the sort of people who run the country.

For his part, Jenkins was either completely stunned or not stunned at all by the psalm discovery, calling it "amazing," "incredible," and "not terribly surprising" all within the space of twenty seconds. He further added that "it would probably have to be told in fiction form because people are going to find it hard to believe," this sentence being literally true insomuch as that an incident that did not actually occur would indeed have to be told in fiction form, but also being literally false insomuch as that people would not find such a thing hard to believe because people will believe anything. For example the old myth that CNN is a respectable source for news instead of a degenerate entertainment outlet where anchorpersons say things like, "from books to blogs to the back pews, the buzz is all about the End Times," which is exactly what Kyra Phillips had said just a moment before.

Rosenberg, meanwhile, saw an opening with which to move onto his two favorite topics: the imminent invasion of Israel by Russia, and Rosenberg's own mysterious ability to predict things that have yet to happen, such as the imminent invasion of Israel by Russia. "Yes, people are interested [in bullshit Hebrew prophecy], because the rebirth of Israel, the fact that Jews are living in the Holy Land today, that is a Bible prophecy. When Iran, Libya, Syria, Lebanon, Russia, they begin to form an alliance against Israel, those are the prophecies from Ezekiel 38 and 39," Rosenberg said, pretending for the sake of his own argument that such an alliance actually exists between those nations and that the Old Testament Book of Ezekiel predicted it. "That's what I'm basing my novels on. I have been invited to the White House, Capitol Hill. Members of Congress, Israelis, Arab leaders all want to understand the Middle East through the—through the lens of biblical prophecies. I'm writing these novels that keep seeming to come true, but we are seeing Bible prophecy, bit by bit, unfold in the Middle East right now."

One can understand why Rosenberg's insight into world affairs would be so sought after around the White House and Capitol Hill; the ability to write books "that keep seeming to come true" would be an incredible asset to the national intelligence infrastructure of any geopolitical entity, particularly one as troubled as our own. In fact, it's a wonder that the NSA is permitting Rosenberg to write anything at all. As things stand now, any Iranian intelligence agent could show up at LAX, amble into a gift shop, and pick up a copy of one of these popular books "that keep seeming to come true," thus gleaning invaluable information about the not-so-distant future without having to resort to the rigors of human intelligence, electronic intelligence, geospatial intelligence, or (my personal favorite) foreign instrumentation signals intelligence. Likewise, any Chinese spy could download a bootlegged copy of one of these books for his communist masters, and without paying Rosenberg a dime in royalties. Shouldn't the U.S. intelligence community declare Rosenberg a national resource and whisk him off to some undisclosed location? The answer, of course, is no, because Rosenberg cannot actually predict the future.

Or, hell, maybe he can. Why not? I mean, you know, whatever. You know?

Having said that, let's hear Rosenberg—or at least whoever writes his marketing copy—out. According to his website, our prophetic friend has quite a track record. "The first page of his first novel, *The Last Jihad*, puts you inside the cockpit of a hijacked jet, coming in on a kamikaze attack into an American city, which leads to a war with Saddam Hussein over weapons of mass destruction," it says. "Yet it was written before 9/11, long before the actual war with Iraq." That actually sounds pretty impressive. I mean, that's exactly what ended up happening. Okay, I'm convinced. The rest of this article is about why I'm converting to Evangelical Christianity.

But perhaps we should make sure that I'm not jumping the gun here. Let's start by examining that last sentence, the one that ends "long before the actual war with Iraq." A more accurate way of putting this would have been, "long after the first war with Iraq, not quite as long after the establishment of the No Fly Zones in two large sections of Iraq which consequently put U.S. and Iraqi forces into a decade-long series of shooting incidents, and not very long at all after Operation Desert Fox, which had at that point been the most recent military conflict with Iraq, and which was also fought over weapons of mass destruction." That's somewhat better, although not quite as impressive from a marketing standpoint, which is to say that it's now true.

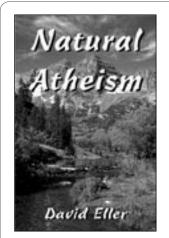
Still, though, Rosenberg did indeed write up a scenario in which we'd fight yet another undeclared war against Iraq over WMDs, which certainly ended up happening. Did he predict that 150,000 U.S. troops would be deployed to Iraq, topple Saddam, occupy the country, and find out that there aren't any WMDs after all? That would be pretty impressive if he did; but he didn't. Instead, his book details how Saddam tries to blow up the U.S. with ICBMs launched from his super-secret ICBM launchers, at which point the U.S. gets all huffy and nukes Baghdad and Tikrit. My memory is a little hazy, but I don't remember any of that actually happening.

There's also the matter of Rosenberg's hijacked airplane, the one that comes in "on a kamikaze attack on an American city." In *Last Jihad*, said plane crashes into the presidential motorcade in an attempt to assassinate the commander-in-chief. Well, that didn't happen, either, but surely the fact that Rosenberg used a plane crashing into an American city as a plot element makes him an extraordinarily

important person whose views should be sought out by the White House, Capitol Hill, and Kyra Phillips. But what if he had written a scenario in which terrorists attempt to crash a commercial airliner into the World Trade Center itself, and said scenario had been released in narrative form just a few months *before* 9/11? That would be more impressive still, right?

In fact, that scenario was indeed written, and said scenario was indeed released in narrative form just a few months before 9/11. But it wasn't written by Rosenberg, or by any other modern prophet. Rather, it was an episode of the short-lived X-Files spin-off called The Lone Gunmen. I don't know who the writer was, but I'm pretty sure he hasn't been invited to Capitol Hill or the White House or even CNN. But why not? Coming up with a scenario in which such a significant event happens before it actually happens is, as we've determined, a valuable skill, perhaps even more valuable than Rosenberg's ability to predict a few things that sort of happen along with a bunch of shit that will never happen at all. As Condoleeza Rice put it during her 2002 testimony before the 9/11 Commission, "No one could have imagined them taking a plane, slamming it into the Pentagon. . . into the World Trade Center, using a plane as a missile." No one but the guy who wrote that one show with those guys from that other show, that is.

I'm kidding; plenty of people aside from that guy who wrote that one show with those guys from that other show imagined that such a thing could happen, and Condoleeza Rice is, of course, a liar. In 1993, the Pentagon itself commissioned a study in which the possibility of airplanes being used as weapons against domestic U.S. targets was looked into. Similar reports on the topic conducted by various other agencies would follow over the next few years. In 1995, an Islamic terrorist plot to crash eleven planes into various world landmarks was foiled by international authorities. In 1998, the Federal Aviation Administration warned airlines to be on the alert for hijackings by followers of bin Laden, and a number of reports that circulated through the intelligence community over the next two years warned that said followers might try to crash airliners into skyscrapers. And in 1999, Columbine assailants Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold wrote out their plan to shoot up their school, blow up the building, escape to the airport, hijack a plane, and crash it into New York City, but only got around to doing the first part. Had they refrained from doing any of it and instead simply described that last



Natural Atheism

by David Eller

Everything is here to help those who already are Atheists better understand the logic of their lives and see Atheism's social and political implications. Those who are not yet Atheists will be helped by this scientist's common-sense analysis of the so-called 'proofs of God' to see the irrationality—indeed, the meaninglessness—of god-beliefs. What is belief? What is knowledge? As Pilate is alleged to have asked, "What is truth?" Understandable and clear answers to these questions are in this book.

\$25.00 – stock # 16003 (Please see order form for member discount and S&H charges) event in a book, they probably could have looked forward to lucrative post-9/11 careers as novelists/cable news mainstays, insomuch as that they would have been "writing these books that keep seeming to come true" to the same extent that Rosenberg does.

Ah, but Rosenberg has written other books as well. Back to his website: "His second thriller, *The Last Days*, opens with the death of Yasser Arafat and a U.S. diplomatic convoy ambushed in Gaza. Six days before *The Last Days* was published in hardcover, a U.S. diplomatic convoy was ambushed in Gaza. Thirteen months later, Yasser Arafat died."

That a U.S. diplomatic convoy might be ambushed in Gaza is hardly a tough bet; the reason that it was a U.S. diplomatic convoy in the first place, and not a U.S. diplomatic bunch-of-cars-driving around-individually-without-a-care-in-the-world-through-a-verydangerous-region-where-anti-U.S.-sentiment-is-high-and-everyoneis-armed, is that Gaza is a very dangerous region where anti-U.S. sentiment is high and everyone is armed. For instance, I looked up the search terms "convoy ambush Gaza" on Google News just now, and the first thing that comes up is the headline "Hamas ambushes convoy of U.S. weapons intended for Abbas agencies," relating to an incident that occurred on May 15th of 2007, that being two weeks previous to the time of this particular writing and a few weeks after I compiled my notes for this particular essay (yeah, I procrastinate). Oh, man! Here I was, writing and thinking about convoys being shot up in Gaza, and here was this convoy being shot up in Gaza! How is it that I manage to write these articles "that keep seeming to come true"? Someone should invite me to fucking Capitol Hill and ask me about it. I'll tell them that I figured it out by interpreting the Norse Ragnarök myth in a literal fashion. Or maybe I'll just tell them the truth, which is that convoys get shot up in the Palestinian territories all the time, and that if you write a big long book in which things get shot in the Middle East or Middle Eastern terrorists blow something up—which is to say, a big long book filled with things that are constantly happening—a couple of these plot points are going to sort-of-kind-of come true at some point, and then everyone will think you're neat. I probably won't tell them that, though. I'll just say it's Ragnarök. I can't wait to launch my career writing Ragnarök-based techno thrillers.

In fairness to Rosenberg, his plot points don't simply involve things that have already happened several times or things that have almost happened several times or things that are happening right now; occasionally, he goes out on a limb by describing events that can only happen once, such as the death of Yasser Arafat mentioned above. The reader will no doubt recall that Arafat did indeed die of health complications in 2003, having reached the age of 75 in a region where life expectancy is a bit lower than that and also after having been in and out of hospitals for several years, which is generally the sort of situation that leads one to die. And so it would have been pretty easy to predict in 2003 that Arafat might very well pass away in 2003 or 2004 from a combination of disease and plain old age.

But as easy as such a prediction might have been to make, it was still too difficult for our prophetic friend Rosenberg. *The Last Days* opens with Yasser Arafat being blown up in a suicide blast along with the U.S. secretary of state . . . in 2010. So, although Rosenberg does indeed predict the death of Arafat, whereas many people less astute than himself had no doubt predicted that Arafat might live forever, the actual death of Arafat, coming seven years before his fictional techno thriller death in 2010, actually made Rosenberg's own scenario not more accurate, but less accurate and, in fact, impossible. Nonetheless, this is one of a handful of plot points that Rosenberg uses as an example of how he's managed to write "these books that keep seeming to come true."



Well, that's good enough for Kyra Phillips. Back at the CNN interview, Rosenberg was demonstrating his expertise on matters Middle Eastern by explaining that many Arabs don't like Israelis and would like to see them conquered and occupied. "Saddam Hussein, or Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, or Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah—they're all drunk with the dream of capturing Jerusalem," our friend informs us, although it's somewhat doubtful that the capture of Jerusalem was at the forefront of Mr. Hussein's mind when this interview was conducted in July of 2006, seeing as how he was at the time living in a jail cell and being tried by a bunch of Shiites for killing a bunch of Shiites. But the larger point is indeed valid, so I'll stop interrupting for a second here. "That's what Rosenberg's poorly-written novel The Copper Scroll is about, which is about this battle—this intense battle—to liquidate the Jewish people and liberate Jerusalem," Rosenberg continued. "I mean, are we seeing that happen? It's hard not to say that we are. That's why I've gotten invited over to the CIA, and the White House, and Congress," he reminded us again, later noting for good measure that "Bible prophecy" is "fairly remarkable intelligence. And that's why my novels keep coming true," which they don't, that "they have this feeling of coming true," which is true in the fortune cookie sense described earlier, that "a million copies have sold," which is simultaneously true, annoying, and unsurprising, and that "they are coming true bit by bit, day by day," by which he apparently means that Saddam will come back to life and fire his non-existent nuclear missiles at the U.S., which will in turn nuke Baghdad and Tikrit; that Yasser Arafat will come back to life and live long enough to be blown up by a suicide bomber in 2010 along with Secretary of State Dennis Kucinich; and that a convoy will be shot up in Palestine. In fairness to Rosenberg, one of those things is indeed likely to happen. Again.

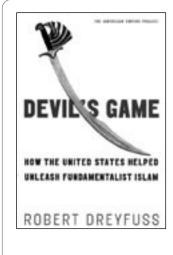
But on the question of the imminent destruction of Israel, Phillips—in accordance with established CNN procedure—wanted a second opinion from a guy who totally agrees with the guy who gave the first opinion.

"Jerry, what do you think about what Joel wrote, about watching the Russian-Iranian alliance seeking to wipe out Israel?"

"Well, I find it very fascinating," Jenkins replied, "and of course, Joel is a real geopolitical watcher."

Of course. Every prophet in recorded history has been a "real geopolitical watcher" for the simple reason that if one wishes to pretend that one's favored means of magic has managed to predict the current world situation, one must know a thing or two about said situation. The big problem is taking the current world situation and using it to determine the future world situation (whereas the small problem is taking the current world situation and using it to determine the current world situation, which, though this may sound axiomatically easy, is apparently very difficult for Rosenberg, who is wrongly convinced that Syria and Lebanon are allied with each other and that Russia is allied with both of them). The prediction of future events generally entails extrapolation from current trends, which is a pretty tricky process even when undergone by clear-headed observers and becomes nearly impossible when undergone by nitwit theocrats like Joel Rosenberg—and it becomes absolutely impossible when the nitwit theocrat in question insists on dotting his proposed future narrative with magical explosions, as Rosenberg did recently when he explained to Pat Robertson that "God says He's going to supernaturally judge Iran, Sudan, Lebanon, Syria, these other countries. We're talking about fire from heaven, a massive earthquake. It's going to be devastating and tragic. But I believe that afterwards there's going to be a great spiritual awakening."

The first great prophet of the 20th century was Herbert W. Armstrong, a former advertising copywriter who dispensed his dispensationalism by way of a radio program called *World of Tomorrow*, a monthly newsletter entitled *Plain Truth*, and the occasional booklet, and whose second career as a harbinger of doom spanned more than fifty years. Like most advertising copywriters of his time, Armstrong had nothing but contempt for the written form of the English language. In his popular 1956 pamphlet entitled *1975 in Prophecy!*, Armstrong's jihad against subdued English communication begins on the title page and continues without pause; let the reader be warned that this is only the first of many inappropriate exclamation points used therein. More to the point, Armstrong here pioneers the art of



Devil's Game

by Rober Dreyfuss

How The United States Helped Unleash Fundamentalist Islam. Robert Dreyfuss Devil's Game delves into the complex history of Islam, and exposes the failure, particularly of the Bush administration, to comprehend the dynamics of fundamentalist Muslim religious ideology. He demonstrates the disastrous (and little publicized) history of how western powers, including the British and Americans, sought to achieve elusive foreign policy goals by subsidizing fundamentalist extremism. The catastrophic results became clear on 9/11.

\$25.00 – stock # 16003 (Please see order form for member discount and S&H charges)

modern eschatology and serves as a shining example for those would come later, largely by being wrong.

1975 begins with an acknowledgment of the general sense of optimism for which the post-war U.S. is often remembered, and concedes that man's technological feats will indeed usher in a new era of convenience. "You'll no longer bother taking a bath in a tub or shower," Armstrong tells his contemporaries. "You'll take an effortless and quicker waterless bath by using supersonic waves!" An exciting prospect, to be sure; from the beginning of time, man has yearned to be free of his bubble baths. But instead of going on to describe how the drudgeries of adolescent love will soon be performed by robots, thus leaving young people with more free time in which to labor at the robot factories, Armstrong warns us that our budding, supersonic way of life is already threatened by a familiar enemy: the Germans. This may seem counter-intuitive; one would think that no other race would be more inclined to leave undisrupted a world in which love and leisure are soon to be sacrificed on the altar of robot efficiency. Nonetheless, the signs of the times were present for all to see, if only one knew where to look.

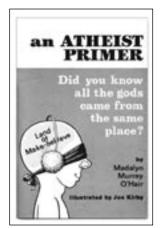
It seemed, for instance, that the Krauts were already protecting themselves against the elements. One picture of Berlin is captioned, "Notice MODERN apartment building-a common sight in the NEW Germany." That these NEW Germans were disinclined to replace their bombed-out dwellings with reproductions of 11th century Crusader fortresses, opting instead to build 20th century apartments in the 20th century, would probably have ranked pretty low on most people's lists of alarming German behavior, even bearing in mind that such a list would, at that point in history, be pretty fucking long indeed. But there was more to be worried about, said Armstrong. "Already Nazis are in many key positions; in German industry; in German education; in the new German ARMY!" To be sure, the concept of a new German ARMY is quite a bit more alarming than the concept of a new German PRE-FAB CONDOMINUM. And in addition to what Armstrong lists here, Nazis already occupied "key" positions in the American rocket program, the feds having by this point made pets of many of the more useful fascists by way of Project Paperclip. With the benefit of hindsight, we now know that

nothing particularly bad came of any of this. Armstrong, though, was supposed to have possessed the benefit of foresight.

But Armstrong's most stunning prediction is that not all of the problems of tomorrow will be caused by Europeans, as had been the case in the recent past. Americans will soon be to blame as well. "Our peoples have ignored God's agricultural laws," he notes. "Not all the land has been permitted to rest the seventh year." Although largely forgotten today, the failure of American agriculturalists to follow Old Testament farming guidelines was once akin to homosexual nuptials in its allegedly mortal threat to our national viability. The collective failure to follow these gastronomic guidelines, Armstrong knew, would result in a major famine that would strike the U.S. "probably between 1965 and 1972." The imminence of this catastrophe was quite plainly evident even back in 1956; as the ongoing de-Yahwehification of our soil continued apace, the nation's "food factories are removing much of what minerals and vitamins remain—while a new profit-making vitamin industry deludes the people into believing they can obtain these precious elements from pills and capsules purchased in drug stores and 'health food' stores!" If only these misguided nutritionists had gotten into something legitimate, like the supersonic bath industry.

The rest of 1975 consists of what has become fairly standard Christian End-Times spiel insomuch as that the Antichrist briefly takes over the world, much of which is eventually blown up. Armstrong's text does deviate from the norm in that instead of inviting the reader to accept Christ into his or her heart and then put all trust in Him, he invites the reader to accept Christ into his or her heart and then await further instructions from Armstrong, who has an idea about what might be some good places to lay low for a while. Unlike most of his modern-day contemporaries, Armstrong does not subscribe to the concept of the pre-Tribulation Rapture, which is to spirit away the world's Bible-believing Christians before all the bad shit goes down. Also somewhat unique to Armstrong is the charming admonition printed on the final page: "This booklet is exceedingly brief and condensed. The reader is advised to read it a second time. This disclosure is so amazing, so different from the common conception, you probably did not really grasp it all the first reading."

Aside from such minor novelties, Armstrong is a fundamentally typical specimen of the professional prophet insomuch as that he possesses the one attribute common to all of them, which is persistence, persistence having been Armstrong's strongest characteristic, stronger even than his penchant for exclamation points, which was very strong indeed. This is to Armstrong's credit; in matters of prophecy, persistence is what separates the men from the boys, or, rather,



An Atheist Primer

by Madalyn O'Hair

This children's book explains what religion and what Atheism are all about. It is a great introduction to Atheism for readers of any age.

\$6.00 – stock # 5372 (Please see order form for member discount and S&H charges)

what separates the men from the crazy old men who think they can divine the future. If you or I had predicted in 1941 that Hitler would eventually take over the planet as the "beast of Revelation," as Armstrong had done before later moving on to Tito, and if Hitler ended up dead four years after this prediction, as Hitler did, you or I would probably give up right then and there and gone into real estate or something. Not Armstrong, though. Armstrong kept at it for forty more years.

Like real estate, prophecy is a crowded field, and Armstrong eventually came to face just as much competition as you and I are going to come up against when we go into business together doing land flips in Southern California. Billionaire faith healer Benny Hinn, for instance, has dozens of failed prophecies under his belt, ranging from the wacky 1989 prediction that all of the nation's gays are going to be killed by "fire" no later than 1995; (perhaps he meant that they would be "thrilled" by "Fire Island") to the not-so-wacky-yet-unfulfilled-nonetheless (another 1989 prediction that Fidel Castro would die in the '90s). Ditto with Pat Robertson, who predicted that the apocalypse would occur in 1982, and then again in 1984. Luckily, it didn't, and thus Robertson was able to run for the GOP presidential nomination in 1988—that being the same year in which an engineer named Robert Faid wrote a book called the title of which sort of makes it sound as if he's trying to get the Russian premier's attention and then ask him his opinion on the matter, but the text of which, of course, posits Gorbachev himself as the Antichrist. In 666: The Final Warning, a fellow named Gary Blevins proposes that the Antichrist is none other than Ronald Reagan. Blevins wrote this in 1990, so you've got to give him some credit for going out on a limb. The very prolific author Yisrael Hawkins predicted that nuclear war would occur on September 12th, 2006; when this didn't turn out to be the case, he decided that such a war had simply been "conceived" on that date. As of this writing, though, the world's water has yet to break.

One of the more financially successful of these modern prophets was Edgar Whisenaut, who appears to have sold something on the order of four million copies of his 1988 book, 88 Reasons Why the Rapture Will Occur in 1988, in which he puts the event at sometime between September 11th and September 13th of that otherwise uneventful year. Then, on the 14th, he changed his prediction to the 15th. Then, October 3rd. Then he wrote another book called 89 Reasons Why the Rapture will Occur in 1989, and I would imagine that the extra reason had something to do with 1988 having been ruled out by process of elimination. When the world made it to 1990 unscathed, Whisenaut wisely decided that his particular brand of prophecy might work better in a periodical format, and so he began putting out a new publication entitled Final Shout - Rapture Report 1990. The next year, it was called *Final Shout – Rapture Report 1991*. This went on for several years, but what's truly unusual is that it didn't go on forever. Whisenaut's eventual obscurity in the face of failed predictions is the exception, not the rule, to the usual career arc of the modern Evangelical prophet, who may generally depend on a reliable income stream regardless of whether or not any of their predictions actually hit the mark. To be fair, this phenomenon isn't limited to the Evangelical world, and in fact often applies to the world of mundane, secular prophets, which is why William Kristol still has his own magazine.

If we measure the success of a prophet by how wrong he can be for how long he can be it without losing his income stream as a result (and there is no more polite way to measure such a thing) then Hal Lindsay is, by that reckoning, the most successful prophet in modern history by virtue of having been the most unsuccessful at actual predictions for the greatest length of time without having had to get a job. Lindsay's once-ubiquitous 1970 book *The Late, Great Planet Earth,* for instance, sold millions of copies and went through dozens of printings, and was later followed up by several sequels, including *The 1980's: Countdown to Armageddon,* which asserts that "the decade of the 1980's could very well be last decade of history as we know it." I'm not sure what else it says, though, as I can't seem to find a copy.

I was, however, able to score an early edition of The Late, Great Planet Earth, and I'm glad I did, because according to the dust jacket copy, this is a very important book, or at least it was in 1970, before all the things that Lindsay predicted would soon happen, didn't happen. "Prophets and astrologers are enjoying the greatest revival since the ancient days of Babylon," warns the text on the back cover, right under a picture of Lindsay leaning on a tree while clearly enjoying his mustache. The onset of all this mystical nonsense to which Lindsay is so clearly opposed is to the wrongful detriment of the "authentic voices which have been overlooked by modern, sophisticated man . . . the voices of the ancient seers of Israel, the Hebrew prophets. Three milleniums [sic] of history are strewn with evidence of their prophetic marksmanship and to ignore their incredible predictions of man's destiny and the events which are soon to effect (sic) this planet will be perhaps the greatest folly of this generation," which is a pretty serious charge when one considers that this is the generation that elected Lyndon Johnson out of concern that Barry Goldwater might turn out to be some sort of warmonger.

To hear Lindsay tell it, the aforementioned Hebrew prophets certainly sound like the real deal, particularly in relation to their modern counterparts. "What would you think of prophets today who would be willing to stake their lives on their claims?" Lindsay asks us. The ancient Hebrew prophets, he says, were such fellows, and those among them who failed in their short-term predictions were promptly put to death, and presumably not rewarded with their own column in Time, as the aforementioned Mr. Kristol has been. The clear implication is that the ensuing natural selection weeded out all the bad prophets, and so we should listen up to what they have to say about the latter 20th century, with just a little bit of help from Lindsay.

One of the more prominent of these prophets was Jeremiah, who predicted "that the capital city, Jerusalem, would be destroyed and that its people would lose their capacity to laugh." Luckily, they didn't lose their capacity to make other people laugh, and Curb Your Enthusiasm is now in its fifth season without having lost its appeal. But Jerusalem was indeed destroyed, just as most cities on the Levant were destroyed at some point or another during that general period, which is why you and I aren't going to be buying up many residential lots in the area, no matter how good the schools may be. Then there was Isaiah, who "foretold that the mighty invincible Babylonians would be conquered and so completely destroyed by the Medes that Babylon would never be inhabited again," a prediction which would have been somewhat more impressive if the first half weren't obvious (had these "invincible" Babylonians managed to avoid being conquered, theirs would have been the only empire in history to do so) and if the second half weren't obviously wrong (Babylon is indeed "inhabited" right now, just as it always has been, and is in fact home, as of this writing, to 22 million native Iraqis and 150,000 visiting Americans).

"It's ironic that man never seems to learn from past mistakes, especially when they relate to major catastrophes," Lindsay later notes, ironically enough, before adding, even more ironically, that

"[m]any Bible students in recent years tried to fit the events of World War I and II to the prophetic signs which would herald the imminent return of Christ. Their failure discredited prophecy," although not to such an extent that prophecy was ever discredited in the eyes of those who lent prophecy credit in the first place, which is why Lindsay's own attempt to "fit the events" of the latter Cold War years to those very same "prophetic signs" sold so many millions of copies. But Lindsay didn't see himself as doing any sort of fitting at all; no modern prophet believes himself to be in the business of interpretation. "God's word should not be interpreted!," Herbert Armstrong wrote in the '30s. "To INTERPRET it is to place human meaning into it. God's Word is a REVELATION from the Almighty - revealing to us TRUTHS we do not otherwise know and could never find out." Inimitable emphasis aside, Armstrong's interpretation of his own lack of interpretation is common to those who came before him and to those who would come later, including Lindsay in the '70s, Whisenaut in the '80s, LaHaye and Jenkins in the '90s, and Rosenberg today, all of whom believe themselves to be simply restating the unambiguous and unchanging prophecies of the Bible, which leads to the obvious question of why we need Armstrong, Whisenaut, La-Haye, Jenkins, and Rosenberg in the first place. The not-so-obvious answer is that the unambiguous and unchanging prophecies of the Bible are shrouded in ambiguity and subject to constant change.

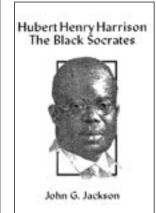
This is not to say that there aren't some points of agreement among the various interpretations of the various non-interpreters. Everyone seems to agree that the Temple of Jerusalem, having been destroyed twice in antiquity, must be rebuilt a third time before Jesus can return. Armstrong, writing in the '50s, decided that this would happen at some point around 1972; Lindsay, writing in 1970, decided that this would happen "soon." However, "There is one major problem barring the construction of a third Temple," Lindsay reminds us. "That obstacle is the second holiest place of the Moslem faith, the Dome of the Rock. This is believed to be built squarely in the middle of the old temple site." Problematic as this problem may be, Lindsay believes that it will be solved. "Obstacle or no obstacle, it is certain that the Temple will be rebuilt. Prophecy demands it."

Prophecy tends to get its way. Lindsay notes a then-recent interview with Israeli historian Israel Eldad, who was in agreement with ever-so-demanding Prophecy that the Temple would soon return.

"What about the Dome of the Rock which now stands on the temple site?" the interviewer asks.

"It is, of course, an open question," replies Eldad. "Who knows, maybe there will be an earthquake."

Who knows?



Hubert Henry Harrison The Black Socrates

by John G. Jackson

\$3.00 – Stock # 5205 (Please see order form for member discount and S&H charges) Just as Armstrong and Lindsay then agreed that the Temple would make its appearance in Jerusalem sometime in the early '70s, Lindsay and Rosenberg today agree that the Russians will make their appearance in Jerusalem sometime soon. For Lindsay, "soon" has meant various things at various times. In 1970, when he wrote *The Late, Great Planet Earth,* "soon" meant some time during the '70s. Then, in 1980, when he wrote *The 1980's: Countdown to Armageddon,* "soon" meant some time during the '80s. Today, it means some time in the near future. The important thing to understand, though, is that the Russians are going to invade Israel "soon," with the chronological proximity of such an event being an eternal attribute of time, the concept of time being, as the physicists tell us, subjective.

Back in 1970, Russia was going to invade Israel "soon" because the temple was going to be rebuilt "soon," and the Bible not-so-clearly states that Magog, the great enemy from the North, will invade Israel "soon" afterward, and Magog, as everyone knows, apparently, is Russia. Lindsay also cites the 1968 prediction of renowned Israeli military genius Moshe Dayan. "General Dayan's statement that 'the next war will not be with the Arabs but with the Russians' has a considerably deeper significance, doesn't it?" In fact, it does, insomuch as that it marks a rare lapse in Mr. Dayan's usual prescience, assuming that he really said any such thing at all; Israel's next war was with the Arabs, as have been all of its military conflicts since. Meanwhile, the Russians have been in Russia, except when they were in Afghanistan, from which they were eventually dislodged by U.S.-supported freedom fighters, and in Chechnya, from which they have yet to be dislodged by Muslim-supported terrorists. Not even the Bible could have predicted the amazing transformation of the Central Asian patriot from hero to villain in the space of two decades.

When the Russians invade, they'll have plenty of company, including that of Persia. "All authorities agree on who Persia is today. It is modern Iran," notes Lindsay, correctly enough. "This is significant because it is being wooed to join the United Arab Republic in its hostility against Israel," although this is somewhat less significant in light of the fact that the United Arab Republic no longer exists, and that what was then the de facto leader of this now non-existent entity, Egypt, has been at peace with Israel for nearly three decades. Nor was it ever a significant possibility even back then; the Iranians, not being Arabs, would probably not have been all that inclined to join a political entity that designated them as such, and Iran's thenruler, the pro-Western shah, would have been less inclined still, and thus this was a pretty silly prediction to make.

But perhaps the Egyptian regime will be peer-pressured into attacking nonetheless. Hebrew seers also predict a military attack by



The Case Against Religion: A Psychotherapist's View

by Albert Ellis

\$6.00 – Stock # 5096 (Please see order form for member discount and S&H charges)

"Cush," a term which Lindsay tells us refers not only to Ethiopia but to all of black Africa. "The sobering conclusion is this: many of the African nations will be united and allied with the Russians in the invasion of Israel." Anticipating the obvious question of why this would be the case, Lindsay provides the answer which seemed plausible in 1970: "One of the most active areas of Evangelism for the Communist 'gospel' is in Africa. As we see further developments in this area in the future, we realize that it will be converted to Communism." Today, of course, there is not a single black African nation which could be said to be Communist, nor is there a single black African nation that cares anything for Russia at all (although several are increasingly keen on China, which itself is decreasingly keen on communism). On the other hand, black Africa is now "one of the most active areas of Evangelism" for the actual Gospel, Pentecostalism is sharply on the rise, and the few black Africans who today march on Jerusalem are religious tourists intent on buying jars of mustard seeds.

Ah, but what about the inhabitants of North Africa? The reader can probably guess. "The territory of Northern Africa is becoming solidly Pro-Soviet." Oops. But there's always "Gomer," another Hebrew proper noun that allegedly refers to Eastern Europe. "This includes Eastern Germany," which, as the reader will remember, remains behind the Iron Curtain, its peoples united with the Soviet bloc and its resources dedicated to Stalinist objectives. Western Germany, meanwhile, is likewise under the control of the Holy Roman Empire. Woe unto the Teutons thus torn asunder!

The next chapter is entitled "Yellow Peril," in apparent reference to the yellow men of the Orient who will soon be threatening the peace. Lindsay tells us that China is well on its way to becoming a great power, although it's left unclear whether he figured this out by deciphering passages of the Old Testament or whether he read it in a 1964 issue of *Time* like everyone else. There is quite a bit of talk in this chapter of the 200 million-man infantry force that the People's Republic is preparing to field against Israel for some reason known only to Lindsay, the Chinese, and perhaps God.

Like Armstrong before him and LaHaye after, Lindsay is convinced that the Europeans are intent on reviving the Roman Empire. "Twenty years ago no one would have dared to believe that Rome as an empire would be put back together," except for our friend Herbert W. Armstrong, who was an unusually daring fellow. But Lindsay is correct in his proposition that "Rome as an empire" will be put back together, and it is in fact in the process of being put back together right now, although it will not be centered in Rome. It will consist of essentially independent democratic states governed mostly from within instead of imperial provinces governed from afar; will not be in the business of imperial conquest, and, if recent history is any indication, will be busy with factional disputes over largely inconsequential matters of commercial agricultural policy for the next seven thousand years; and will thus not be in any way analogous to the Roman Empire at all.

But innocuous as it may first appear, the very existence of the European Union is itself ominous to Lindsay, Armstrong, LaHaye, and the millions who give them money and credence; that a collection of states would become united is a frightening prospect to many residents of the United States. This decidedly non-Roman and non-imperial Roman Empire will consist of ten such states, as Lindsay tells us in 1970 with some great certainty gleaned from the Book of Revelation and its reference to a dragon with ten horns or some such. Today, the European Union consists of 27 states. Not only was Lindsay correct, but he was over two-and-a-half times more correct than he had expected to be.

While the Europeans play into the hands of the Antichrist by lowering their trade barriers and providing for streamlined work permits, the rest of the world's peoples are—were, rather—driving headlong into oblivion by way of their nasty habit of getting married and having children. Lindsay cites a 1968 study claiming that the world population would hit 7.5 billion by 2000, which, of course, did not happen. He then quotes J. Bruce Griffing, chairman of the genetics department at Ohio State University: "Unless mankind acts immediately, there will be a worldwide famine in 1985, and the extinction of man within 75 years." Apparently, mankind did end up acting immediately, although I've been unable to figure out exactly what it was that mankind ended up doing. Anyway, kudos to mankind.

Lindsay then makes what was a common mistake in 1970_. He quotes Stanford University gadfly Paul Ehlrich, author of the 1968 book *The Population Bomb*. Ehlrich has made a career for himself by being wrong about things even without the assistance of Hebrew prophecy, which is quite a talent. "Mankind may be facing its final crisis," Ehlrich had written. "No action that we can take at this late date can prevent a great deal of future misery from starvation and environmental deterioration." Take that, J. Bruce Griffing! Ehlrich was also convinced that hundreds of millions of people would starve to death in the 1970s, and the fact that millions of liberal environmentalists believed him is often cited by conservatives as evidence that millions of liberal environmentalists are damned fools, although the fact that millions of conservative Evangelicals believed the very same thing does not seem to have struck these same conservatives as evidence of anything at all.

Anyway, with everyone now starving to death, the great powers reasonably decide that this would be the perfect time to field and supply infantry brigades of unprecedented size for the purpose of invading Israel, a nation with no natural resources. According to Lindsay, the Soviet Union attacks first, with the assistance of the Africans, Arabs, and East Europeans (including East Germany, of course). Then the Soviets betray everyone and invade Africa. The Neo-Roman Empire, now led by the Antichrist, attacks the Russians, or the Israelis, or both, or something (I'm sort of skimming at this point), and then the Chinese attack the Soviets near Jerusalem, and not, as one might expect, on their thousand-mile long common border. Then Neo-Rome, which is now allied with the U.S. for some reason, attacks the Chinese. Hundreds of millions are killed in a single battle.

"As history races towards this moment, are you afraid or looking with hope for deliverance? The answer should reveal to you your spiritual condition," Lindsay says, finally getting something right. *

Barrett Brown is Dallas-born, Brooklyn-based freelance writer whose work has appeared in dozens of publications, including National

Lampoon, The Onion, and McSweeney's. His first book, Flock of Dodos: Behind Modern Creationism, Intelligent Design, and the Easter Bunny, was released in March 2007 to praise from Alan Dershowitz, Rolling Stone, Skeptic, Air America Radio, and other sources. He currently serves as chief blogger for Politicalbase. com and as a contributing writer for Fox Business Channel. He may be reached at barriticus@gmail. com, if one so dares.



The Founders Friends...

So many of you help American Atheists with donations and other financial support—and we want to find a way to say "Thank You!" We are pleased to announce the re-establishment of an American Atheist tradition—The Founders' Friends, begun by the Murray O'Hair family.

Those contributing \$50 or more to American Atheists will have your name and amount entered in subsequent issues of the AA Magazine. Just fill out the blue card with the information requested, include your gift, and mail it back to us in the enclosed envelope. Be sure to check the appropriate box authorizing us to thank you by printing your name and contribution amount in the Magazine. Mailing addresses will not be mentioned.

This is our way of saying THANK YOU to an extraordinary group of people—those of you who want to "do more" and financially support the critical work of American Atheists!

American Atheists Thanks The Following Persons For Their Generous Contributions To Our Cause.

Neal Cary, NC - \$1,000 Robert Rivas, CA - \$125 Jaime G. Wancier, MD, FL - \$50 **Edmund DiGiulio, NY - \$50** Frank H. Titus, OK - \$50 Richard D. Hogan, TX - \$150 Jeffrey D. Borelli, OH - \$50 Robert Finch, NY - \$100 Raymond Peger, KY - \$120 Thomas Bauch, MN - \$200 Windell D. Horton, TX - \$300 Colonel Jon K. Rider (Ret.), WA - \$150 Irv Sutley, CA - \$52.00 Jason Goldsmith, MD - \$75 Luis E. Varona, San Juan, P.R. - \$75 Bob McElwain, VT - \$50 Leon "Tony" Fulcher, NC - \$500 Dal E. Mathias, IN - \$50 Jingyu Cui, TX - \$50

Divine Beings By The Bushel

How to Speak and Write About Gods

by Guy P. Harrison

Why do many Atheists help Christians, Muslims and Jews promote the idea that only one god matters?

There is a powerful bias in the West that corrupts almost every discussion, argument, analysis and casual conversation about religious belief. Judged by their own words, most people clearly think that "God," Yahweh-Jesus-Allah (*endnote), is the only god on the table, the only divine being worth believing in or worth being skeptical of. This "God"—always uppercase and singular—reigns supreme as the standard point of reference. One rarely hears any consideration of other gods who are no less likely to be real. Approximately half of the world's population currently believes in Yahweh-Jesus-Allah, so it is easy to see why so many people forget, never know, or simply choose not to include other gods in their words and thoughts. Not only is there strength in numbers, it seems, there is a lot of ignorance and arrogance, too. But while the limited perspective of these believers may be predictable, what in the world is going on inside the heads of nonbelievers? Why do so many Atheists cooperate in promoting this idea that only one god merits attention?

The reflex response from most skeptics is that Yahweh-Jesus-Allah is the most popular god "here and now" so he should dominate discussions about belief in western societies. But this is way off the mark. Today, there are hundreds of millions of people who believe in gods other than Yahweh-Jesus-Allah. Additionally, if most gods are able to transcend national borders and time, as various believers claim, then any general discussion about supernatural influences on the universe and humankind should include them. One god having more believers than rival gods at a particular point in history is not proof of anything and might be explained as nothing more than successful marketing and a fortunate attachment to successful nations. Many diverse gods have enjoyed runs of great popularity in the past. The current success of this one is not a good enough reason to ignore all others and mislead people into a choice between "God" or no god. The real choice is to believe in one god, multiple gods, or no gods.

It is time for nonbelievers to rethink their support of the view that Yahweh-Jesus-Allah is the only star in the sky. This bias helps Jews, Christians and Muslims promote their god at the expense of all others. It unfairly inflates the apparent likelihood of this one god being real when he is the only one people ever hear Atheists challenge. It matters when "God" consistently gets, not just top billing but exclusive billing, from both fans and skeptics alike. It gives claims of his existence the illusion of more credibility. No less important, the "God" bias is insulting to people who worship different gods today. Without justification, it suggests that their beliefs are on less solid

ground than Jews, Christians and Muslims. It also is outrageously dismissive of past cultures that worshipped other gods. Nonetheless, the overt stance taken by most people in the West today is that only one specific god should be believed in, disbelieved, analyzed, defended, studied, discussed, debated, cherished or condemned.

Amazingly, nonbelievers are nearly as consistent as believers in pushing the "God" bias. Virtually every news broadcast and written report about religious belief, regardless if it takes a supportive or skeptical position, focuses on the Jewish-Christian-Islamic god as if all others are irrelevant and unlikely to exist. An unfortunate result of this slant is that most news consumers are left with a very narrow view of religious belief. Instead of attempting to make sense of a species that has claimed the existence of many thousands of very different gods, they are encouraged to ponder the existence or non-existence of only one god, "God." This unfairly skews the challenge in favor of belief in general and it gives Judaism, Christianity and Islam a tremendous head start over Atheism. In many cases, it may be a head start that will never be overcome by reason.

Judaism, Christianity and Islam directly benefit from keeping the god concept singular and separate because it is easier to believe, easier to defend and more difficult to let go of a god who dominates all others to the point of making them vanish in popular culture. Most Jews, Christians and Muslims rarely—if ever—have to confront the fact that their reasons for believing are nearly identical to those cited by people who believe in different gods (i.e. The universe is so complex; Life can't be the result of chance; Sacred writings; Prayer works, etc.). This undoubtedly is one of the primary reasons many of them develop such high levels of confidence in their own reasons for believing. Greater awareness of claims for other gods, now and throughout history, could be a huge step toward Atheism for many believers. But it can't happen when everyone agrees to only speak about one god.

It may be difficult to see, but Judaism, Christianity and Islam are in sync and mutually supportive when it comes to promoting their shared god. Yes, there is conflict between these groups but none of it is disagreement over the existence or supremacy of "God" vs. other gods. They all agree that their shared god is the real one. Sunni, Shiites, Baptists, Catholics, Reform Jews and Ultra-orthodox Jews can all hold hands around the campfire on that one. Their problems come from splitting hairs over what they think this god wants of them and who they think speaks for him on Earth. By always naming

"God" and virtually never mentioning "gods," they can more easily avoid the most basic questions about his existence. They duck having to explain why claims for him being real are better than claims for other gods. Instead, they can enjoy the comfort of burying themselves in endless details about what "God" wants us to eat, how he wants us to pray, who he wants us to kill, etc.

As for nonbelievers who consistently speak and write about "God" rather than gods, where exactly do they think all the others have gone? One would think they would refuse to give Yahweh-Jesus-Allah exclusive status in the name of accuracy and fairness, if nothing else. What about Hinduism? Did someone recently disprove the existence of all those colorful and unique gods? If so, how was it done and why hasn't anyone informed the nearly one billion Hindus who still seem to think they are real?

What about contemporary tribal people who believe in many gods other than the Jewish-Christian-Islamic god? Why don't their divine beings show up in many BBC reports that touch upon religious belief in today's world? They only seem to warrant mention alongside "exotic" foods and music in anthropological reports, never as equals to "God." It should be obvious that all gods should be given the same treatment by objective journalists. Of course, mentioning the names of a million or so gods is impossible in a three-minute news package; but the BBC only has to frame appropriate reports using the plural, "gods" to be inclusive and accurate.

Why do CNN reports that tackle issues such as "Religion vs. science" always present the view that only "God" may or may not have created the universe and life on Earth? Compounding the error, most nonbelievers who take part in such productions go along with it. It is as if these skeptics actually think that a successful debunking of Yahweh-Jesus-Allah would solve the problem of humankind's chronic obsession with gods. Prominent examples of the glaring "God" bias include such headlines as: "The God Debate," *Newsweek*; "God, Under a Microscope," Washington Post; "Scientists Speak Up on Mix of God and Science," *New York Times*.

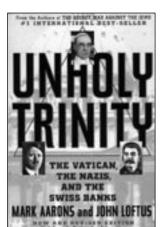
Could the "God" bias have something to do with racism and ethnocentrism? After all, it does seem like any god exclusively worshipped by non-white people is automatically disqualified from even the slightest consideration by western broadcasters, writers, editors, and debate organizers. Is this about nothing more than power, a case of "he who wins the wars gets to name the god"? When "objective" journalists in the West only name the god favoured by the majority of their audience in reports about religious belief as it relates to everyone's Earth, everyone's universe, everyone's origin and everyone's future, they seem to reveal a stark prejudice of power. The BBC, CNN, New York Times, Newsweek, etc. should explain if it is a god's association with militarily and economically powerful societies that somehow makes claims for his existence more credible. Meanwhile, the Mayan Jaguar god is left out of all media reports and debates about a possible supernatural creation of the universe, the end of the world, or the chance of rain tomorrow simply because no society with a nuclear arsenal finds him appealing at this time. If this is what lies behind the "God" bias then thoughtful nonbelievers who seek to challenge religious claims certainly have no business going along with it.

Gods who are worshipped today, other than Yahweh-Jesus-Allah, are not the only ones who deserve attention. Our past is filled with many thousands of gods who have as much a right to be included in talks about origins and the future as "God." But why are so few nonbelievers willing to force monotheists to deal with them? So what if they lost their star power centuries ago? These faded gods were confidently believed in by intelligent and sane people throughout his-

tory and probably deep into prehistory. If most gods are eternal and unrestricted by geography, as their believers assure us they are, then why are gods of the past not relevant today? Apart from a few pharaohs and David Koresh, very few dead bodies of supposed gods have turned up. Maybe they are still active. No one can make a compelling argument that unpopular gods are less likely to be real as "God" is. Skeptics are supposed to operate on evidence and reason. What exactly is the evidence and reason that supports dominating every discussion about belief with talk of one currently popular god as if all others are dead or debunked? Why is it always "God" rather than Ninurta, for example? Admittedly, the Mesopotamian god of thunderstorms is no longer a household name but he still could be out there somewhere, stirring up the weather and tossing lightning bolts at us. No formerly popular gods have ever been dethroned by scientific proof of their nonexistence or by scientific proof of a rival god's existence. No claims for any gods, regardless of how long ago their peak years were, are inferior to claims made for Yahweh-Jesus-Allah. Therefore, news broadcasters, print journalists and editors have a professional obligation to highlight or ignore all gods equally when reporting on the possibility of supernatural happenings.

Skeptics of religion who support the "God" bias because they think current popularity somehow makes the lead god the proper target of their focus are mistaken. Times change and people are fickle. Who knows what tomorrow holds for the most popular supernatural being of today? The concept of gods in general and the recycled reasons given for believing in all of them should be the priority target for those who want to promote critical thinking. For example, the ancient gods of Mt. Olympus recently won the right to be worshipped legally in Greece again. Those once-popular gods are staging a comeback in our lifetime. What if they eventually catch up to and overtake Yahweh-Jesus-Allah in popularity? Would future generations of skeptics be wise to limit the scope of their criticism to Greek gods only? It may be that gods come and go but believers will always be with us. Who knows? Even if "God" goes away, the door may still be ajar for another god to come in and take his place. Who the god is or how many people currently believe in her or him is not the key. What matters most is the tendency humans have for thinking that gods are real despite the absence of any evidence for their existence. Addressing this should be the priority for skeptics who desire a more rational world.

Some believers claim that references to "God" are not specific to Yahweh-Jesus-Allah. They say that "God" can be interpreted to mean some vague creator god who encompasses all belief systems. Pleasing as that may be to some ears, however, it simply doesn't work.



Unholy Trinity

by Mark Aarons & John Loftus

The Vatican, The Nazis and The Swiss Banks. John Loftus and Mark Aarons. Unholy Trinity details how the Papacy ferreted Nazi criminals out of post-World War II Europe via the infamous "ratline," and exposed the ties between the Vatican, Swiss bankers and hidden Western investors.

\$18.00 – stock #16002 (Please see order form for member discount and S&H charges) Attempting to condense hundreds of thousands of gods into "God" contradicts specific claims made by millions of people, past and present, who believed in numerous gods who cannot possibly be Yahweh-Jesus-Allah. In North America and Europe, when lecturers, authors, journalists and laypersons on a street corner mention "God," they mean Yahweh-Jesus-Allah. No one honestly believes they are referring to Athena, Minerva and Aralo, too.

It is time for nonbelievers to stop playing the game by the monotheists' rules. People who think Yahweh-Jesus-Allah is real need to recognize that we are a god-creating species. We make divine beings by the bushel and—given their conflicting duties, powers and biographies—they cannot all be real. We have claimed the existence of so many contradictory gods that any believer who collides with even a small fraction of them would have to agree that we got it wrong at least most of the time when it comes to religion. A short step from that admission, of course, is the realization that if we got it wrong on most gods then it is possible we got it wrong on all gods-even Yahweh-Jesus-Allah. Instead of hammering away with this important point, however, most nonbelievers continue to speak and write about "God," helping believers to keep him safely apart from the pack. Why, for example, is Richard Dawkins writing about the "God" delusion when he could be writing about the gods delusion? Why does Christopher Hitchens declare in his best-selling book that only one god is not great when it is clear that "gods" are not so great? Why is Michael Shermer debating some Yahweh-Jesus-Allah believer about the existence of "God"? As a matter of principle, shouldn't he always insist on debating the existence of all gods equally? Why is Julia Sweeney only "letting go of (one) god"? Are we to assume that the poor woman is still holding onto a million more? When PBS produced its documentary, "A Question of God," did they really mean to suggest that only Yahweh-Jesus-Allah is worthy of a question? Of course, prominent nonbelievers such as Dawkins, Hitchens and Shermer know all about the awkward presence of claims for other gods from other belief systems, and they do raise the point often. But far too much good work that is skeptical of religious claims is phrased in a way that inadvertently fuels the confidence of believers who don't see beyond the glare of their one god.

I suppose I should be grateful to live in an age when so many people are speaking out for reason and freethought. But when I read and hear the words chosen by many skeptics today, I can't help but think to myself, "Nice work, guys, only a million more gods to go!" Nonbelievers can make a deeper and more lasting impact by consistently focusing on the reasons people give for believing in a god—any god—rather than getting bogged down in talk about one specific god. The problem is not Yahweh-Jesus-Allah. The problem is that most people are not aware of how easy it is to be snared by irrational ideas.

Every oral and written presentation made by critics of religious belief ought to emphasize humankind's long-time love affair with numerous gods. Use of the phrase "a god or gods" should be standard when discussing belief. For example, "There is no evidence that God created the universe," is not the best choice of words. "There is no evidence that a god or gods created the universe," is much better. "God", referring to Yahweh-Jesus-Allah, is appropriate only when addressing very specific matters concerning Judaism, Christianity or Islam. Any general discussion of belief as it touches the workings of nature, the future, or the universe should describe "a god or gods." Use of "God" also leads to sloppy communication. Those who say, "I do not believe in God," for example, reveal nothing about their position on most gods. They also help to keep Yahweh-Jesus-Allah center-stage and in the spotlight.

Skeptics who hope to bring more enlightenment to the world, hurt their cause when they reinforce the idea that claims for one god are more likely to be valid than claims for others. Giving Jews, Christians and Muslims an easy pass on this gives up too much without a fight. No general worth his epaulettes would surrender 99.9 percent of the battlefield before the first shot is fired. Yet this is precisely what most Atheists do in their encounters with religious people. Humans are very good at inventing gods and nonbelievers should be the last people to spare anyone this truth. Many critics of religious belief do make an effort to note that Yahweh-Jesus-Allah is not the only god. They know that the best answer to, "Do you believe in God?" is, "Which god?". It is also common for savvy skeptics to drop the name of Thor, Poseidon or some other out-of-fashion god for dramatic effect. More times than not, however, these comments are delivered and received as nothing more than cute one-liners. They are quickly forgotten when the nonbeliever reverts to catering to the Jewish-Christian-Muslim bias by speaking only of the singular god with an uppercase "G." This is not good enough. Consistency is required to make the point stick that "God" is simply one of many gods and has no more good evidence behind him than any other.

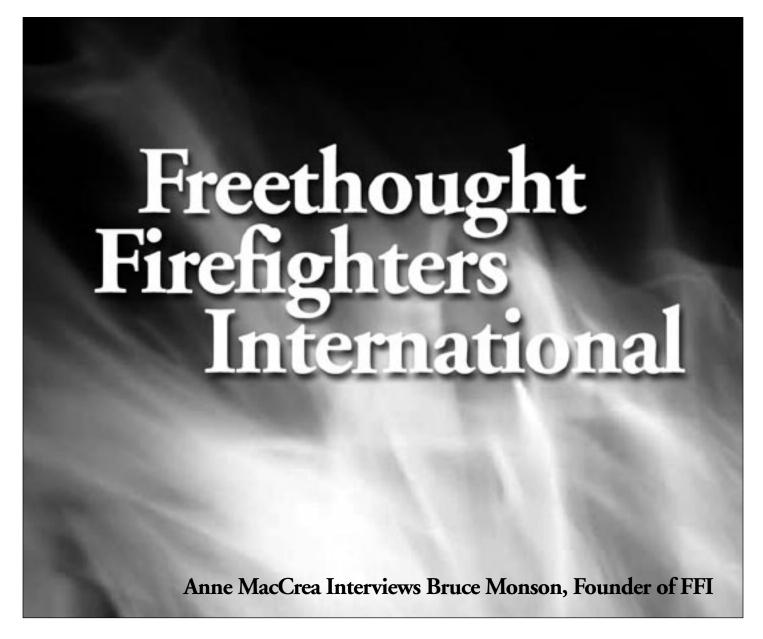
Imagine if a teacher presented a lecture on the importance of individuals to world history—but only named people who are still alive as examples. Wouldn't leaving out Pericles, Jefferson, Napoleon, Hitler, Gandhi and Mao Zedong diminish the value of the talk? Wouldn't such a lecture unfairly inflate the importance of the people mentioned and leave uninformed listeners with a distorted view of world history? Atheists not only weaken their case against belief in gods when they choose to speak and write about "God," they also miss an opportunity to help believers see the big picture. Many Jews, Christians and Muslims need to be reminded, or shown for the first time, that there are many different gods, according to many different believers. And they need to hear that these gods are or were thought to be very real by sane and confident believers—despite the absence of evidence. Speaking and writing about gods in the plural and with that lowercase "g" are important. So too is repeating the crucial point that no god is superior to any other by the measure of evidence and argument. Maintaining consistency on this can help the progress of reason. It may even be necessary for the progress of reason. Perhaps the day Jews, Christians and Muslims see humankind's religious landscape as it was and as it is will be the day they finally decide to challenge the existence of their god. *

Endnote: Most people probably know that the "God of Abraham" (Yahweh-Allah) is the god of both Judaism and Islam. However, some people may be confused by the idea of Jesus being the same god too. To explain this, one must refer to the Christian doctrine of the Holy Trinity. It claims that God the Father (also the God of Abraham), the Holy Spirit and Jesus are individu-

al beings but are also the same being. I can't claim to understand this but it's their religion and their rules so this means Yahweh, Jesus and Allah are the same god.

Guy P. Harrison is the author of 50 Reasons People Give for Believing in a God, published by Prometheus Books. He can be reached at guy@weststartv.com.





AAM: How long have you been a firefighter and how long have you been Atheist?

Bruce: I've been a firefighter for 18 years and in emergency services for about 20 years. I have been atheist about 15 years, although that transition was anything but sudden. It was a long process that began in high school when I first began to seriously question the existence of a god after dealing with the deaths of several classmates who were killed in traffic accidents; and one, my best friend, who died in a particularly tragic chainsaw accident.

AAM: Were you raised in a religious home?

Bruce: I was raised in the heartland of Kansas, the Bible Belt. We were Baptists of the fundamentalist variety. In fact, to give you an idea of the nature of my theology, Jerry Falwell actually came to my church to see the completion of the remodeling my pastor had had done. Looking at myself today through my eyes in those days, I would certainly have considered me to be a vile, condemned being. **AAM:** You are the founder of a website called "Freethought Fire-

AAM: You are the founder of a website called "Freethought Firefighters International". Why did you create this site and is it a membership organization or just an informational site?

Bruce: I created the organization "Freethought Firefighters International" as part of a thought experiment initially, to demonstrate

a point. There is a national group that calls itself the Fellowship of Christian Firefighters (FCF). And one such chapter of the FCF had a foothold within the Colorado Springs Fire Department.

For many years FCF members had been posting evangelizing tracts ("have you found Jesus..." etc., with extensive Bible citations and quotations) on bulletin boards in every firehouse in the city, as well as other departmental facilities. These bulletin boards were placed alongside all the other departmental bulletin boards and were thus afforded a status of official endorsement by the fire department. There were also prayer groups, prayer chains, emails, and open proselytizing with firefighters attempting to convert other firefighters right in the fire stations! Fire department chaplains also had full access to any fire station to drop off Bibles and other religious paraphernalia, which they did. Many people found such open and blatant religious activities inappropriate at best, though virtually no one dared raise a voice against it. But I did! About six years ago, in my own firehouse, I added one more bulletin board to the group of bulletin boards, directly next to the FCF bulletin board. It read in large bold letters: "Freethought Firefighters." On my bulletin board I ALSO provided lots of direct Bible quotations, citations, and stories. The only difference was that I was posting Bible material that the Christians don't like to see publicly displayed.

Naturally, this led to a backlash against me. Christians were up in arms about it. How DARE I do something so 'offensive' and 'hateful'! One of them even removed the board and threw away all my material while I was off duty, though no one would 'fess up to it. So I replaced it with a new board and posted even more Bible quotes and morally repugnant citations from the 'good book'.

More uproar, this time to the station captain and a district chief who pulled me into the office and ordered me to remove my bulletin board. Furthermore, I was forbidden to post anything to any bulletin board without expressed approval from my officer.

I responded, "Fine, I'll be happy to take my 'Freethought Firefighters' board down, but the Christian boards also need to come down." Their response? "Oh, that's completely different!" Long story short, the issue went up the chain of command to the fire chief who agreed with my position, although he stopped short of demanding all the FCF boards come down immediately. Instead, he assigned me the task of writing a new policy concerning the proper use of bulletin boards within the department, which I did. The policy I wrote found its way to the city attorney who wanted a few changes in verbiage, but left it largely intact and about 6 months later it was adopted into our policies and procedures. After that all the FCF bulletin boards came down and remain down. To their credit some members of the FCF had decided to start taking down their board in advance of the policy change, though most of them viewed me with contempt.

As it turns out, there were A LOT of people who applauded my efforts (including some Christians). They had been fed-up with the proselytizing for a long time but never said anything for fear of backlash. I received dozens of private emails and notes from people expressing thanks for my efforts to change this practice.

There is more to the story, but this is the gist of it, and how my FFI organization first came into being. After that I wrote my "A Firefighter Speaks-out" essay, which prompted NY Times science writer, Natalie Angier, to interview me. This became the backdrop for her excellent editorial, Confessions of a Lonely Atheist (http://

www.nytimes.com/library/magazine/home/20010114mag-atheism. httm!). The Colorado Springs Gazette also did a story on it (http://www.firefighting.com/search/articles/2235.htm). After that the Freethinkers of Colorado Springs had me speak at one of their meetings. Two of their members, Gary Betchum and Becky Hale, are a husband-wife team who own and operate the locally-based store, EvolveFish.com. Sympathetic to my cause, they provided me free web space to build a website and from that was born "Freethought Firefighters International."

Today FFI is a free membership site. Its primary purpose is to provide information and help other firefighters and emergency personnel deal with similar evangelizing problems within their own departments. It is also supports the separation between religion and government. And your AA readers will also be happy to know that FFI vehemently stands in the face of those political-religion pundits who so often proclaim that "There are no Atheists in foxholes."

AAM: Your website essay about how you became Atheist is quite excellent, and clearly shows your tolerance for those with privately held religious beliefs.

Bruce: I actually have a number of very good friends who still identify themselves as Christians, but they take a more philosophical approach, they just say, it's easier for me; it's comforting for me to believe this. And if it gives them comfort, and they're not bringing harm on anyone, then who am I to say otherwise to that? But when it becomes a proselytizing issue, that's another thing. For example, there's a particular church in my district that was capturing little Jewish kids and baptizing them.

AAM: Capturing? As in kidnapping!?

Bruce: Yeah! That was big news in the Colorado Springs area about 7 or 8 years ago. They were taking little Jewish kids from the school, unbeknownst to their parents, and were baptizing them.

AAM: Isn't there some sort of criminal offense in that?

Bruce: Absolutely! And one church got in trouble for conducting baptisms of girls and making them get completely nude for it, another church got in trouble for stealing. There was one time when we went to a church on a seizure call; a lady had started seizing during

the service, and they had carried her out into the lobby, and had someone on each side holding her up in a chair, all while she was still actively seizing. So I did a paramedic workup, and we were going to give her some valium to stop the seizing, and this deacon comes out and says to me, "Umm, excuse me, could you move her someplace else, because services are about to end, and I need to have this area cleared out". It's amazing to me, the mindset of these people. They're just so brainwashed, it's the only word that you can use for it. And I remember thinking that way myself, and I know how hard it is to change that.

AAM: So what do you want to accomplish with your Freethought Firefighters International site?



Bruce: It's a place to house debates and discussions, but mainly it's for information. I spoke at a local Freethought meeting when the article first came out in the paper about my writing the new fire department bulletin board policy, and one of the people there, Gary Betchum is a local Freethinker who also owns Evolvefish.com, if you've ever heard of that website

AAM: Yes, I do a lot of my Solstice shopping there.

Bruce: He offered me free web space to start the website and it originally was a thought experiment, it wasn't something I started out to start a Freethought society, it was just something I wanted to use for my own station to deal with the Christian firefighters bulletin board problem, and it really took off from there. Now firefighters across the country write to me and tell me about what's going on in their own departments, whether it's Christian chaplains or other Christian firefighters doing things like they were doing in my department, and they ask me what they can do about it. So I have been able to help them understand the legal background and policies and procedures; basically they need to know what I've already done, to help them fix the same kinds of problems in their departments.

AAM: Have you or your family experienced much backlash in your town about this website?

Bruce: Well, my kids haven't gotten any backlash. I of course, was reviled by a lot of people back when the bulletin board situation occurred, for daring to go against what these guys were doing. They were posting Christian evangelizing tracts, and openly evangelizing people in the fire station. Chaplains would bring Bibles and other paraphernalia to the fire stations, in an effort to evangelize, and a lot of people were quietly fed up with that stuff, but they wouldn't say anything because they didn't want to be labeled or blackballed or anything like that, and based on the backlash against me, they probably had good reason not to. I was called "Satan's helper working over time", "spreader of lies, lies, lies from the father of all lies", "the devil", "pure evil", and all kinds of other derogatory comments were made, and it wasn't like people were joking about it, they said it with full intention of being hurtful when they were saying that. Although it's kind of interesting now, because I'm affectionately known as "Satan". A lot of people will come on this job, and they've never heard of Bruce Monson but they'll meet me and say, "Wow, you're Satan?" So it's kind of a badge of honor now.

AAM: I love how Atheists are always being accused of worshipping Satan. We don't believe in ANY imaginary creatures, much less worship them! So would you say that your website and your efforts to change station policies have had any impact?

Bruce: There were a lot of other changes that happened because of that. The chaplain policy had to change, because we had chaplains running amok, and they pretty much had free rein to go to any fire house any time they wanted, and to dispatch on any calls, and there are all kinds of issues with that, particularly with the recent privacy law changes. Chaplains really shouldn't even be on the scenes of these deaths, because technically they're crime scenes until proven otherwise. Departments that have priests who are chaplains are particularly at risk for these privacy problems, because of the priest penitent clause. A lot of our calls have a very high potential to end up in a courtroom. As firefighters, regardless of religious beliefs or philosophical views, we are mandated reporters, so anything that happens on scene, we are subject to subpoena, we're required by law to say what we saw or heard. Now if you have a priest or chaplain, and some departments I've seen have chaplains as active members, they may not report what they've observed. As a police officer, you're never truly off duty, but as a priest, you're never really a police officer.



Sea Stories

Reminiscences of a Navy Radioman 1952-1977

I am an Atheist and the sea stories in this book come from my 23 years of active service, 1952-1956 and 1958-1977 in the United States Navy. They are the sort of stories which are told over a beer at the club, on the fantail at sunset, when work is caught up on the midwatch, or whenever/wherever two or more sailors embark on prolonged conversation about their past experiences.

The book, 425 pp., is not available through the AA Press, but is available through <u>Amazon.com</u> and the usual outlets.

http://www.authorhouse.com/BookStore/ItemDetail-bookid-47286.aspx (Not available from *American Atheists*.)

So there are a lot of issues that come up with that. I've helped re-craft our policies on the chaplain's role in the department as well as the bulletin board policy, and I can say that today everything is much better because of that. This is definitely a success story, even though we live in Colorado Springs, which is a heavily Evangelical society, and you're always going to have people stepping over their bounds here and there, but for the most part, you don't find evangelizing tracts at the fire station any more. A lot of my Christian friends agree that it was out of bounds before and that it's much better now.

AAM: Well it sounds much nicer. I wish I could say the same about the ladies' bathrooms at my workplace. I'm always finding chick tracts there. But then maybe that's appropriate place for them. So do you have any parting thoughts for us, Bruce?

Bruce: If there's anything in particular that I would like to emphasize, it has to do with how people are always saying that as an Atheist firefighter, and even though I don't believe, that God still believes in me and when I do good, that's Jesus working through me. You know, how any success story, even if it comes through medical science, they say "that's just Jesus". So what I want to say is that there are a lot of non-believing firefighters out there, and a lot of them never speak up, for the same reasons I've cited. But there are a lot of people out there who whole-heartedly believe in science and technology and that's the stuff that makes us able to save lives. That's an important message I want to emphasize.

AAM: Thank you for your work and thanks for creating Freethought Firefighters International.

www.freethoughtfirefighters.org

Leap Of Faith

Desperate for career redemption, savvy celebs are dropping to their knees.

by Jeff Bercovici

esus saves. Any red-blooded American with a hunting license and a "Git R Done" bumper sticker can tell you that. In recent months, however, He's been garnering shout-outs from some unlikely quarters. Steeling herself for a stint in the pokey, convicted drunk driver Paris Hilton took to toting around the Good Book, flashing it for the courthouse cameras. Her friend and fellow con, Nicole Richie, recently revealed that she and baby daddy-to-be Joel Madden have begun reading Bible verses to each other. Michael Lohan, celebu-dad and recent parolee, is training to be a minister and founding a Christian rehab center with fellow born-again basket case Stephen Baldwin. Newt Gingrich, after finally admitting to the fact that he was cheating on his wife while leading the charge against President Clinton, has sought public absolution from evangelical hard-ass James Dobson. And canicidal NFL outcast Michael Vick, hoping for clemency from the league, the law, and the rest of humankind, said his pending conviction on dogfighting charges has helped him "turn [his] life over to God." At press time, Owen Wilson and men's-roomcruising Senator Larry Craig hadn't yet answered the altar call, but would you be shocked if they did?

Of course, the charitable-minded among us view all of this as a positive—dare we say, providential—development: proof that the Holy Spirit is alive, well, and quite possibly an Us Weekly subscriber. Who wouldn't rather see outed New Jersey Governor Jim McGreevey in seminary than in court?

For the more cynical types, however, the whole phenomenon looks suspiciously like the Great Rehab Craze of late '06 and early '07. Remember that? It was a heady era when just about anyone, be it a hate-spewing actor (Mel Gibson, Isaiah Washington), horny politico (Mark Foley, Gavin Newsom), or coke-addled starlet (Britney Spears, Lindsay Lohan), could take the oxygen out of a scandal by checking into a seaside resort for a few weeks of "me time." "It wasn't me doing and saying those horrible things you videotaped me doing," went the refrain. "It was the Percocet!"

Yet, inevitably, the words "I have a problem, and now I'm getting treatment," have lost their incantatory power. Maybe the turning point came when Reverend Ted Haggard blamed his fondness for sodomy on crystal meth, or perhaps it was when Lindsay checked in for the one-millionth time to a surf-and-sun drunk tank in Malibu. Either way, the public finally realized that addiction, terrible as it may be, doesn't turn Nicey McNormalson into a Jew-baiting, intern-fondling maniac. The crisis-control experts needed a new magic bullet. Enter Yahweh.

As a cure-all for the scandalized, Jesus Christ seems to have legs. Lord knows, Americans love religion. Our cultural mythology is packed with hyperbolic tales of abasement and stunningly timed deliverance. The "once was lost but now am found" narrative, of course, has a special place in Evangelicalism—a strain of belief to which some 40 percent of us claim to adhere. To them, "hitting rock bottom and then discovering the Lord" isn't just an accepted route to holiness, it's the norm. Those who follow this course, arguably, are seen to have a more authentic relationship with God than those who never strayed from His path.

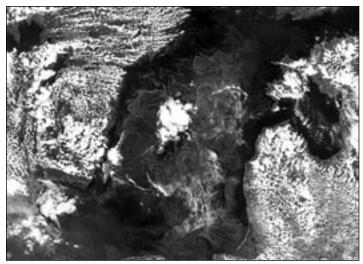
For proof, look no further than our nation's prodigal-inchief. While John Kerry's past somehow managed to become a liability in the 2004 election—was he really heroic in Vietnam, or only kind of heroic?—George W. Bush skated through two election campaigns without ever being held to account for his misspent decade of drinking and drugging. Democrats can shout themselves hoarse about the double standard, but Christians get it: Bush was born-again. Nothing he did before matters—that was, quite literally, another life. And to attack the sincerity of his conversion, or the depth of his repentance, only invites backlash from the millions who believe that they, too, were granted a divine mulligan on the day they found God.

Yet while evangelicals prize forgiveness above all else, there's another Christian virtue that Americans have never seemed to care much for: humility. Contrast Bush's unwavering (if unsubstantiated) confidence in the divine mandate backing his decisions with the faith of the late Mother Teresa, who, as Newsweek recently reported, wasn't even convinced that God exists. "I am told God loves me—and yet the reality of darkness and coldness and emptiness is so great that nothing touches my soul," she confided to her diary.

There's no question that Mother Teresa's unhappy agnosticism would've played badly in the U.S., where words outweigh actions and certitude counts for more than wisdom. Michael Vick may be a dog-strangling sicko, but by invoking God he stands to gain more Christ-cred than if he comes clean about the "coldness and emptiness" of his soul. Paris may not be able to name her favorite Bible verse, but she sure does get the part where someone else died for her sins. Talk loudly enough about Jesus for long enough, and all will be forgiven in the court of public opinion. They don't call Him the Redeemer for nothing. *

Originally published in Radar Magazine, Radaronline.com

Origin Of 'Breathable' Atmosphere Half A Billion Years Ago Discovered



Phytoplankton today. A new study suggests that upheavals in the earth's crust initiated a kind of reverse-greenhouse effect 500 million years ago that cooled the world's oceans, spawned giant plankton blooms, and sent a burst of oxygen into the atmosphere.

SCIENCEDAILY (Oct. 30, 2007) — Ohio State University geologists and their colleagues have uncovered evidence of when Earth may have first supported an oxygen-rich atmosphere similar to the one we breathe today.

The study suggests that upheavals in the earth's crust initiated a kind of reverse-greenhouse effect 500 million years ago that cooled the world's oceans, spawned giant plankton blooms, and sent a burst of oxygen into the atmosphere.

That oxygen may have helped trigger one of the largest growths of biodiversity in Earth's history.

Matthew Saltzman, associate professor of earth sciences at Ohio State, reported the findings October 28 at the meeting of the Geological Society of America in Denver.

For a decade, he and his team have been assembling evidence of climate change that occurred 500 million years ago, during the late Cambrian period. They measured the amounts of different chemicals in rock cores taken from around the world, to piece together a complex chain of events from the period.

Their latest measurements, taken in cores from the central United States and the Australian outback, revealed new evidence of a geologic event called the Steptoean Positive Carbon Isotope Excursion (SPICE).

Amounts of carbon and sulfur in the rocks suggest that the event dramatically cooled Earth's climate over two million years—a very short time by geologic standards. Before the event, the Earth was a hothouse, with up to 20 times more carbon dioxide in the atmosphere compared to the present day. Afterward, the planet had cooled and the carbon dioxide had been replaced with oxygen. The climate and atmospheric composition would have been similar to today.

"If we could go back in time and walk around in the late Cambrian, this seems to be the first time we would have felt at home," Saltzman said. "Of course, there was no life on land at the time, so it wouldn't have been all that comfortable."

The land was devoid of plants and animals, but there was life in the ocean, mainly in the form of plankton, sea sponges, and trilobites. Most of the early ancestors of the plants and animals we know today existed during the Cambrian, but life wasn't very diverse.

Then, during the Ordovician period, which began around 490 million years ago, many new species sprang into being. The first coral reefs formed during that time, and the first true fish swam among them. New plants evolved and began colonizing land.

"If you picture the evolutionary 'tree of life,' most of the main branches existed during the Cambrian, but most of the smaller branches didn't get filled in until the Ordovician," Saltzman said. "That's when animal life really began to develop at the family and genus level." Researchers call this diversification the "Ordovician radiation."

The composition of the atmosphere has changed many times since, but the pace of change during the Cambrian is remarkable. That's why Saltzman and his colleagues refer to this sudden influx of oxygen during the SPICE event as a "pulse" or "burst."

"After this pulse of oxygen, the world remained in an essentially stable, warm climate, until late in the Ordovician," Saltzman said.

He stopped short of saying that the oxygen-rich atmosphere caused the Ordovician radiation.

"We know that oxygen was released during the SPICE event, and we know that it persisted in the atmosphere for millions of years—during the time of the Ordovician radiation—so the timelines appear to match up. But to say that the SPICE event triggered the diversification is tricky, because it's hard to tell exactly when the diversification started," he said.

"We would need to work with paleobiologists who understand how increased oxygen levels could have led to a diversification. Linking the two events precisely in time is always going to be difficult, but if we could link them conceptually, then it would become a more convincing story."

Researchers have been trying to understand the sudden climate change during the Cambrian period ever since Saltzman found the first evidence of the SPICE event in rock in the American west in 1998. Later, rock from a site in Europe bolstered his hypothesis, but these latest finds in central Iowa and Queensland, Australia, prove that the SPICE event occurred worldwide.

During the Cambrian period, most of the continents as we know them today were either underwater or part of the Gondwana supercontinent, Saltzman explained. Tectonic activity was pushing new rock to the surface, where it was immediately eaten away by acid rain. Such chemical weathering pulls carbon dioxide from the air, traps the carbon in sediments, and releases oxygen—a kind of greenhouse effect in reverse.

"From our previous work, we knew that carbon was captured and oxygen was released during the SPICE event, but we didn't know for sure that the oxygen stayed in the atmosphere," Saltzman said.

They compared measurements of inorganic carbon—captured during weathering—with organic carbon—produced by plankton during photosynthesis. And because plankton contain different ratios of the isotopes of carbon depending on the amount of oxygen in the air, the geologists were able to double-check their estimates of how much oxygen was released during the period, and how long it stayed in the atmosphere.

They also studied isotopes of sulfur, to determine whether much of the oxygen being produced was re-captured by sediments.

It wasn't.

Saltzman explained the chain of events this way: Tectonic activity led to increased weathering, which pulled carbon dioxide from the air and cooled the climate. Then, as the oceans cooled to more hospitable temperatures, the plankton prospered—and in turn created more oxygen through photosynthesis.

"It was a double whammy," he said. "There's really no way around it when we combine the carbon and sulfur isotope data—oxygen levels dramatically rose during that time."

What can this event tell us about climate change today? "Oxygen levels have been stable for the last 50 million years, but they have fluctuated over the last 500 million," Saltzman said. "We showed that the oxygen burst in the late Cambrian happened over only two million years, so that is an indication of the sensitivity of the carbon cycle and how fast things can change."

Global cooling may have boosted life early in the Ordovician period, but around 450 million years ago, more tectonic activity—most likely, the rise of the Appalachian Mountains—brought on a deadly ice age. So while most of the world's plant and animal species were born during the Ordovician period, by the end of it, more than half of them had gone extinct.

Coauthors on this study included Seth Young, a graduate student in earth sciences at Ohio State; Ben Gill, a graduate student, and Tim Lyons, professor of earth sciences, both at the University of California, Riverside; Lee Kump, professor of geosciences at Penn State University; and Bruce Runnegar, professor of paleontology at the University of California, Los Angeles. *

Adapted from materials provided by Ohio State University.

Reprinted with permission from <u>ScienceDaily.com.</u>

Tired of All the Religious Shows on Television?

Don't you want the religious to see "Atheist" programming when they turn on the TV? You can make that happen. You can get **The Atheist Viewpoint** on television. It's simple. Please contact us for more information at **908.276.7300**.

NEW Life Members

AMERICAN ATHEISTS Welcomes New Life Members Ibrahim Albayrak, Quebec, Canada Stanley M. Bradley, Lithopolis, OH Helen M. Mitzman, San Francisco, CA



MICHIGAN ATHEISTS

www.michiganatheists.org (313) 938-5960

March 2, 2008

WHAT: First Sunday of the Month Gathering WHERE: Denny's, 39550 Ann Arbor Rd., Plymouth Twp.

TIME: 2:00 pm - 5:00 pm

March 16, 2008

WHAT: Celebrate the Spring Equinox

WHERE: China Star Palace, 270 S. Wayne Rd., Westland

TIME: 3:00 pm - 7:00 pm

April 6, 2008

WHAT: First Sunday of the Month Gathering WHERE: Denny's, 39550 Ann Arbor Rd., Plymouth Twp.

TIME: 2:00 pm - 5:00 pm

April 20, 2008

WHAT: Celebrate Birth of Madalyn O'Hair

WHERE: China Star Palace, 270 S. Wayne Rd., Westland

TIME: 3:00 pm - 7:00 pm

(Please send your group or organizations events listing 3-4 months in

advance to editor@atheists.org.)

Another Way To Give...

Until Dec. 31, donors can make a direct tax-free charitable contribution from their traditional or Roth IRAs to American Atheists. The Pension Protection Act allows you to make a 2007 rollover gift even if you made a gift from your IRA last year. This contribution can be used to satisfy Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) obligations.

There are several important rules to consider:

- Only traditional or Roth IRAs may be used for this type of gift;
- The amount of your donation is limited to \$100,000 and must be made before Dec. 31.
- You must be at least 70 1\2 years old as of the date of the gift;
- Your gift must be made directly from your Trustee to American Atheists;
- · Other restrictions may apply.

For more more information and assistance with processing a contribution, check with the IRA Custodian where your account is held. Or if you prefer, American Atheists' advisor, **Tom Chancellor** has offered assistance.

Call toll free **888-244-1163**, direct **817-759-8326**, or by e-mail to **tchancellor@pclient.ml.com**.

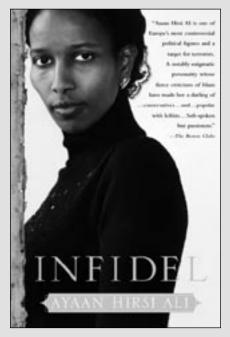
The Price Of Submission Is Too High

by Gina Liggett

n the fall of 2007 President Bush hosted his seventh *Iftaar* dinner and spoke of "Islam's learned and vibrant culture." The President has used similar glowing words each year at this end-of-Ramadan celebration ever since Islamic radicals murdered thousands of Americans on September 11, 2001. His infamous quote that terrorists have "hijacked a great religion" is totally unconvincing to knowledgeable Atheists—the radicals were simply following the dictates of their religion.

We find out just how "vibrant" Islamic culture is in the illuminating autobiography entitled, "Infidel," by Ayaan Hirsi Ali. This is the extraordinary story of a brave woman who grew up in Somalia, Kenya and Saudi Arabia and escaped a repressive cultural-religious upbringing. She became a champion of Western ideals of reason and individual rights and committed the worst sin according to her religion: she publicly renounced Islam and became an Atheist. Ms. Hirsi Ali's autobiography speaks for itself, unlike the hollow praises for a brutal religion. And if there were such a thing as becoming "more Atheist than ever," then I certainly have after reading this story.

The first striking aspect of the book is how Ms. Hirsi Ali exposes the facts about a barbaric religious culture in a style that reads like a novel. Her tales of living in a society that values primarily clan loyalty and strict obedience to Islam and tradition are morbidly captivating. The people closest to her are well "characterized" and the author gives depth to her story by framing it within the broader context of the politically chaotic east Africa and rigidly theocratic Saudi Arabia. The conspicuous absence of any concept of individual rights in these societies is a sobering reality check about the evils of religion.



Infidel by Ayaan Hirsi Ali Free Press 2007, 350 pp., \$26.00

The events in Ayaan's early life reveal the severe cultural dysfunction existing to this day in these tribal-Islamic areas, particularly in the treatment of women and girls. In addition to regular verbal, physical and emotional abuse, Ayaan is forced at age five to undergo the most egregious form of sexual abuse of girls sanctioned in many parts of the world: female genital mutilation. She explains, that while this ubiquitous ritual "predates Islam and is not practiced by all Muslims, (it) is always justified in the name of Islam." Ayaan vividly details how the women themselves endorse Islam's warped obsession with female "purity" and enthusiastically

enable their own repression in the name of Allah. It's as if they collectively suffer from "Stockholm syndrome" in which victims of abuse sympathize with their abusers in order to survive.

Another compelling aspect of this book is how the author describes her intellectual journey as a back-and-forth struggle with conflicting ideas. Given the context of growing up in the fetid pit of such a stifling and horrific environment, her choice to reason her way through the muck is truly heroic.

What made it all possible was that she dared to exhibit a questioning spirit that took root early on. She idolized her often-absent father who fought for democratic reforms in Somalia. And she read voraciously, fascinated by the ideas in Western novels and Nancy Drew stories. She compared the "internal logic" of these books with the intellectually unsatisfying *hadith* of the Prophet Mohammad. This made me recall how unbelievable my Sunday school lessons seemed to me as a child, even before I knew I was an Atheist.

When Ayaan turned sixteen and began searching for "truth," an influential Islamic nun inspired Ayaan to turn off her intellect and surrender mind, body and soul in order to "submit to God's pureness and light." Here, readers learn about some of the intricacies of Islam's rules of "deep submission," which is the literal meaning of the religion.

The author clearly makes the case that the surrender demanded by Islam is *absolute*—a degree of power and control that has not (yet) metastasized in the predominately Christian West. For example, Ayaan describes how girls were told that because God created women to be so irresistible to men, "(o)nly the robe worn by the wives of the Prophet could prevent us from arousing men

and leading society into *fitna*, uncontrollable confusion and social chaos." Ayaan began to cover herself in an oversized black cloak and headscarf; she practiced the long ritual praying; and most importantly, she learned about the "*jihad* within ourselves: submission of our will."

Naturally, Ayaan started experiencing the many contradictions of her religion; but unlike her peers, she began to reason: "I needed my belief system to be logical and consistent." When she challenged the inviolable rules, she was told, "You may not question Allah's word! Satan is speaking to you, girl!" She discovered that Islam "restricted (her) to a very narrow role" and provided "no real answers." Many Atheists with a strict religious background can relate to this inner dialogue of questioning absurd ideas. While death may not be the price for challenging "divine authority" in the West, there are still risks such as overcoming religion-induced guilt and being ostracized by family and community.

The last straw was when Ayaan's father brought her the "good news" that he had ar-

ranged her marriage to a Somali Muslim from their clan living in Canada. Instead of meeting her new husband there, she escaped to Holland and created a new life for herself. She devoured books on history, political science, philosophy and psychology, learning "theories about what makes human individuals tick" and absorbing ideas about liberty that displaced the mind-asphyxiating rules of Islam.

When terrorists attacked the United States in 2001 (leading to mob orgies of glee among Muslims worldwide) Ayaan experienced a transforming realization. Having fully embraced ideas depicting the true meaning of the word, "vibrant," she eloquently writes: "By declaring our Prophet infallible and not permitting ourselves to question him, we Muslims had set up a static tyranny. (W)e Muslims suppressed the freedom to think for ourselves and to act as we chose. We were not just servants of Allah, we were slaves." Then she made a life-changing decision: she would no longer submit, and declared to herself in the mirror, "I don't believe in God."

Ayaan Hirsi Ali went on to become a member of Dutch Parliament, speaking out against the unquestioning Islamic religion and the transplanted abuse in Holland's Muslim immigrant communities. She produced the provocative movie, "Submission, Part I," with Dutch filmmaker, Theo van Gogh, who was soon after savagely killed by a Muslim radical. Herself a target of Islamic extremists, Ms. Hirsi Ali now works as a scholar at an American think tank where she continues her fight for reason and liberty, unleashed from the chains of *submission*.

This autobiography about a voyage to freedom through the brainwashing maze of a violent and dehumanizing faith is a significant achievement. Overcoming huge odds that have psychologically and intellectually damaged people for centuries, the author (literally) unveils the dignity in confronting blind obedience to religion.

As an Atheist who values reason and individual rights, I am inspired by the courage of Ayaan Hirsi Ali who has explicitly named and boldly repudiated the core element that keeps religion alive: the surrender of free will—the choice to reject the irrational belief in god. *

Stone & Bones

by Char Matejovsky illustrated by Robaire Ream

Beautifully illustrated in full color, Stones & Bones sketches the story of evolution in seventeen verses. Through words and illustrations readers will find answers to questions such as, when did the Age of Mammals begin and what is it called? When did the first hrses appear on earth? What about whatles? What is the name and date of Darwin's revolutionary book on evolution? When did the earth begin to form? And many more.

From the pages of Stones & Bones, About sixty million years ago, no, make that sixty-five, with the Cenozoic Age, the age of mammals would arrive.

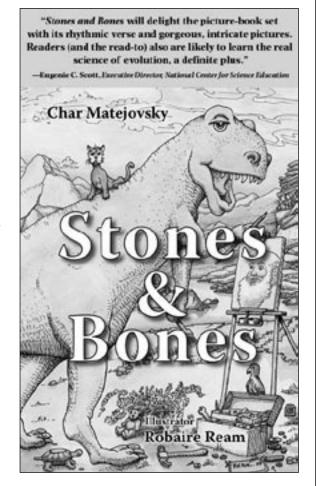
There were mastodons and woolly...

Includes a CD of the Stones & Bones Song and a bonus recording of The Song of the Meadowlark.

32 pages, color, illustrated ISBN 978-1-59815-004-9

\$19.00 – stock # 16009

(Please see order form for member discount and S&H charges)





Identical Mistakes

by Lloyd Foster

You have probably never seen issues of religion or race in this light before. Never looked at politics, corporate life or the threat of terrorism from such a unique angle either. And just in case you are thinking that this is a collection of boring essays by a disturbed academic... This is a *novel!* A mystery novel, no less. A bona fide mystery that will keep you guessing to the very last page.

Go out and grab a copy. You will see.

Available on amazon.com (Not available from *American Atheists*.)

MAIL ORDER TO:

AMERICAN ATHEIST PRESS

P.O. BOX 5733, Parsippany, NJ 07054-6733 908-276-7300 *voice* 908-276-7402 *fax*



Ordered by:						_ Ship To: (If different address)				
Name:						Name:				
Address:										
City: State: Zip: Daytime Telephone()						City:				
Qty. Stock #		Description			Price Each	Total Price				
		0.1.				A	Subtotal			
□ Cneck or					o American Atheists) □ Discover	American Atheists	Members' 10% Discount Subtotal			
□ Visa □ MasterCard □ AMEX □ Discover Account Number □						Т	ax (NJ residents add 7%)			
Expiration Date							ng & Handling (see chart)			
						٦	Tax-deductible Donation			
Signature (as shown on credit card)						<u> </u>	GRAND TOTAL			

PAYMENT: Checks or money orders in U.S. dollars only, please.

CUSTOMER SERVICE: To help us resolve any of your problems quickly, please contact us at 908-276-7300 between 9:15 AM and 5:00 PM (EST), Monday-Friday. Or write to the address at the top of this form.

AVAILABILITY: If we are unable to fill your order promptly, we will notify you. If the merchandise is no longer available, we will send you a credit voucher, redeemable for a refund or other merchandise at your option.

GIFTS: We will gladly send your order to any recipient you specify. Please provide the name and address on the order form.

OUR MAILING LIST: We never sell or divulge your name and address to any other company.

BY MAIL

American Atheists, Inc. P.O.Box 5733 Parsippany, NJ 07054-6733

BY FAX

FAX your credit card order to: 908-276-7402

PRICES SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT NOTICE

Shipping & Handling (Order multiple items and save on shipping & handling!)

For orders containing:	The shipping & handling for the first item is:	The shipping & handling for each additional item is:	
Heavy-weight items: Mugs, shirts, paperback books, videos	\$5.00*	\$1.00	
Medium-weight items: Greeting cards, stapled booklets, children's books, pamphlets, sets of pamphlets, ornaments, license plates, CD's	\$3.50*	\$0.50	
Light-weight items: Jewelry, keychains, buttons, lanyards, cookie cutters, bumperstickers - Every 5 (or fewer) bumperstickers can be counted as a single item.	\$2.00*	\$0.20	

^{*}For orders containing items from more than one of the above categories, **please calculate your shipping and handling by using the heaviest item in your order as the "first item".** For the rest of the items in your order, please use the "additional item" rate that applies to that type of item.

For example, if your order contains one stapled booklet, two mugs, a set of earrings, and three bumperstickers, you shipping would be calculated as follows: First item:

Mug: \$5.00

Additional items:

Mug: \$1.00 Stapled booklet: \$0.50 Set of earrings: \$0.20 Three bumperstickers: \$0.20 **Total Shipping & Handling:** \$6.90

(If you'd like to verify your shipping and handling, please feel free to call us at 1-908-276-7300.)

Orders being shipped OUTSIDE OF THE UNITED STATES will be sent by "First Class International." Your shipping and handling can be calculated as follows:

Canada & Mexico: 25% of the cost of your order All other countries: 65% of the cost of your order

If you are ordering **jewelry**, the shipping cost will probably be less. Before writing your check, we recommend that you do one of the following:

- Email a list of your items to <u>sales@atheists.org</u>. We'll calculate your shipping charges for you.
- OR simply place your order with a credit card and we will adjust the shipping charges.



Membership Application

American Atheists www.atheists.org (908) 276-7300



Name	Email Email (Email required if you choose online access to magazines. – See below for price.)
Address	
	State Zip
This signature is to certify that I	am in general agreement with the "Aims and Purposes" and theists, as listed on the other side of this application.
Signature	Date
1 11 \	cept Associate) now include a subscription to <i>American Atheist</i> s no longer necessary to pay a separate fee for the magazine.
Simply mark the type you want and (For online magazines, multiple year Individual: \$35 per year Couple/Family: \$60 per year . Associate: \$15 per year (magazines) Distinguished Citizen (65 or constitution) Student: \$25 per year (copy of wall Builder: \$150 per year (i	over): \$25 per year (copy of ID required)
Price for multiple years:	Price/Year Number of Years Price Before Discount \$ X = \$
Optional online access to magazine I'd like to access magazines on I'd like to access magazines on Subtotal: Discount for multiple years: 2 year	line only, INSTEAD OF receiving printed ones. (same price) lline AND receive printed ones. Add \$15 per year: \$ Subtotal: \$ rs - 10% discount; 3 or more years - 20% discount - \$
	an additional postage fee, unless you chose "online only." da and Mexico, add: \$10 per year X years = \$ other countries, add: \$30 per year X years = \$
Additional donation:	I (we) also wish to make an additional donation of \$
Total:	(All payments must be in US dollars.) Total: \$
I am paying by check or money	y order I am paying by credit card (see below).
Credit card number:	Expiration date:/ (month/year)
Signature:	Date:

Please mail this form to: American Atheists, P.O. Box 5733, Parsippany, NJ 07054.

AIMS & PURPOSES

American Atheists, Inc. is a nonprofit, nonpolitical, educational organization dedicated to the complete and absolute separation of state and church, accepting the explanation of Thomas Jefferson that the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States was meant to create a "wall of separation" between state and church.

American Atheists is organized:

- To stimulate and promote freedom of thought and inquiry concerning religious beliefs, creeds, dogmas, tenets, rituals, and practices;
- To collect and disseminate information, data, and literature on all religions and promote a more thorough understanding of them, their origins, and their histories;
- To advocate, labor for, and promote in all lawful ways the complete and absolute separation of state and church;
- To act as a "watchdog" to challenge any attempted breach of the wall of separation between state and church;
- To advocate, labor for, and promote in all lawful ways the establishment and maintenance of a thoroughly secular system of education available to all;
- To encourage the development and public acceptance of a humane ethical system stressing the mutual sympathy, understanding, and interdependence of all people and the corresponding responsibility of each individual in relation to society;
- To develop and propagate a social philosophy in which humankind is central and must itself be the source of strength, progress, and ideals for the well-being and happiness of humanity;
- To promote the study of the arts and sciences and of all problems affecting the maintenance, perpetuation, and enrichment of human (and other) life; and
- •To engage in such social, educational, legal, and cultural activity as will be useful and beneficial to the members of American Atheists and to society as a whole.

DEFINITIONS

Atheism is the Weltanschauung (comprehensive conception of the world) of persons who are free from theism (free from religion). It is predicated on ancient Greek Materialism.

Atheism involves the mental attitude that unreservedly accepts the supremacy of reason and aims at establishing a life-style and ethical outlook verifiable by experience and the scientific method, independent of all arbitrary assumptions of authority and creeds.

Materialism declares that the cosmos is devoid of immanent conscious purpose; that it is governed by its own inherent, immutable, and impersonal laws; that there is no supernatural interference in human life; that humankind, finding the resources within themselves, can and must create their own destiny. It teaches that we must prize our life on earth and strive always to improve it. It holds that human beings are capable of creating a social system based on reason and justice. Materialism's "faith" is in humankind and their ability to transform the world culture by their own efforts. This is a commitment that is, in its very essence, life-asserting. It considers the struggle for progress as a moral obligation that is impossible without noble ideas that inspire us to bold, creative works. Materialism holds that our potential for good and more fulfilling cultural development is, for all practical purposes, unlimited.

INFORMATION ABOUT TAX DEDUCTIONS

IRS rules state that the tax-deductible portion of membership dues can be found by subtracting the fair-market value of any goods or services that you receive in return. For most of our membership types, your dues are actually LESS than the fair-market value (\$40 per year) of a subscription to our magazine. This means that your membership dues are NOT tax-deductible. Life membership dues are also NOT tax-deductible. (If we sold Life magazine subscriptions, they would cost at least as much as life memberships.)

The only membership type that is fully tax-deductible is the Associate membership because Associate members do not receive a magazine subscription. For the Couple/Family (\$60) and Wall-Builder (\$150) membership types, \$40 covers your magazine subscription. The remainder of your dues (\$20 for Couple/Family and \$110 for Wall-Builder) are considered to be a tax-deductible donation. For multiple-year memberships, the same fraction of your dues (1/3 for Couple/Family and 11/15 for Wall-Builder) is tax-deductible (in the year that those membership dues were paid).

Also, any donations that you make IN ADDITION TO your membership dues are fully tax-deductible.

MILITARY DIRECTOR

Kathleen Johnson CMR 422, Box 910 APO AE 09067 kjohnson@atheists.org http://www.atheists.org/mil

ALABAMA STATE DIRECTOR

Blair Scott PO Box 41 Ryland, AL 35767-2000 (256) 513-5877 bscott@atheists.org http://www.atheists.org/al/

ALASKA STATE DIRECTOR

Clyde Baxley 3713 Deborah Ln. Anchorage, AK 99504 (907) 333-6499 cbaxley@atheists.org http://www.atheists.org/ak/

ARIZONA STATE DIRECTOR

Monty Gaither P.O. Box 64702 Phoenix, AZ 85082-4702 mgaither@atheists.org http://www.atheists.org/az/

CALIFORNIA STATE DIRECTOR

Dave Kong (415) 771-9872 dksf@atheists.org

CALIFORNIA ASSISTANT STATE DIRECTOR

Mark W.Thomas (H) (650) 969-5314 (C) (650) 906-1095 mthomas@atheists.org 900 Bush Street, Unit 210 San Francisco, CA 94109 http://www.atheists.org/ca/

CONNECTICUT STATE DIRECTOR

Dennis Paul Himes P.O. Box 9203 Bolton, CT. 06043 (860) 643-2919 dphimes@atheists.org http://www.atheists.org/ct/

FLORIDA STATE DIRECTOR

Greg McDowell P.O. Box 680741 Orlando, FL 32868-0741 (352) 217-3470 gmcdowell@atheists.org http://www.atheists.org/fl/

IDAHO STATE DIRECTOR

Susan Harrington P.O. Box 204 Boise, ID 83701-0204 (208) 392-9981 sharrington@atheists.org http://www.atheists.org/id/

ILLINOIS STATE DIRECTOR

Sandra Van Maren P.O. Box 1770 Chicago, IL 60690-1770 (312) 201-0159 svanmaren@atheists.org http://www.atheists.org/il/

KENTUCKY STATE DIRECTOR

Edwin Kagin P.O. Box 48 Union, KY 41091 (859) 384-7000 ekagin@atheists.org http://www.atheists.org/ky/

MICHIGAN STATE DIRECTOR

Arlene-Marie amarie@atheists.org and

MICHIGAN ASSISTANT STATE DIRECTOR

George Shiffer gshiffer@atheists.org Both can be reached at: P.O. Box 0025 Allen Park, MI 48101-9998 (313) 388-9594 http://www.atheists.org/mi/

NEW JERSEY STATE DIRECTOR

David Silverman 1308 Centennial Ave, Box 101 Piscataway, NJ 08854 (732) 648-9333 dsilverman@atheists.org http://www.atheists.org/nj/

NORTH CAROLINA STATE DIRECTOR

Wayne Aiken P.O. Box 30904 Raleigh, NC 27622 (919) 602-8529 waiken@atheists.org http://www.atheists.org/nc/

OHIO STATE DIRECTOR

Michael Allen PMB289 1933 E Dublin-Granville Rd Columbus, OH 43229 (614)-678-6470 mallen@atheists.org http://www.atheists.org/oh

OKLAHOMA STATE DIRECTOR

Ron Pittser P.O. Box 2174 Oklahoma City, OK 73101-2174 (405) 205-8447 rpittser@atheists.org http://www.atheists.org/ok/

TEXAS STATE DIRECTOR

Joe Zamecki 2707 IH-35 South Austin TX 78741 (512) 444-5882 Extension 703 jzamecki@atheists.org http://www.atheists.org/tx/

TEXAS REGIONAL DIRECTOR FOR DALLAS/FORT WORTH

Dick Hogan dhogan@atheists.org http://www.atheists.org/dfw/

UTAH STATE DIRECTOR

Rich Andrews P.O. Box 165103 Salt Lake City, UT 84116-5103 randrews@atheists.org http://www.atheists.org/ut/

VIRGINIA STATE DIRECTOR

Rick Wingrove P.O. Box 774 Leesburg, VA 20178 (H) (703) 433-2464 (C) (703) 606-7411 rwingrove@atheists.org http://www.atheists.org/va/

WASHINGTON STATE DIRECTOR

Wendy Britton 12819 SE 38th St. Suite 485 Bellevue, WA 98006 (425) 269-9108 wbritton@atheists.org http://www.atheists.org/wa/

WEST VIRGINIA STATE DIRECTOR

Charles Pique P.O. Box 7444 Charleston, WV 25356-0444 (304) 776-5377 cpique@atheists.org http://www.atheists.org/wv/

CONTACTING STATE DIRECTORS

Our directors are NOT provided with contact information for members in their area. If you're interested in working with your director on activism, please use the listing on this page to contact them.

They would love to hear from you!

If you live in a state or area where there is no director, you have been a member for one year or more, and you're interested in a director position, please contact Bart Meltzer, Director of State and Regional Operations at bm@atheists.org or visit http://www.atheists.org/states/

American Atheist Center



mailing address PO Box 5733, Parsippany, NJ 07054

delivery address
225 Cristiani Street, Cranford, NJ 07016
phone 908-276-7300 • fax 908-276-7402

www.atheists.org • info@atheists.org