

FACT
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A Matter of FACT

May 2007

FACT

is an association of atheists, freethinkers, agnostics, secular humanists, rationalists, skeptics, and other non-theists serving the purpose of preserving the separation of church and state and promoting Freethought through education.

May General Meeting

The speaker for the May General Meeting is Michael White. Michael is an ACLU Attorney and he will talk on "Religion and the Rule of Law."

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The after-the-break speaker and title of presentation were not known at press time.

General Meeting, Saturday, May 19th @ 1pm
Community Unitarian Universalist Church
4818 E. Beverly Mae

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Stem Cell Petition

Urge Texas House members to tell Speaker Craddick that they OPPOSE House Bill 225. You can sign the petition in support of stem cell research on the following web site: <http://www.tfn.org/standupforscience/>.

State Affairs Committee Chairman David Swinford, R-Dumas, recently called a snap vote on House Bill 225, which would ban state funding for embryonic stem cell research in Texas. This surprise vote came in the middle of discussion on a completely unrelated bill. Even worse, two of the committee's key supporters of stem cell research weren't even in the meeting room at the time!

But that's only part of this sorry story.

Patients suffering from Parkinson's and other serious medical conditions had joined with advocates testifying in favor of this promising medical research. Many had stayed all night – until nearly 6 am on Friday! But Chairman Swinford waited until mid-afternoon before finally calling a vote on only one bill – House Bill 225. These outrageous tactics demonstrate the continued willingness of far-right extremists to put politics ahead of the health of patients who are looking to medical science for hope.

ATTEND THE STEM CELL 'TOWN HALL' MEETING

Join the Texas Freedom Network, the League of Women Voters and medical experts for an important discussion on stem cell research!

WHEN: Thursday, May 3, 7:00 pm – 8:30 pm

WHERE: Bay Area Unitarian Universalist Church
17503 El Camino Real
Houston, TX 77058

April Meeting Review

Elected Positions:

President, OPEN
 Vice President, OPEN
 Second Vice President, Nick Lee
 Secretary, Jean Clelland-Morin
 Treasurer, Cathy Howard
 Publicity, OPEN

Appointed Positions:

Newsletter

Publisher/Editor, Marc Janssens
 Webmaster, Jim Evans
 Discussion Group Host, OPEN
 Librarian, Jimmie Barnes

Texas Hill Country

Freethinkers

(No Officers)
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 Julie Fisher:
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FACT MEMBERS:

FACT wants your participation in communicating through our newsletter. Please contribute letters, articles, book reviews, highlights and comments on church/state separation, quotes, drawings, cartoons, etc. Please send contributions to janssensml@aol.com.

All submissions are subject to editorial revisions at the discretion of the publisher.

Vice President Nick Lee opened the meeting at 1:03 pm. He introduced member Joellen De Berg who spoke on the subject of the Historical Perspective on Executive Wartime Power. Joellen chose 2 presidents of very different views as examples: Abraham Lincoln and Woodrow Wilson.

Lincoln suspended Habeas Corpus and imposed Martial Law during the civil war. Still he believed in free speech and civil liberties and allowed his administration to be criticized. But he felt that was his duty to “top” the court in matters that would protect citizens from rebellion. The courts later approved his action.

Woodrow Wilson (who received a Nobel Peace Prize), in contrast, used the Espionage Act (EA) to control dissent, which he felt was the equivalent of being disloyal. During WWI citizens were afraid of aliens and along with the use of the EA, the CPI was established to encourage citizens to report suspicious behavior. Under the Alien Act, 11,625 immigrants were condemned and deported. Wilson accepted no tolerance to criticism. Congress was especially concerned at this time about press censorship. Two thousand dissenters were punished and judges that dared to rule in favor of a dissenter lost their posts.

Those incarcerated under Lincoln’s presidency served very short sentences and judges were allowed to rule on unfair incarceration. Wilson argued before congress that only his decision was to be considered and a dissenter could be given a \$10,000 fine or 20 years in prison.

Now, under a president who made his own **power-war**, the courts are making an effort to rule on constitutional violations in the Patriot Act.

Marc had been scheduled to speak after the break, but had to attend to a family emergency. Sally gave her horror story about “Star Impression” who printed our Freethinker T-shirts. She got an initial, incorrect estimate and with all their errors, made about 8 visits before the job was done. The crowning of her experience came from an employee, after realizing what the logo was about, said, “Well the founding fathers put ‘in God we trust’ on our money.” Sally corrected her faulty history. T-Shirts and vests were on sale. The logo was done by Lois Neville’s son, Kerry.

Six FACT members, with our banner, participated in the walk in Brackenridge Park for the National Alliance on Mental Illness, and raised \$310 for that cause.

Some FACT members are planning to attend the protest of the National Day of Prayer (NDOP), being held on government property in Austin on May 3rd. In addition, many FACT members will join the local protest of the NDOP here in San Antonio, on the same date. Catherine Fahringer and Teri Maverick have been interviewed by the Express-News about the event, so the press will expect FACT to be there.

Catherine suggested a new place for the pre-general-meeting lunch-bunch. We will try it next month.

Treasurer, Cathy Howard gave us a financial report. We may need to raise Solstice fees to cover the cost of the entire event. The Community UU Church has proposed a four-fold increase in our rent. for using the church once a month, but Nick will try to negotiate a lower rate.

Nick noted that we shaved expenses by sending most newsletters by e-mail and the few by snail-mail that he can print himself.

Contributed by Jean Clelland-Morin

National Day of Prayer Protest

by Nick Lee

On Thursday, May 3rd, cities across the United States will observe National Day of Prayer. The local group in San Antonio has chosen to hold that observance on the steps of City Hall. Government property is an inappropriate location for a religious function. Here is what the sponsors of the event have to say about it on their website:

Join hundreds across San Antonio in prayer and praise at the Steps of City Hall, Thursday May 3. Arrive early for praise music which begins at 11:30 am. At noon, Mrs. Max Lucado will sing the National Anthem. Ray Jones and the CBC praise team will lead in worship. The Carver Academy (David Robinson's school) Student Choir will sing special music. Pastors, students, military, and city leaders will lead in prayer as we seek God and call on His name at the "city gates" Provs. 1:20-21 says "Wisdom shouts in the streets. She calls to the crowds along the main street, to those gathered in front of the city gate"

We think this is an inappropriate location for this observance, and, once again, this year FACT members will be on hand to protest this violation of the separation of Church and State. Please join us there for a non-confrontational protest. We have some ready-made signs which reflect our opposition, but feel free to bring your own. Look for our group in front of the City Hall, starting about 11:30 am. Two of our members have already been interviewed by the Express-News, so there will be press coverage of our position on this issue. We need a show of force to be credible!

The National Day of Prayer was established by Congress in 1952 for people of all faiths, but in recent years, the observance has been dominated by the Religious Right as part of their political agenda.

The basic tenet of FACT is the maintenance of the separation of Church and State, and to guard against any encroachment. We do not object to people of faith holding religious observances, but we do object when they are held on Government property, with the appearance of Government endorsement and involvement. That is the basis for our protest: **PRAY IF YOU MUST, BUT YOU MUST NOT PRAY HERE!**

On the same day, there will be an observance of the National Day of Prayer on the steps of the State Capitol in Austin, with the expected participation of Governor Perry, and we expect a large turnout of Freethinkers, Humanists, Agnostics, and Atheists from around the State, to protest this blatant endorsement of religion.

Elsewhere in the country on the same day, many Humanists and non-believers will be participating in a "National Day of Reason." This is the secular response to the National Day of Prayer, raising awareness about threats to religious liberty while simultaneously asking all Americans to come together, organize ourselves, and make a difference. Instead of being passive members of society begging for supernatural betterment of the world around us, it challenges all of us to actively make the world a better place. What is more, any proud American can take part in this inclusive alternative, regardless of their worldview.

Vatican Reverses Teaching on Limbo

In the November 2006 Newsletter we reported that Vatican theologians were leaning toward revising the centuries-old teaching that babies who die without baptism go to limbo instead of heaven. Pope Benedict XVI now officially reversed the Church's teaching on limbo by approving a Vatican report released on April 20. The report was prepared by the International Theological Commission, a body of Vatican-appointed theologians who advise the pope and the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. The commission said that it was reassessing the traditional teaching on limbo primarily because of the growing number of abortions and infants born to non-believers who die without being baptized.

The report states that there are "serious" grounds to hope that children who die without being baptized can go to heaven. The reversed teaching has some significant implications for non-Christians. It could be seen as suggesting that non-baptized adults could go to heaven if they led a good life. It also could imply, contrary to evangelical doctrine, that one does not have to accept Jesus to avoid going to hell. Atheist must be relieved to know that there may be a place in heaven for them after all.

Christian Leader Blames Jews for the Holocaust

Anti-semitism has deep and strong roots in Christianity. A certain level of anti-Semitism is almost inevitable because Christianity is based on the idea that God sent them a messiah whom they rejected but which the Gentile people accepted. Although overt and explicit anti-Semitism has declined among Christians in the West, it has not disappeared entirely. It is especially strong among ostensible "friends" of Israel who regard that nation as little more than a collection point for Jews to be killed in the Apocalypse.

Bruce Wilson writes at Talk To Action:

In "Jerusalem Countdown: A Prelude To war" Hagee has stated that Jews brought the Holocaust upon themselves by rebelling against God and that the Holocaust was God's way of forcing Jews to move to Israel where, Hagee predicts according to his interpretation of Biblical scripture, they will be mostly killed in the apocalyptic Mideast conflict Hagee's new lobbying group seems to be working to provoke and which John Hagee believes to be a necessary precondition for the "Rapture" that will lift Christians, but not Jews, bodily into Heaven to enjoy physical immortality amidst paradise.

...

On July 19, 2006, at a CUFI's Washington DC inaugural event, with GOP Party head Ken Mehlman and US GOP Senators Sam Brownback, Rick Santorum, Kay Bailey-Hutchinson and John Cornyn in attendance (President George W. Bush sent recorded greetings to the event), Pastor John Hagee declared: "The United States must join Israel in a pre-emptive military strike against Iran to fulfill God's plan for both Israel and the West... a biblically prophesied end-time confrontation with Iran, which will lead to the Rapture, Tribulation [...] and [the] Second Coming of Christ."

Hagee subsequently wrote, in a Charisma Magazine editorial entitled "The Coming Holy War", that the preemptive attack he advocates should be carried out with nuclear weapons.

Source: <http://www.talk2action.org/story/2007/3/5/105015/2167/>

John Hagee matters: he has been called one of the 20 most influential evangelical leaders in all of America and is a major force on the Christian Right, pushing a Christian Nationalist point of view and influencing national policies via the Republican Party. Many seem to sincerely believe that he is a genuine "friend" of Israel, but his "friendship" is predicated on the belief that Jews must be in Israel in order to die en masse. Hagee is not unique in this perspective.

As if that weren't bad enough, Hagee seems determined to ensure that both they and the rest of us die by helping to bring about an Apocalypse sooner rather than later. It's as if he were unwilling to allow God to act or believes that he is God's holy instrument of destruction.

With "friends" like these, Jews hardly need enemies.

Source: Austin Cline's blog at <http://atheism.about.com> — March 18, 2007



FACT T-Shirts for Sale (Grey w/Black Logo)

| | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| Small-XLarge.....\$12.00 | 3X.....\$15.00 |
| 2X.....\$14.00 | Vests (Red).....\$17.00 |

To order or for further information, contact Catherine Howard
catherine.j.howard@jci.com (210) 545-4235

“Who Wrote the Books of the Bible?” by Jack Trickler

Book Review by Marc Janssens

For quite some time I have been trying to find an objective laymen’s guide on who wrote the books of the Bible. Biblical scholars have published numerous books on this subject. They are generally a very hard read for laymen. In addition, the objectivity of these books is often questionable since many authors have a bias toward a particular doctrine. Widely mixed reviews on Amazon.com and similar sites usually give a clue when that is the case.

I believe my quest finally ended a few months ago when I stumbled across Jack Trickler’s book “Who Wrote the Books of the Bible?” The complete title is “A Layman’s Guide to – Who Wrote the Books of the Bible? When? Why? – Genesis to Revelation.” Trickler is a retired engineer. At this time there are only three reviews on Amazon.com, five stars across the board. The reviews refer to an earlier edition of the book. This review is based on the newest paperback edition published in December 2006.

The book consists of 39 chapters called “conversations.” Most conversations cover one or a collection of related books of the Bible. Trickler examines the questions of who, when and why for the 74 books (47 from the Old Testament and 27 from the New Testament) that comprise. This is supplemented with a few general conversations that provide background information and historical context. Those who take the Bible literally and manage to read Trickler’s book with an open mind will be shocked. But Trickler’s survey will also be an eye-opener for most other Christians. Some interesting Bible trivia from the book:

- The authors of more than half of the Bible books are unknown.
- The books are not compiled in chronological order. For example the four gospels in the NT were compiled after the letters attributed to Paul were written.
- All books were edited many years after they were written. This casts serious doubt on the authenticity of the messages that are conveyed in the books of the Bible. For example, post-editing should make believers question up to what extent OT prophecies of the coming messiah were actually made prior to Jesus’ birth.
- Examination of the historical context leads to a plausible interpretation of the books of the Bible that is often at odds with Christian evangelical doctrine. For example, there is a strong indication that the author of the book of Revelation expected the apocalypse to happen during the lifetime of his generation.
- The first four books of the OT are largely based on mythology and folk tales of older civilizations. These myths were conveyed from one generation to the next by storytellers who added new elements to better appeal to their audience.

I always wondered how stories that show God’s dark side made it into the Bible. The story of second-generation humans Cain and Abel comes to mind. Cain worked the land and Abel was a shepherd. Abel sacrificed his best animals while Cain could only offer his best crops. God liked the smell of burning flesh and was pleased with Abel’s offerings, but he was upset with Cain. Cain killed his brother and was punished by God by making him a wandering sheep-herder. Trickler puts the story in historical context on page 90 of his book:

Another example of how the storytellers could have told stories their audiences would absorb is the story of Cain and Abel. Cain was the farmer, Abel was the shepherd. If we consider that the early Israelites were semi-nomadic sheep herders who had not yet settled into fixed communities, we can reason that their sympathies would have been with Abel, the shepherd, not with Cain, the farmer. Farmers do not like wandering sheep herders, who let their flock damage crops. Sheep herders do not feel kindly about farmers who chase them away from the fields.

God did not need to give a reason for rejecting farmer Cain’s offering. Cain was a farmer. That was enough for rejection! And God’s punishment of Cain was to make him a wandering sheep herder! “Right on!” the audience probably shouted.

This book is easy to read. I highly recommend it to anybody who wants to have a behind-the-scene look at the creation of the Bible.

READ A GOOD BOOK LATELY? TELL US ABOUT IT.

Send your book reviews, recommendations, critiques, or top 10 list to:

janssensml@aol.com

Or P.O. Box 160881, San Antonio, TX 78280

VA Tech Shootings Used to Further Christian Agenda

Dinesh D'Souza is the Rishwain Fellow at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University. He runs a conservative blog on aol.com. Mr. D'Souza decided to use the Virginia Tech shootings as a justification to launch a below-the-belt attack on atheists:

Where Is Atheism When Bad Things Happen?

Notice something interesting about the aftermath of the Virginia Tech shootings? Atheists are nowhere to be found. Every time there is a public gathering there is talk of God and divine mercy and spiritual healing. Even secular people like the poet Nikki Giovanni use language that is heavily drenched with religious symbolism and meaning.

The atheist writer Richard Dawkins has observed that according to the findings of modern science, the universe has all the properties of a system that is utterly devoid of meaning. The main characteristic of the universe is pitiless indifference. Dawkins further argues that we human beings are simply agglomerations of molecules, assembled into functional units over millennia of natural selection, and as for the soul--well, that's an illusion!

To no one's surprise, Dawkins has not been invited to speak to the grieving Virginia Tech community. What this tells me is that if it's difficult to know where God is when bad things happen, it is even more difficult for atheism to deal with the problem of evil. The reason is that in a purely materialist universe, immaterial things like good and evil and souls simply do not exist. For scientific atheists like Dawkins, Cho's shooting of all those people can be understood in this way--molecules acting upon molecules.

If this is the best that modern science has to offer us, I think we need something more than modern science.

Source: <http://newsbloggers.aol.com/2007/04/18/where-is-atheism-when-bad-things-happen/>

It is sad when Christians abuse a tragedy to further their agenda. Within days hundreds of atheists expressed their outrage on Mr. D'Souza's blog and on Richard Dawkins' and other atheist web sites. One of the most extensive and thought-provoking reactions to the bigoted piece was posted on a Virginia Tech atheist professor's web site. The professor concluded his reaction with the following words:

With or without a belief in a god, with or without your asinine bigotry, we will make progress, we will breathe life back into our university, I will succeed in explaining this or that point, slowly, eventually, in a ham-handed way, at risk of tears half-way through, my students will come to feel comfortable again in a classroom with no windows or escape route, and hell yes we will prevail.

You see Mr. D'Souza, I am an atheist professor at Virginia Tech and a man of great faith. Not faith in your god. Faith in my people.

Source: <http://www.dailykos.com/story/2007/4/19/18451/0971>

To be fair I should mention that Mr. D'Souza also received numerous negative reactions from Christians. Why did Mr. D'Souza not target Muslims or Buddhists? There must be Muslim and Buddhist students and professors at Virginia Tech, but their presence at the public gatherings in the week following the shootings was not apparent either. Mr. D'Souza's was allowed to publish his bigoted piece only because he is attacking the most hated minority in America.

Three letters to the Editor published on mysa.com

Re. Roddy Stinson's column "Complaint about offensive prayer leads city board to kill invocation"

Hooray for the "UW" (Unidentified Woman)!

The Board of Adjustment is supposed to be guided by city zoning laws, not by an appeal to a higher power.

Each individual board member is entitled to his/her own religious beliefs, but with the diversity of beliefs and dis-beliefs in this country, it is an insult to a large percentage of the public to invoke any particular deity.

That is only one reason officially sponsored prayer in government functions is not appropriate. The next challenge is to the City Council meetings, which are routinely opened by "invocations."

Nick Lee

If they must pray, then go to church.

Praying in City Hall is for the birds.

If the members must pray for forgiveness, they should go to church and do so on their own time.

C.K. Kjeldsen

Well, Hallelujah! Until I read Roddy Stinson's April 1 column, I had no idea the debate over prayer before city meetings had come so far.

It's been at least a year since, as an agnostic, I registered my complaint before the City Council meeting while my own councilman held a private tête-à-tête all the time I supposedly had the floor. Maybe his two ears were working separately.

Helen Dutmer says, "There is a Supreme Being." Does she know the Texas Constitution prohibits me from holding public office because I don't believe in a "Supreme Being"?

In contrast, everyone is "free to say their own prayers," just not with my taxes.

A "moment of silence" sounds good to me.

Jean Clelland-Morin

Letter to the Editor published in San Antonio Express-News

Re. Political well poisoned

Columnist Ellen Goodman is absolutely correct in her assessment of the roadblocks to public office ("Morals and church are not synonymous," March 28.)

The religious right has poisoned the well of electioneering politics to the extent that George Washington could not be elected in today's charged political atmosphere. (He was a deist and had poorly fitting false teeth.) In fact, none of the first seven presidents would make it today, for they all had unconventional religious stances in regard to today's litmus test of true believer, born again, Trinitarian Christian.

Never mind that the Constitution clearly forbids religious tests for public office. Never mind the endless scandals of corrupt politicians singing "Amazing Grace" on the way to the pen. Never mind the unconstitutionality of "faith-based" programs. Never mind the hypocrisy of greed done in the name of Jesus for all sorts of cheap labor, make-work programs and corporate entitlements.

The beat goes on, and the drummers from the pews are loud and clear. We should all be scared about where this is taking us.

Stan Grayson

HEY, LETTER WRITERS!

We're looking for well-crafted letters having to do with the separation of church and state, atheism, or any other relevant topic. Members are encouraged to forward published letters, or ones which were rejected by the mainstream media, for publication. Send them either to: janssensml@aol.com or P.O. Box 160881 San Antonio, TX 78280

Let the Stones Fly! - Part I

by Sally Chizek and Catherine Fahringer

Nobody seems to know how it happened, but Americans awoke one day to learn they were strangers in their own country. There was a chill over the land as frightening changes manifested themselves, affecting more and more citizens. The institutions of society had been rebuilt, as if overnight, according to a biblical blueprint which was interpreted by a group of religious fanatics calling themselves *Reconstructionists*. While many secularists had been aware of a pesky group of Christians called the Christian Right, who were constantly in the news over various acts, ranging from placing statuary and large relics of the Ten Commandments on, and in, public grounds and buildings, to pressuring member of congress to do away with Roe v Wade, few would be cognizant of the name, Rousas John Rushdoony, his Chalcedon Institute, or his militant doctrine called "Reconstructionism." All most people knew was that they seemed to wake up one morning to a different country. There were no OTC contraceptives to be had anywhere. No pregnancy test kits were available. Bookshelves were devoid of any material other than approved Christian literature. The news media were acquainting listeners with the new laws: the laws of the Old Testament.

WHAT IS CHRISTIAN RECONSTRUCTIONISM?

It is replacing democracy with Biblical law interpreted by an elite corps. So if a woman is unchaste when she marries; she should be taken to the town square and stoned to death. It can be a community effort with everyone taking part. The same goes for an unruly child; take the child and stone him or her to death.

The social structure advocated by Christian Reconstructionists will have the clergy, laity and government, individually and corporately, to be in ultimate submission to the moral principles of the Bible, especially the Old Testament. Even under the Davidic administration of the Israelites, the Priest (Levitical line) and Kings (Davidic line) were distinguished by their scopes of authority (e.g. the Kings could not offer sacrifices for others and the Priest could not pass or enforce legislation), and their roles in society were that the King maintained the social welfare and the Priests maintained personal welfare, so it should be in modern Christian Reconstructionist society.

John Sugg, author of "A Nation Under God," says Christian Reconstructionism evolved, so to speak, from a radical variation of Calvinism, aka Puritanism, and the Birchers (John Birch Society).

ORIGIN

Rousas John Rushdoony (April 1916 - February 2001) is credited as the father of both Christian Reconstructionism and the modern home school movement. Rushdoony began his career as a writer in 1958, popularizing the works of Calvinist philosophers Cornelius Van Til and Herman Dooyeweerd arguing for a Calvinist system of thought.

Rousas Rushdoony sought to cast a vision for the reconstruction of society based on Christian principles. He said we must first toss out the United States Constitution, and then we had to deconstruct all religions and reconstruct them using the Old Testament as law. Everyone is welcomed to join them, but many who are following the lead of this movement will be surprised when they find that if they don't submit to the narrow interpretation of the elite in charge; Christian or not, they will be eliminated.

Rushdoony was very intelligent, but he was fixated on this movement. He proposed in his book, "Institutes" that Old Testament law should be applied to modern society and that there should be a Christian theonomy (the law of God governs). He denied the Holocaust and defended segregation and slavery. He focused on education, especially on behalf of home schooling, which he saw as a way to combat the intentionally secular nature of the U.S. public schools and argued for the dismantling of the state's influence in education.

Rushdoony's work has been used by Dominion Theology advocates who attempt to implement a Christian theocracy (that is, a government subject to Biblical law, especially the Torah) in the United States. Economics, penology, authority, behavioral boundaries and the like would all be governed by biblical principles in Rushdoony's vision, but he also proposed a wide system of freedom, especially in the economic sphere, and claimed Ludwig von Mises as an intellectual mentor, calling himself a Christian libertarian.

Rousas Rushdoony was the founder in 1965 of the Chalcedon Foundation and the editor of its monthly magazine. He also published the "Journal of Christian Reconstructionism" and was an early board member of the Rutherford Institute, founded in 1982 by John Whitehead.

VARIATIONS

Christian Reconstruction broadly divides into two branches. One group oriented to the ideas of R. J. Rushdoony and associated with the Chalcedon Foundation of California, maintained an emphasis on the role of the individual and family in their own self-discipline and interaction with culture, while the other, associated with Gary North (son-in-law to Rushdoony) and the Institute for Christian Economics (ICE) in Tyler, Texas emphasized a unique five-point covenant model, which included the institutional church, the clergy and sacraments. Some writers published by ICE went on to repudiate Christian Reconstruction. Of these Ray Sutton became a bishop in the Reformed Episcopal Church, and James B. Jordan and Peter Leithart, building on the symbolic theology of Meredith Kline who developed a new theological movement known as Federal Vision theology.

Let the Stones Fly! - Part II

by Sally Chizek and Catherine Fahringer

THEOCRACY AND NEOFASCISM:

Some critics categorize the Christian Reconstruction movement as a form of totalitarianism or theocratic neofascism. For example, Karen Armstrong (a former nun of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus in England) sees a potential for fascism in Christian Reconstructionism, and notes that the system of dominion envisaged by Christian Reconstructionist theologians R. J. Rushdoony and Gary North "is totalitarian." Many critics view that a Christian Reconstructionist state in the U.S. would much resemble the Taliban in Afghanistan or the theocratic dictatorship in Iran.

In the article "Warped Worldview" by John Sugg, who attended "Worldview Super Conference 2006," said that Herb Titus and Gary North called for nothing short of the overthrow of the United States of America. (an aside--wouldn't that be considered treason?) North said, "I don't want to capture their (mainstream Americans') system. I want to replace it." North has called for the stoning of gays and non-believers (rocks are cheap and plentiful, he has observed). Both friends and foes label him "Scary Gary."

Sugg also says: "There are big theological differences between the Religious Right's generals and the Reconstructionists. Traditional Christian theology teaches that history will muddle along until Jesus' Second Coming. That teaching is tough to turn into a political movement. Reconstructionism preaches that the nation and the world must come under Christian "dominion," as they define it, before Christ's return---a wonderful theology to promote global conquest.

"It would be easy to dismiss the Reconstructions as the lunatic fringe, no more worrisome than the remnants of the Prohibition Party. But, in fact, they have rather extraordinary entree and influence with top-tier Religious Right leaders and institutions."

THE DOMINIONIST PLAN: "Today control the USA; tomorrow the world."

Dominionism is a natural, if unintended, extension of Social Darwinism and is frequently called "Christian Reconstructionism." Journalist Frederick Clarkson warned in 1994 that Dominionism seeks to replace democracy with a theocratic elite that would govern by imposing their interpretation of "Biblical Law." He describes the creation of new classes of citizens: Insufficiently Christian men would be denied citizenship, perhaps executed. So severe is this theocracy that it would extend capital punishment to blasphemy, heresy, adultery, and homosexuality. Women would be generally relegated to hearth and home.

Dominionism started with the Gospels and turned the concept of the invisible and spiritual "Kingdom of God" into a literal political empire that could be taken by force, starting with the United States of America. Discarding the original message of Jesus and forgetting that Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world," the framers of the Dominionism boldly presented a Gospel whose purpose was to inspire Christians to enter politics and execute world domination so that Jesus could return to earth prepared for the earthly rule by his faithful "regents."

When one examines the progress of its agenda, one sees that Dominionism has met its timetable; the complete takeover of the American government was predicted to occur by 2004. Unless the American people wake up and reject the GOP's control of the government, we may wake up living in a theocracy since they have already spelled out their intentions to change every aspect of American life and toss out our U.S. Constitution.

COUNCIL FOR NATIONAL POLICY

There is mountains of information on this topic, but we would like to just briefly touch on the Council for National Policy. Since the council has been, in its modern form, in existence for over forty-five (45) years, and to some extent to the beginnings in the colonial governments of early New England this article is just a "chink" from the mountain. As Carol Carpenter of Boerne, Texas, said, "They are like termites working from the inside to the outside." The Council for National Policy (CNP) was formed to be the conservative alternative to the Council of Foreign Relations. Since its inception, membership directories have been "confidential" and meetings closed to the public and media. The very existence of the CNP is denied by high profile evangelical leaders.

In 1981, the Council for National Policy was founded as a nonprofit educational organization by Tim LaHaye (author of the Left-Behind series), who became the first president. They probably didn't know in the '80's that once something is published on the internet; it's there forever. They published a database on the internet and we found the list although it is old. It's way too long to publish all their names, but some of the members are: Jack Abramoff, Richard Arme, Gary Bauer, Pat Boone, the Coors (beer) family, Holland, Jeffrey and Joseph, Jerry Falwell, Jesse Helms, Nelson Bunker Hunt, Hon. Ernest J. Istook, Jr., Alan Keyes, Hon. Edwin Meese III, Lt Col Oliver North, Gary North, John Sununu, Richard Viguierie and Paul Weyrick to name a few.

Today, Dominionists hide their agenda and have resorted to stealth; one investigator who has engaged in internet exchanges with people who identify themselves as religious conservatives said, "They cut and run if I mention the word "Dominionism."

Belief in Reincarnation Tied to Memory Errors

by Melinda Wenner

People who believe they have lived past lives as, say, Indian princesses or battlefield commanders are more likely to make certain types of memory errors, according to a new study.

The propensity to make these mistakes could, in part, explain why people cling to implausible reincarnation claims in the first place.

Researchers recruited people who, after undergoing hypnotic therapy, had come to believe that they had past lives.

Subjects were asked to read aloud a list of 40 non-famous names, and then, after a two-hour wait, told that they were going to see a list consisting of three types of names: non-famous names they had already seen (from the earlier list), famous names, and names of non-famous people that they had not previously seen. Their task was to identify which names were famous.

The researchers found that, compared to control subjects who dismissed the idea of reincarnation, past-life believers were almost twice as likely to misidentify names. In particular, their tendency was to wrongly identify as famous the non-famous names they had seen in the first task. This kind of error, called a source-monitoring error, indicates that a person has difficulty recognizing where a memory came from.

POWER OF SUGGESTION

People who are likely to make these kinds of errors might end up convincing themselves of things that aren't true, said lead researcher Maarten Peters of Maastricht University in The Netherlands. When people who are prone to making these mistakes undergo hypnosis and are repeatedly asked to talk about a potential idea—like a past life—they might, as they grow more familiar with it, eventually convert the idea into a full-blown false memory.

This is because they can't distinguish between things that have really happened and things that have been suggested to them, Peters told LiveScience.

Past life memories are not the only type of implausible memories that have been studied in this manner. Richard McNally, a clinical psychologist at Harvard University, has found that self-proclaimed alien abductees are also twice as likely to commit source monitoring errors.

CREATIVE MINDS

As for what might make people more prone to committing such errors to begin with, McNally says that it could be the byproduct of especially vivid imagery skills. He has found that people who commonly make source-monitoring errors respond to and imagine experiences more strongly than the average person, and they also tend to be more creative.

"It might be harder to discriminate between a vivid image that you'd generated yourself and the memory of a perception of something you actually saw," he said in a telephone interview.

Peters also found in his study, detailed in the March issue of *Consciousness and Cognition*, that people with implausible memories are also more likely to be depressed and to experience sleep problems, and this could also make them more prone to memory mistakes.

And once people make this kind of mistake, they might be inclined to stick to their guns for spiritual reasons, McNally said. "It may be a variant expression of certain religious impulses," he said. "We suspect that this might be kind of a psychological buffering mechanism against the fear of death."

Source: http://news.yahoo.com/s/livescience/20070406/sc_livescience/beliefinreincarnationtiedtomemoryerrors

Every Monday at 12:30 and 8:30 PM

Time Warner Digital Cable Channel 20

FREETHOUGHT FORUM

May Events

May 1st - THCF First Tuesday Lunch

1:00 pm – Meet other Freethinkers at the Texas Hill Country Freethinkers' First Tuesday Lunch (held monthly)
 Discussion Topic: "The World Peace Diet" by Dr. Tuttle

Ping's Restaurant
 (by the HEB in Leon Springs)
 24165 W IH 10 # 221

May 3rd – SPECIAL EVENT: NDOP Protest

11:30 am: Join the FACT team for a non-confrontational protest of the National Day of Prayer
 Meet in front of San Antonio City Hall
 Bring your own sign!

May 19th – The Lunch Bunch

11:30 am: Join the "Lunch Bunch" for good food and great conversation before the General Meeting

Nicavid's Bakery and Café
 5115 Fredericksburg Road (near Callaghan)
 Note New Location!

May 19th – FACT General Meeting

1:00 pm: General meetings occur on the 3rd Saturday of every month (unless otherwise announced)
 Guest speaker: Michael White
 Title of Presentation: "Religion and the Rule of Law"
 After-break speaker: TBD

Community Unitarian Universalist Church
 4818 Beverly Mae East (off Babcock)

May 27th – FACT Discussion Brunch

10:00 am - Join us for breakfast and discussion the last Sunday of every month.

Host TBD
 Topic: TBD

Justin's Ice Cream and Deli
 2512 N. Main (near Woodlawn)

June Events

June 5th — THCF First Tuesday Lunch

June 16th — FACT General Meeting

June 24th — FACT Discussion Brunch

| May 2007 | | | | | | |
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YEARLY DUES

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|----|---|------|
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| B. | Family (2 or more members) | \$35 |
| C. | Full-time Student | \$15 |
| D. | Restricted Member (Newsletter Subscription Only) | \$15 |

- Membership dues are due in January.
- Dues are non-refundable.
- New members who join after the 1st month of the year will pay a prorated amount for the remainder of the year.
- Members who paid dues the previous year, but who are paying late, will be liable for the entire year.