

X13 – EXchanging Worldviews, 13: EXploring Prospects for Peace & Prosperity, 5: EXuding EXTremism

Dear: For this chapter, consistent with my assignment from a certain trouble-making four-year old (who asked me why I don't believe in God), I want to dig deeper into the role of religion in politics, violence, and wars. My thesis continues to be: belief in god [any god] is bad science and even worse policy. And once again, Bertrand Russell described the contrast between religion and science well:

When two men of science disagree, they do not invoke the secular arm; they wait for further evidence to decide the issue, because, as men of science, they know that neither is infallible. But when two theologians differ, since there [are] no criteria to which either can appeal, there is nothing for it but mutual hatred and an open or covert appeal to force.

In this chapter, I especially want to outline how religious extremists (including those in America) are causing some horrendous problems throughout the world. The American case is particularly worrisome, not only because of the military strength of the US but also because it has arisen from an unholy alliance between corporations and “end-time” religious fundamentalists – an alliance somewhat similar to that forged by Hitler, who promoted his hatred of the Jews using ideas in the New Testament (as interpreted by Luther and various popes) and derived his military strength from German (and foreign) corporations.

From the viewpoint of an objective observer (if one could be found!) it might be concluded that creation of such an “unholy alliance” (between religious fundamentalists and corporate power) in the US was quite amazing. Thus, at least since the time of Lincoln (when the Federal government's main source of revenue was import and export taxes), the Republican Party usually aligned itself with corporate interests (and money) while the Democratic Party aligned itself with worker interests (and money). Thereby, for more than 100 years, the majority of poor people in American (especially in the South) voted for Democratic candidates. But in recent years, the Republican Party (courtesy the campaign managers of politicians such as Ronald Reagan, George Bush, Sr., Newt Gingrich, Tom Delay, and George Bush, Jr.) pulled off quite an amazing coup: with funding principally from corporations, they managed to convince typically poor and poorly educated

fundamentalist Christians (e.g., in the southern “Bible Belt”) that the Republican Party is “the Party of God”, committed to “Christian family values”. Mormons were similarly duped.

Illustrative of the response by Christian fundamentalists is the following:¹

Human government never will be able to solve the world’s problems. There never will be true peace until the Prince of Peace establishes His Millennial Kingdom. That understood, until the Lord Jesus comes for His Church in the rapture – presuming both major political parties in America continue to hold to their present party lines – it is the view of Rapture Ready that Republican values are America’s best political option.

Relying on “kooks” such as the writer of that nonsense, the Republicans gained sufficient power to promote the Party’s historically consistent corporate interests.

Thereby, since ~1980 (the start of the Reagan Administration), a strange and powerful coalition has developed in the US that, on the one hand, most people would probably have expected couldn’t survive (because it encompasses such diverse worldviews) but that, on the other hand, is fast approaching its goal of world domination (militarily and economically). It’s a “strange coalition”, in that, rather than politicians using religion to “move the masses”, financiers have put religious stooges in positions of political power (e.g., Reagan, Bush Sr., Newt Gingrich, Tom Delay, and Bush Jr.).

The case of President George W. Bush is particularly stunning. Previously, the Democrats had the poor in their pocket (who in turn had their hands in the plutocrats’ pockets), and usually the Democrats had the support of union workers, liberals, semi-socialists, the American Association of Retired People, etc. Meanwhile, the Republicans struggled to form a coalition of the rich, industrialists, free enterprisers, members of the American Rifle Association, state’s rights NASCAR dads, etc. The religious vote was fairly evenly split. The Republicans, however, took the gamble that, whereas many of the poor are also uneducated and cling to their born-again Christianity (for losers) and whereas George W. Bush was one of them (a “born again” loser), then the poor religious fools (many of whom, similar to Bush Jr., staggered from the gutter to Evangelical crutches and who would

¹ Copied from <http://www.raptureready.com/republican.html>; written by Todd Strandberg, “your roving rapture reporter”.

normally vote Democratic) might feel comfortable that Bush Jr. was “one of them” – and vote for him. And thus Bush Jr. became president of the US, “the American pope”, and similar to popes of the past, he’s led America into a “holy war” against “evil”.

And if you think that’s “kinda far out”, Dear, then I’m afraid “you ain’t seen nothing yet”. For example, consider the following assessment by the Apollo Project engineer Dom Stasi, in an article entitled “Moral Victory – Religious Exploitation and the New American Creed”.²

It was the mid-Seventies. Our culture had been reeling from the narcotic excesses of the Sixties and the sexual intemperance of the Seventies. The divorce rate was the highest it’s ever been in our nation’s history. The entire concept of nuclear family was under siege as never before in America. It seemed as if everything familiar was changing. And while most Americans were blessed with moderate appetites, self-disciplined behaviors, and a measure of common sense, and thus well suited to social change, many others were not. To so many of our repressed and simplistic countrymen and women every new experience in this brave new age, however intuitive, however mundane, seemed an epiphany [i.e., “an awakening”]. So, while most Americans also managed to remain relatively unaffected by the willingly-acquired excesses that characterized the period, many others could not.

America had also just emerged from a decade-long war of unspeakable horror, and dubious purpose. Thanks to a still-relevant news media, a mandatory draft, and casualty rate topping 200,000 (58,000 KIA), Vietnam affected all aware Americans. To avoid the draft, countless young Americans married in haste and conceived unloved children in order to gain deferment. Millions more enrolled and remained in colleges though they would not ordinarily have done so but for the student deferment. (No fewer than 12 deferments were granted to chickenhawks Dick Cheney (5) and John Ashcroft (7) alone!) Since the college deferment required actually going to college and studying something, the experience exposed millions of commonplace minds to the volatile philosophies of extraordinary – and quite often revolutionary – thinkers for the first time in their personal and America’s societal history. One way or another, every American, regardless of family, background, intellect, or social circumstance, shared in the war’s trauma and was made to look upon and confront its distasteful significance.

Drenched in this cascade of social and moral upheaval, vast numbers of Americans were driven to the edge. Many more went over that edge and found comfort only in denial or in excess, or both. Be it drugs, sex, alcohol, violence, or all of the above, there was a measure of comfort and escape to be found in the sensual distractions of excess, and it was available and beckoning from wherever one turned.

² Copied from <http://www.progress.org/2004/stasi04.htm>.

Indulgence would yield a temporary comfort, and when the millions who over-indulged came crashing back to reality, many needed comforting of another kind. They needed reform, and some degree of certainty in what seemed an even-more-uncertain society than that which they had attempted to escape. They needed someone or something to which they could turn for advice, direction, strength, and inspiration. For those who survived the fall physically but not emotionally, there arose a need for some mortal contact, someone who would not consider them failed humans, someone or something to show them the way back. Or, more simply stated, millions and millions and millions of Americans needed a new addiction to wean them from and obviate the mental scars left by their old addictions of war and sex and drugs, and social transgression, and violence, and confusion, and behavior outside the limits of their operant conditioning. Instead of assessing and accepting their memories, so very many Americans needed forgiveness for their actions.

Those among the multitudes lacking the resolve to accept and assess and repair their assaulted psyches, those lacking the strength to pick themselves back up (and their numbers were legion) needed something more. They needed an emotional crutch. What people need, people tend to find. If they don't find it by themselves, there are always those willing to provide it... usually for a price. In this case, it appeared literally right before their eyes. Salvation, forgiveness, aggrandizement, self-esteem, courage, moral superiority, all of it was beaming to them right from heaven itself, and onto their television screens. Satellite delivered televangelism was born on that day back in 1975. I watched it hatch.

Suddenly it was everywhere. There was never a time in modern history when it was "needed" more. From the flickering boxes in America's living rooms came the siren call to her desperate multitudes. "Hey you out there in TV land, whatever you've done, and to whomever you've done it, no worries. Put down that bottle, throw away that needle, stop punching your wife, whatever. All is forgiven... or can be. In fact, you can instantly become superior to those infidels who've not found the light and The Way and have done so much to degrade you for so long. Just listen to me, then send cash, check, or money order to the address on your screen. You'll be the best there is, brothers and sisters, the best there is. Trust Jesus. Trust me. Send a check. Halleluiah!

Given that so very many of "Christian" fundamentalism's contemporary American adherents believe that they have failed in the eyes of those who follow more moderate religious or societal paths, and given the widespread genetic proclivity toward belonging, they also needed something more extreme than rational theology to light their way back from the abyss. They needed to be a part of something so extreme, so strident that it would also provide them the psychological wherewithal to dismiss their moderate fellows' judgments of them. That would require a system of beliefs and strictures so rigorous, so abstemonious that it would also serve to obviate or at least trivialize the beliefs and behaviors of their moderate Judeo-Christian counterparts, and those of enlightened liberal practitioners of any religion and religious thought, thus discrediting those they saw as their mortal judges and

despicable scholarly elites, their betters. Once again, they needed an escape from reality. They needed a mind fix.

There is but one major creed that has offered such impenitent forgiveness, even aggrandizement for simply having rejected ones past transgressions and accepting its tenets. There is but one creed that associates itself so closely with an Anglo-Protestant American heritage, despite that no such identity ever existed. (Nature abhors a vacuum. The vacuum left by most Americans' ignorance of their own country's relatively brief history, is a vacuum easily filled by myth. Any student of American history knows well that many of the Founders were religious, but none publicly fundamentalist Christian... From where does the religious Right's claim to their legacy stem? It stems from imagination. Because it simply never was. Religion was a part of the beautiful fabric of early America, not its foundation. The plurality of the US Constitution superceded the singularity of the Mayflower Compact.) There is but one creed that stimulates intolerance while proclaiming an inclusiveness based on its very antithesis. And finally, but most critical, there is but one creed that bases its fundamentalism on an absolutely literal interpretation of a Bible it considers absolutely flawless. Yet the Bible passed down through the ages is largely a fabrication. It is laced with revisionist scripture and distortions of convenience that the most serious of religious scholars have found to be at best, only 18% historically factual...

By exploiting this widespread proclivity to believe, the Bible has become a convenient vehicle through which unscrupulous interpreters can derive a creed, a creed which, if accepted with a zealot's fervor, would forgive anything – absolutely anything – one might have inflicted upon himself or his fellow man, woman, child, beast, vegetable or mineral in the past, and do so *sans* active or substantive non-monetary penance. It is a creed that is conveniently blind to any dichotomy between intolerance and forgiveness, theocracy and democracy, benevolence and vengeance, faith and political corruption. That is the creed that encourages one to be born again, the Evangelical Creed of Biblical literalism. Or what is alternately called rightist, conservative, Evangelical, fundamentalist Christianity. So ill conceived and distorted is this ostensibly “literal” acceptance of oft revised, translated, and interpreted scripture, that serious Biblical scholars now consider it fabrication in the interest of self-servitude and the exploitation of mind-cure. Noted Biblical scholar and psychologist Edmund D. Cohen postulates that, “Cast free from its Biblical moorings, Christianity came to denote anything good or wholesome in American life.” Inventing religions of convenience is characteristic of men, not the province of man.

Nonetheless, and as usual, legions of credulous, disillusioned, disconnected Americans fell victim to fundamentalism's lure. Whether the adherent fancies a turban, a topknot, or a Stetson, religious extremism serves a purpose no different from drugs when it becomes a crutch. Religious extremism has become the simplistic answer for far too many of our countrymen's mortal problems. For its “Christian” adherents, the answers to all life's problems are found between the Bible's covers. There is no need to actually indulge in the human attribute of reasoning. Intellect is

fabricated through rote memorization of scripture. But were it all that simple. Unfortunately, as with most other forms of extremism which abdicate thought to dogmatic obedience, fundamentalism is also the source of so very, very many more problems than it ever has solved, or ever will solve...

Anyone who would have been addicted to sex, drugs, and anything but rock and roll, was a candidate for addiction to whatever else suited his or her self-depreciated fancy. Anyone who needed forgiveness for the harm he'd done to himself or to others, could find it here. Christianity – but especially this strange, highly-selective, but very heady new simplistic form of it – was an addiction about which they could even feel good. They could even feel better than anyone else. They could garner immense self-esteem, however ill-placed. That rush was, and is to this day, a first in so many disturbed lives. In fact, lets throw in faith-healing of the most desperately ill while we're at it. What's the harm?

The ensuing decades would see the easily led, easily addicted, easily persuaded, easily frightened, abused, downtrodden, secret-harboring, pain ridden – in short, vulnerable – masses drawn to the flickering images of these fire and brimstone preachers on their cable televisions and they would be converted by the millions, by the tens-of-millions. They would belong. All is forgiven. All is well, or will be shortly. All. Absolutely all. Oh, by the way, don't forget to send the check...

We are the most religious advanced society on earth today... A recent poll showed that 59% of Americans consider God and religion very important in their everyday lives. Compare this to Italy's 23%, or to Japan's and France's 12% and you start to get the picture. Surprising, isn't it? It doesn't change much between the oceans either. While we might fondly consider ourselves socially and economically more similar to our progressive northern neighbors than we do those to our south, the similarities begin and end with language. Mexicans answered the same question with 57% of them saying that religion plays a very important part in their lives. That compares tightly with the 59% of Americans, while only 30% of Canadians considered this to be so. Thus, with the most moneyed country in the world publicly proclaiming its citizens' faith – or more simply stated, their eagerness to believe things without supporting evidence – it's no wonder the preachers of prey find their way to our shores, while their bank accounts remain offshore. It's no wonder they have become ever wealthier in material things, ever more revered by their faith-filled flocks. They prevail and have been joined by many others, with doubtless many more yet to come. In *Isaiah 1:18*, the Bible tells us – and them – exactly why: “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.”

Despite their record of apparent hypocrisy, scandal, and evident deceit, the televangelists prevail, and have become ever more powerful a political force in a no-longer secular US government. The empire of influence – real or perceived – has been built by the TV preachers on the faith, fortunes, and fealty of the credulous, desperate, terrified. That it has been founded upon and in violation of the American Creed is of no concern to them or their history-oblivious flocks. Now, it is welcomed

and even nurtured by one of the most irrationally faithful among them. In their poster boy of the moment the fundamentalists have found a man who believes the world is doomed to destruction in our lifetime, so take what you can get, and throw the wrapper in the river. And what's worse, with his return to power, the idiot-king seems bent on fulfilling that false prophecy of doom himself if only to prove it correct. I am speaking of course of extremism's repentant, born again Christian fundamentalist and reformed party animal, deserter, tooter, boozier, stock manipulator, and president, George W. Bush...

In Evangelical Christianity, George W. Bush found a culture supporting non-judgment and unearned forgiveness of ones past deeds. This is known as Motivated Belief. Further, Evangelicals quite deliberately separate themselves from moderate Protestants by their belief in the Bible's absolute unerring accuracy as the written word of God. Unless God has continually edited it vicariously, that stands in stark contrast to logical and rational religious belief and learning. It stands in equal contrast to Anglo-American concepts of jurisprudence. It profanes science. But it thrives because it serves a purpose, and that purpose is self-delusion. It has no place in enlightened government or philosophy, yet today it dominates America's. It is the primary reason Bush won or stole this [2004] election despite his abysmal performance as president these last four years, and it is the primary reason that he, just like the tainted televangelists who sent their legions of faithful lemmings out to vote for their born-again miscreant, can get away with just about anything in the conditioned minds of his and their followers.

The point of all this is simple. After all, if these American "value voters" cannot find it within themselves to ignore the mountains of evidence and FORGIVE their very leaders of dastardly deeds, and do so unconditionally, how can they expect to be forgiven themselves? Yet there is a sinful dichotomy at play here. They will forgive one another, but condone the vengeance-killing of 100,000 Iraqis without evidence that any of these slaughtered men, women, or children were guilty of anything – anything other than being different, that is. To me, such inconsistent beliefs as forgiveness and vengeance, sanctifying life while taking it indiscriminately, do not pave the way to Heaven. Such beliefs are the road to Hell. Unfortunately we're all on it together and the kooks are driving...

As Americans, as members of what was so recently called the most advanced society in human history, should we not be looking forward? Why then do we reward those who always look backward for guidance, backward to a time and place and a circumstance that never existed but in their fantasies and the imagination of those who foist such false ideas about America's religious heritage upon them? The Evangelists' version of That Old Time Religion is, in reality, a very new concept. But unless we're about to start burning witches again, and offering our daughters into slavery, it's just another bill of goods they've sold themselves... sold being the operative word...

Bush's style appeals to what the TV ministers call their "Value Voters." So, let the exit polls be damned, the Evangelicals carried the day for their poster boy. If they didn't, they at least gave the Republican crooks who own this president a plausible vehicle to which they might attribute the otherwise inexplicable vote counts in this year's national election. They have changed our country into something its founders never intended it to be, a virtual theocracy, and they did it through abuse of the very system first designed to prevent it.

Though 30 years ago they had no substantive national influence, today, by their own literally incredible estimate, born-again Evangelicals represent 38% of voting age Americans. This year [2004] they appeared in record numbers casting, according to Barna Research, an estimated 53% of the total vote. That's a majority however you cut it. Their votes went overwhelmingly to George W. Bush and his anti-gay, anti-science, anti-pluralist, anti-social, anti-secular, anti-Earth, backward-looking, blind faith agenda...

Blind faith is not a plan for any society's future survival; neither is it cognition worthy of the fully developed human mind. Blind faith is just a pretty mask that hides the ugly face of ignorance. Today, America wears that mask, and it does not represent the moral or ethical or religious "values" of its most rational citizens. Neither is it fooling anyone but other Americans.

And if you think it couldn't be that bad, Dear, I'm sorry to suggest that it's actually even worse. Rummel's discovery (mentioned in the previous chapter) that democracies don't initiate war against other democracies, plus the increasing number of democratic nations throughout the world, encourages hope that peace may yet "break out". There is, however, a counteracting trend, driven by "extremists" both in autocratic and democratic nations, with Islamic and Christian extremists opposing democracy and promoting theocracy. In America, in particular, the strange alliance between corporate power and religious fanatics, forged by the Republicans, is tipping this country toward being a fascist theocracy, similar to what now exists in Iran (save, of course, with a different religion).

Below, I'll show you some evidence to support my claim that America is drifting toward a fascist theocracy. First, however, let me address the similar case of Islamic extremists (also called "Muslim supremacists" or "Islamic fundamentalists" or "Islamic fascists" or "radical Islamists" or just "Islamists"). That the Islamists oppose democracy should have been well known to all "Westerners", but surprisingly, it wasn't. That is, many in the West became aware of the Islamists' opposition to democracy only with the news (just before the January 2005 election in Iraq) that the following

* Go to other chapters *via*

message, used to “justify” killing Iraqis who would try to vote, had been posted at a website used by “Iraqi insurgents”:

Democracy is a religion [!] that the enemies of Allah use to fool the faithful. It means that men are the source of law, and not *sharia*.

Sharia (or *shari'a*, *shari'ah*, or *shariah*) are laws (or judgments or religious edicts or *fatwas*) dictated by clerics who use interpretations of the teachings and practices of Muhammad as the basis of their judgments – or to rationalize their prejudices (depending on one’s opinion about their edicts).

That people could be so backward as to make such a statement as “democracy is a religion” stunned many Westerners – but it shouldn’t have, for a number of reasons. One reason is that it’s consistent with Islamic tradition. Thus, as explained by John O. Voll in a 1998 publication:³

In Muslim tradition the sociopolitical community that was created in Medina provides the model for what a truly Islamic state and society should be. In contrast to tribal groups, the new community, or *ummah*, was open to anyone who made the basic affirmation of faith, and loyalty to the *ummah* was to supersede any other loyalty, whether to clan, family, or commercial partnership. The political structure of the new community was informal. Although Muhammad had great authority as the messenger of God, he could not assume a position as a sovereign monarch because he was only human and only a messenger. The emphasis on the sole sovereignty of God provides an important foundation for Islamic political thinking throughout the centuries, challenging both theories of monarchy and absolutism, as well as later theories of popular sovereignty.

In this early era the characteristically Islamic sense of the *ummah* or the community of believers, rather than a concept of church or state, was firmly established as the central institutional identification for Muslims. In this way Islam is frequently described as a way of life rather than as a religion separate from politics or other dimensions of society. In Medina Muhammad provided leadership in all matters of life, but Muslims carefully distinguish the teachings that are the record of revelation and recorded in the Qur’an from the guidance Muhammad provided as a person. Because of his role as the messenger of God, Muhammad’s own personal actions and words have special prestige. In addition to the Qur’an, the accounts of these, called *Hadith*, provide the basis for a second source of guidance for believers, the *Sunnah* (customary practice) of the Prophet.

³ *Encyclopedia of Politics and Religion*, Robert Wuthnow, ed., 2 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly, Inc., 1998), pp. 383-393; at: http://www.cqpress.com/context/articles/epr_islam.html.

Another reason why the statement “democracy is a religion” shouldn’t have shocked many Westerners is that Islamic clerics have recently promoted exactly this view. For example, Jonathan D. Halevi wrote the following.⁴

Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, leader of the Bayat al-Imam extremist group whose operatives were arrested in Jordan in 1995, takes a further step in his book *Democracy is a Religion...* For al-Maqdisi, democracy is a prohibited innovation that contradicts Islamic values and embodies a new heretical religion... Al-Maqdisi based his claim on the following arguments:

- a. “Democracy gives legitimacy to the legislation of the masses or to the despotic regime. It is not [the expression of] the rule of Allah... Allah ordered his Prophet to execute the commands given to him and forbade him to follow the emotions of the nation, the masses, and the people.”
- b. “Democracy is the rule of the masses or the rule of paganism, which is conducted according to a constitution [written by humans] and not according Allah’s laws... It [democracy] has become the mother of laws and is considered [by the masses] as a holy book. The religion of democracy has no relation to Quranic verses or the Prophet’s way of life and it is not possible to legislate according to them unless they are compatible with the holy book...”
- c. “Democracy is an outcome of despicable secularism... a heretical school striving to separate religion from state and government.”

Al-Maqdisi concludes: “Democracy is a religion that is not Allah’s religion... It is the rule of paganism... it is a religion which includes other gods in its belief... the people represented in the religion of democracy by its delegates in the parliament... who are actually standing idols and false gods placed in their chapels and their pagan fortresses, namely, their legislative councils. They and their followers rule according to the religion of democracy and the constitution’s laws upon which the government is based, and according to the paragraphs of their legislation... Their master is their God, their big idols who approve or reject legislation. He is their emir, their king, or their president.”

Of course, that all theocrats should be opposed to democracy shouldn’t be surprising, because democracy undermines their power.

Another and more fundamental reason why such distorted views about democracy shouldn’t shock Westerners is because such opinions are

⁴ Article entitled *Al-Qaeda’s Intellectual Legacy: New Radical Islamic Thinking Justifying the Genocide of Infidels*, published in December 2003 in *The Jerusalem Letter* by the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs (<http://www.jcpa.org>) and archived as VP508, although I found a copy of the article at <http://www.sullivan-county.com/main.htm>.

consistent with the backward (or better, “atrocious”) educational systems inflicted on so many (if not most) Muslim children. They’re forced to learn a different set of “3-Rs”: reading, writing, and recitation (of the Quran). In fact, the word Quran (or Qur’an or Koran) is Arabic for ‘recitation’.

If you want to learn details about how bad the education systems are in Islamic countries, then you can find ample evidence on the internet. Here, to show you just a few icicles at the top of a huge iceberg, let me first quote the website of Pakistan’s Ministry of “Education” (better: the Ministry of “Indoctrination”), where you can find the following statement of the goals of their “education” program.⁵

Pakistan has a unique position on the map of the world. [Which of course could be said of any country!] We are not a country founded on its territorial, linguistic, ethnic or racial identity. The only justification for our existence is our total commitment to Islam as our sole identity. [Can you imagine any sane group claiming that “the only justification for our existence is our total commitment to... the saying of someone who called himself ‘a mad poet’?!”)].... Article 31 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan... requires development of an educational policy to ensure preservation, practice, and promotion of Islamic ideology and principles as enshrined in the teachings of the Qur’an and the Holy Prophet (p.b.u.h.). [pbuh = Peace be upon him]... Objectives [of the Educational Reform]:... To fulfill the requirements of... Article 31 of the Constitution... saying that education and training should enable the citizens of Pakistan to lead their lives according to the teachings of Islam as laid down in the Qur’an and Sunnah.

Comparable statements were made by the Departments of “Education” in Hitler’s Germany and Stalin’s USSR! Would that Pakistan’s Minister of Education would have written something similar to: the objective is to help students to reach their potential, by teaching them how to read, write, do math, think critically, and learn the rudiments of the scientific method plus some of the principles that have been discovered by the scientific method.

As another example of the atrocious educational system in a Muslim country, here is a summary of current ideas about government and society taught in Saudi Arabian textbooks [to which I’ve added some notes in square brackets]:⁶

⁵ At <http://www.pakistan.gov.pk/education-ministry/highlights/NEP-islamic-edu.jsp>.

⁶ From Chapter 10 of the Report entitled *Christians and Jews in Saudi Arabian Schoolbooks*, prepared by the American Jewish Committee and the Center for Monitoring the Impact of Peace. The full report is available at <http://www.ajc.org/InTheMedia/Publications.asp?did=744&pid=1629>.

Western principles of democracy are not part of the Saudi political worldview. The Saudi regime is based on Islamic Law [Shariah], one of the basic tenets of which is complete obedience to one's rulers – even if they are oppressive – as long as they do not order their subjects to do something contradictory to the Shari'ah. The Muslim subject should not only obey his rulers but also love them, whatever their nature, and be patient vis-à-vis their oppressive measures – if these are taken. [No dictator could wish for more!] The reason for this is: an organized government, even an oppressive one, is much better than anarchy. [As if there were no other options!] Within this framework, duties, rather than rights, should be the citizen's main concern. Yet, there is another aspect of government procedure, unique to Saudi Arabia, which is the “family-like” interconnection between the ruler and the ruled. This point is emphasized in the textbooks. It is interesting to note that one of the government's duties towards the citizens is protecting them against “misleading” ideas, namely, ideas that are not in line with prevailing religious and political doctrines.

Given such “educational systems” (better, “indoctrination systems”) in many if not most Islamic countries, it then shouldn't be surprising that so many Muslims think that laws are edicts of the gods and therefore are not to be promulgated by the people's representatives in democracies. Such people are similar to most people living three- to four-thousand years ago, who were convinced that “the gods” dictated laws to their leaders (e.g., that his god dictated to Hammurabi that all conspirators – against him – should be killed, and that his god dictated to Moses how to legally beat slaves to death and how to sell one's daughter into slavery).

Consistent with such backwardness, one of the most notorious “laws” or *fatwas* issued by Islamic clerics is the 1993 “edict” by “the supreme religious authority of Saudi Arabia” (the “Grand Mufti”) Sheik Abdel-Aziz Ibn Baaz (whose name I've also seen written as Sheik 'Abd al-'Aziz Bin, Abdillah Bin Baz, or just Bin Baz):

The earth is flat, and anyone who disputes this claim is an atheist who deserves to be punished.

And no, Dear, that wasn't a typo: the above *fatwa* was issued not in 1193 but 1993! And by the way, Dear, before he died in 1999, Bin Baz presided over the Saudi Permanent Committee for Scientific Research – where in Saudi Arabia (and in many if not most Islamic societies) the clerics have decided that “scientific research” means studying the Quran!

Other *fatwas* proclaimed by other crazy Islamic clerics have been not quite so silly – but even worse. One of the worst is the 2003 *fatwa* issued by the

cleric who seems to be Osama bin Laden's "spiritual leader", Shaykh Nasr bin-Hamid al-Fahd and entitled "A Treatise on the Legal Status of Using Weapons of Mass Destruction against Infidels." Although a full translation of this *fatwa* seems no longer to be available on the internet, what follows are comments on it given by US Attorney General John Ashcroft in his 5 June 2003 Testimony before Congress.⁷

Nasir Bin Hamd Al-Fahd is a prominent, extremist Saudi cleric known to have significant connections to al Qaeda operatives who seek his religious justification and support for terrorist operations. Just last month, he issued a new fatwah entitled, "The Legal Status of Using Weapons of Mass Destruction Against Infidels" that lays out his religious argument for the use of weapons of mass destruction against Americans.

I quote, "Anyone who considers America's aggressions against Muslims and their lands during the past decades will conclude that striking her is permissible"

Al-Fahd asserts, quote, "The weapons of mass destruction will kill any of the infidels on whom they fall, regardless of whether they are fighters, women or children. They will destroy and burn the land. The arguments for the permissibility are many."

Further, Al Fahd, says, "If a bomb that killed ten million of them and burned as much of their land as they have burned Muslims' land were dropped on them, it would be permissible."

Many other examples of "Islamic Hatred", perpetrated by radical Islamic clerics, are available online.⁸ From such stupidity, I hope you'll never doubt the extremes to which clerics are willing to go to gain and maintain power. As Salman Rushdie said (against whom Iranian clerics issued a *fatwa* ordering his death for "insulting Islam"): "Fundamentalism isn't about religion; it's about power."

Illustrative of the crazy worldview adopted by Islamists is the lunacy written by "Al-Qa'ida spokesman Suleiman Abu Gheith". His ranting was posted in a three-part article entitled *In the Shadow of the Lances*.⁹ The following illustrates Abu Gheith's (and presumably Al Qaeda's) dream of ruling the

⁷ Available at http://www.lifeandliberty.gov/subs/speeches/a_ashcroft_060503.htm.

⁸ For example, see <http://frontpagemag.com/Articles/ReadArticle.asp?ID=15955>.

⁹ This article apparently was originally posted on a website belonging to "The Center for Islamic Research and Studies". A summary is at <http://memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=archives&Area=sd&ID=SP38802>.

world. In what follows, someone else has added the notes in “squiggly brackets” {such as these}, whereas I’ve added what’s in “square brackets”:

How can {he} [the Islamic extremist] possibly {accept humiliation and inferiority} when he knows that his nation [i.e., all of Islam] was created to stand at the center of leadership, at the center of hegemony, and rule...? How can {he} possibly {accept humiliation and inferiority} when he knows that the {divine} rule [law?] is that the entire earth must be subject to the religion of Allah – not to the East, not to the West – to no ideology and to no path except for the path of Allah?

As long as this Muslim knows and believes in these facts [these are “facts”, no less!] he will not – even for a single moment – stop striving to achieve it, even if it costs him his soul – his time, his property, and his son. As it is said [in the Quran], “Say {to the believers}: If your fathers and your sons and your brethren and your wives and your kinsfolk and the worth you have acquired and the trade, the dullness of which you apprehend, and the dwellings that you fancy are dearer to you than Allah and His Messenger, and striving in His cause, then wait until Allah issues His judgment. Allah guides not the disobedient people.”

And in case Americans wonder why bin Laden’s Al Qaeda is especially bent on destroying America, Abu Gheith provides the following rationalization:

America is the head of heresy in our modern world, and it leads an infidel democratic regime that is based upon separation of religion and state and on ruling the people by the people via legislating laws that contradict the way of Allah and permit what Allah has prohibited. This compels the other countries to act in accordance with the same laws in the same ways – and punishes any country {that rebels against these laws} by besieging it, and then by boycotting it. By so doing, {America} seeks to impose on the world a religion that is not Allah’s.

America, with the collaboration of the Jews, is the leader of corruption and the breakdown {of values}, whether moral, ideological, political, or economic corruption. It disseminates abomination and licentiousness among the people via the cheap media and the vile curricula. America is the reason for all oppression, injustice, licentiousness, or suppression that is the Muslims’ lot. It stands behind all the disasters that were caused and are still being caused to the Muslims; it is immersed in the blood of Muslims and cannot hide this.

What a pity such fools don’t investigate their own history. If they did – if they were permitted (by their clerics) to investigate their history, they’d find that “the Muslims’ lot” was caused by their clerics! Thus, almost 1,000 years ago Islamic clerics chose to suppress the scientific method (of which brilliant people in their societies had seen hints in their translations of Greek literature, they pursued it further, and then the method was introduced into Europe *via* translations of Arabic literature). No doubt these clerics made

the choice to suppress science, because they realized that permitting the scientific method to proceed to uncover knowledge would undermine their monopoly on power and ignorance.

In a 17 July 2007 letter to the editor of the Wall Street Journal, Peter Altman of San Francisco summarized the situation well:

The Common Denominator of Terrorist-Producing States

Princeton's Alan Krueger is right in claiming that poverty isn't the main motivating factor behind terrorism, but he is wrong in stating that a lack of civil liberties and political rights is the real culprit... Mr. Krueger looks at the list of major terrorist-producing states and sees a lack of freedom and democracy as the common denominator. However, there are too many authoritarian states that don't produce terrorists for his hypothesis to be true. Neither North Koreans nor Cubans are busy blowing themselves up in cafés.

The common denominator among all major terrorist producing states is Islam, as politically incorrect as it may be to say. It is this narrow and unbending theocratic civilization, which often provides education only in the form of uncompromising religious indoctrination, that actually supplies most of the fuel for world terror. However, it is the caustic sense of humiliation among many Muslims over Western ascendancy that actually lights the fuse.

Muslims are raised on the belief that Islam, the perfect faith, is superior to all other religions and that the only reason that Islam is not ascendant is that the West is undermining it. Many Muslims simply find it impossible to attribute their current situation to their own civilization's failures.

Until self-criticism and a recognition of Western scientific superiority resulting from the triumph of science over orthodoxy is embraced by Islamic civilization from North Africa to the Indian Ocean, we need look no further for an explanation. When self-criticism and an ability to understand the true roots of Western success take hold in the Abode of Islam, levels of terror will no longer warrant this discussion.

As a result of such failure to adopt the scientific method, one finds Islamic clerics making horrible and idiotic statement such as the following by the rabid Sheik Ibrahim Mudeiris, a statement aired on the weekend of 14 May 2005 on the official TV station of the Palestinian Authority.¹⁰

The day will come when we will rule America. The day will come when we will rule Britain and the entire world – except for the Jews. The Jews will not enjoy a life of

¹⁰ Reported in David Brooks' 19 May 2005 op-ed column in the *New York Times* (available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/05/19/opinion/19brooks.html?hp>).

tranquility under our rule because they are treacherous by nature, as they have been throughout history. The day will come when everything will be relieved of the Jews – even the stones and trees which were harmed by them. Listen to the Prophet Muhammad, who tells you about the evil end that awaits Jews. The stones and trees will want the Muslims to finish off every Jew.

It's difficult to imagine how peace can be achieved so long as people promote such stupidity and hate – and worse, permit its broadcast over “an official” Arab (Palestinian) TV station.

Meanwhile, though, still another reason why the primitive worldviews of “modern” Islamists shouldn't shock especially Americans is because an absolutely horrible number of Americans have similar views – although they're not “Islamic fundamentalists” (or “Islamists”) but “Christian fundamentalists” (or “Christianists”). As you can verify by your own internet searches, it's difficult to obtain a reliable estimate of how many Americans are Christianists: estimates range from about one tenth to one third of all Americans!

What's easier to find are an absolutely stunning number of astoundingly stupid statements made by such people – who have managed to gain positions of influence and power, especially in the Republican Party. I should insert, however, that not all Republicans are theocrats. For example, the House Republican Christopher Shays recently stated (in association with the vote on the House Bill related to the Terri Schiavo case): “This Republican Party of Lincoln has become a party of theocracy. There are going to be repercussions from this vote.” Shays voice, however, was barely heard above the roar of counter-statements by Republican theocrats.

In what follows, I want to show you a number of such stupid statements by theocrat Republicans, not only because they're alarming but also because I'm very concerned that until such stupidity is eliminated, the possibilities of peace and prosperity are not only remote but chances for continuing and even expanding wars (e.g., between Christianists and Islamists) are almost certain. If you want to find still more such quotations and assessments, go to (for example) <http://www.theocracywatch.org/>. In the quotations that follow, to save a clutter of references, I'll skip many of their internet references, but you can find the original of any quote by putting a part of the

quotation in quotation marks and searching for it at, e.g., Google.¹¹ In the quotations that follow, I've added some notes in square brackets – as you might expect by now!

- Charles W. (“Chuck”) Colson:¹²

Conservatives have an obligation that goes beyond party politics. It is to preserve the moral order... [Happiness is maintaining the *status quo*, especially when it means the clerics maintain control.] This should be obvious when you think about it, because there are vastly different worldviews at work here. Christians are guided by revealed truth [cough, cough] and the wisdom of the past – what’s often called the democracy of the dead. [Which Lemuel Washborn described well: “Dogma is the hand of the dead on the throat of the living.”] And we recognize original sin as the fundamental state of human nature... [Such an astoundingly cynical assessment of humans – and such a cop out for a convicted criminal!]

It’s only when I can turn to the One whom we celebrate at Easter – the One who was raised from the dead – that I can find the will to do what is right. [Well, fortunately for humanity, everyone is neither so spineless nor so evil!] It’s only when that value and that sense of righteousness pervade a society that there can be a moral consensus... [“Righteousness”, sure, but define your terms. If you meant by “righteous” something similar to “always use your brain as best you can”, then I could agree with you: then we’d have a much better chance for a “moral consensus”; unfortunately, however, there are so many religious kooks who have been brainwashed into believing that “righteousness” is what’s described in various, damnable “holy books”, such as how to make money pimping your sister-wife, promoting slavery, sending your daughter out to be raped by a mob, cheating your brother out of his inheritance, enslaving the people (save of course for the priests), how to beat your slaves to death, sell your daughter into slavery, kill the unbelievers, and so on.]

In Latin America... many were attracted to liberation theology precisely because it is a kind of worldly revolution, relying on government to provide justice for the poor. Most, however, have since spurned liberation theology as they discovered

¹¹ Dear: In some cases (e.g., in some cases where you find ellipsis, “...”), I’ve quoted statements made at different times. Therefore, if by searching you find only a portion of what I’ve quoted, then search again, starting with the statement that begins after the ellipsis.

¹² The former Special Counsel to President Nixon, Colson was “the hatchet man... the evil genius of an evil administration” who was indicted for conspiring to cover up the Watergate burglary, pleaded guilty to obstruction of justice, served time in prison, and (“born again” with an Evangelical Christian worldview) founded the Prison Fellowship, authored Christian books (total sales of his 23 book are approximately 5 million copies), was awarded the 1993 Templeton Prize for *Progress in Religion* (which is an oxymoron if ever there was one!), with three other Baptists, signed a 2002 letter to President G.W. Bush giving theological “justification” for invading Iraq, and in 2003, promoted the “faith-based initiative” to Bush (which clearly violates our Constitution, but a Republican-packed Supreme Court has so far been able to block challenges to its Constitutionality).

governments are at worst, corrupt, and at best, impotent. [Especially those run by such as you!] The poor have turned instead to the Pentecostal church and other exploding expressions of evangelical Christianity where the gospel changed people's lives... Jesus' revolution delivered the goods [a bill of goods]... That is why Christ's revolution continues today, particularly throughout the Global South, and will continue until the time of His return. [Or until people realize that they've been duped by con artists.]

If you care to dig into details, Dear, you might conclude, as have I, that Colson has convinced himself that even though he's a convicted criminal, even though he violated public trust, yet still he's one of "the good guys" – because he bought into the clerics' con game. My response to him is:

“Sorry, Chuck-old-boy, but it ain't that easy. To demonstrate that you're now 'doing good', then help solve some real problems, don't just pollute more people with religious poison. You teach fellow convicts that 'all is forgiven' if they (like you) 'just believe' (the clerics' con game). I'm sure that it makes you feel good to 'think' that's so – and to have a bunch of fellow convicts and fellow duped believers think that you're now one of the 'good guys'. But you're not. You're continuing to damage America (now even damaging the Constitution with your 'faith-based initiative') and continuing to damage humanity. You're just another parrot on a dead branch of knowledge, endlessly repeating the same old stupid mind-numbing nonsense

“If, for a change, you want to try helping humanity, then rather than pollute your fellow convicts with Christian balderdash, teach them the basis of critical thinking (assuming that you first learn those basics yourself), teach them the basics of science (assuming that you first learn those basics), teach them how to become productive members of society (at tasks that vary from carpentry to computer programming and from dentistry to designing space craft), and above all, teach them that the only 'saviors' that ever were – and ever will be – are fellow, struggling, heroic humans.”

- Pat Robertson, founder of the Christian Coalition:¹³

¹³ From <http://www.patrobertson.com/Biography/index.asp>: “M. G. ‘Pat’ Robertson has achieved national and international recognition as a religious broadcaster, philanthropist, educator, religious leader, businessman, and author. [I guess they didn't want to add that he's also “achieved national and international recognition” as a first-class nut!] He is the founder and chairman of The Christian

God's plan [Happiness is knowing God's plan – or even just thinking that you do!] is for His people [and guess who is “chosen people” are!], ladies and gentlemen, to take dominion... What is dominion? Well, dominion is Lordship. He wants His people [i.e., we evangelists] to reign and rule with Him... He's waiting for us to... extend His dominion... And the Lord says, “I'm going to let you redeem society. There'll be a reformation...”

We are not going to stand for those coercive utopians in the Supreme Court and in Washington ruling over us any more. We're not gonna stand for it. We are going to say, “we want freedom in this country, and we want power”... [And in case you don't recall “the Lord” saying any such thing, Dear, then you missed an important point: similar to Moses, “Saint” Paul, Muhammad, multiple popes, and Joseph Smith, when the stupid cleric Pat Robertson speaks, he speaks for God!]

Government was instituted by God [gimme a break] to bring His laws to people [such as how to sell your daughter into slavery and how to beat your slaves to death] and to carry out His will and purposes [which nobody knows – and which, besides, an omnipotent being couldn't have!]... When any civil government steps outside the mandate authorized by God Almighty [which I just happen to know], then that government does not have any further claim over its citizens.

I believe that he [Jesus] is Lord of the government, and the church, and business and education, and, hopefully, one day, Lord of the press. [Cause, doncha know, this “freedom of the press” business is a real pain to us theocrats and dominionists]. I see him involved in everything. And that's why I don't want to stay just in the church, as such. I want the church to move into the world [i.e., the world is to be ruled by theocrats, such as Robertson].

There will never be world peace until God's house and God's people are given their rightful place of leadership at the top of the world. [Moving up, are we, Patrick-me-boy: unsatisfied with ruling just the US, now you're setting your sights on ruling the whole world.] How can there be peace when drunkards, drug dealers, communists, atheists, [Oh, those horrible atheists], New Age worshipers of Satan, secular humanists [Oh, surely not those horrible secular humanists], oppressive dictators, greedy moneychangers, revolutionary assassins, adulterers, and homosexuals are on top?

The strategy against the American Radical Left [i.e., secular humanists] should be the same as General Douglas MacArthur employed against the Japanese in the Pacific... Bypass their strongholds, then surround them, isolate them, bombard them, then blast the individuals out of their power bunkers with hand-to-hand combat. The battle for Iwo Jima was not pleasant, but our troops won it. The battle to regain the soul of

Broadcasting Network (CBN) Inc., and founder of International Family Entertainment Inc., Regent University, Operation Blessing International Relief and Development Corporation, American Center for Law and Justice, The Flying Hospital, Inc. and several other organizations and broadcast entities.”

America won't be pleasant either, but we will win it... Our aim... is to gain dominion over society... to take working control of the Republican Party.

- Pat Buchanan, 1996 presidential candidate:

We need to do more than win an election or win the House or win the presidency, my friends: we need to make this beloved country of ours God's country once again... ["Once again"? The US was never "God's country"! – unless of course Buchanan means that the Native Americans were gods!] We're going to bring back God and the Bible and drive the gods of secular humanism right out of the public schools of America.

And how can we ever again succeed in educating children to become moral men and women if, in America's public schools, we consciously deny them all religious instruction, and deny them access to that primary source of morality, God's own word. The Bible is the one book from which they are expressly not allowed to be taught. [Well, how about teaching children how to think for themselves, so they'll be less likely to be conned into such stupidity as you're promoting?]

What's the Christian-bashing all about? Simple – a struggle for the soul of America is under way, a struggle to determine whose views, values, beliefs and standards will serve as the basis of law. Who are beneficiaries of the Court's protection? Members of various minorities [well, I should hope so!], including criminals, atheists [who are just as bad as] homosexuals, flag burners, illegal immigrants (including terrorists), convicts, and pornographers.

- Randall Terry:¹⁴

Let a wave of intolerance wash over you. I want you to let a wave of hatred wash over you. Yes, hate is good... Our goal is a Christian Nation... We have a Biblical duty, we are called by God to conquer this country. We don't want equal time. We don't want pluralism. We want theocracy [and guess who plans to be the lead theocrat!]...

When I, or people like me, are running the country, you'd better flee, because we will find you, we will try you, and we will execute you. I mean every word of it. I will make it part of my mission to see to it that they are tried and executed... [Shucks, if your plan is to execute us, why waste time with a trial?] If we're going to have true reformation in America, it is because men once again... have righteous testosterone flowing through their veins. [Testosterone in one's veins would kill you, clown!] They are not afraid of contempt for their contemporaries. They are not even here to get along. They are here to take over... [It's difficult to decide if that was written by a Christianist or an Islamist nutcase!]

¹⁴ Former used car salesman and founder of Operation Rescue (a militant anti-abortion group).

What it is coming down to is who runs the country. It's us against them. It's the good guys versus the bad guys. It's the God-fearing people against the pagans... Our goal must be simple. We must have a Christian nation built on God's law, on the ten Commandments. No apologies... We want our nation and all its institutions to be self-consciously built on the laws and principles of God's Word... We are at war – a cultural civil war, a war of allegiances. If righteousness is going to prevail, if paganism is going to be turned back, then we must move to restore this nation to being a Christian Nation.

- Ralph Reed:¹⁵

I honestly believe that in my lifetime we will see a country once again governed by Christians... and Christian values. What Christians have got to do is take back this country, one precinct at a time, one neighborhood at a time, and one state at a time... I want to be invisible. I do guerrilla warfare. I paint my face and travel at night. You don't know it's over until you're in a body bag...

- Gary Bauer:¹⁶

We are engaged in a social, political, and cultural war. There's a lot of talk in America about pluralism. But the bottom line is somebody's values will prevail. And the winner gets the right to teach our children what to believe. [I'm sure he means not "teach our children" but "indoctrinate them"!]

- All of which was summarized well by an earlier spokesman for such kooks:

... a struggle against the poisoning of the soul must begin. Our whole public life today is like a hothouse for sexual ideas and simulations. Just look at the bill of fare served up in our movies, vaudeville, and theaters, and you will hardly be able to deny that this is not the right kind of food, particularly for the youth... Theater, art, literature, cinema, press, posters, and window displays must be cleansed of all manifestations of our rotting world and placed in the service of a moral, political, and cultural idea.

So wrote Adolph Hitler in his *Mein Kampf*.

¹⁵ Former Executive Director of the Christian Coalition, chairman of Georgia's Republican Party and the chair of the southeastern region of the Bush-Cheney 2004 re-election campaign, and a potential candidate for Lieutenant Governor and then Governor of Georgia – and if he has his way, probably a candidate for President during your lifetime.

¹⁶ Bauer served in President Reagan's Administration for eight years (during the last two years as Reagan's Chief Domestic Policy Advisor), was director of the Family Research Council for more than 10 years, was a US Presidential candidate in 2000 (coming in last place in the New Hampshire primary, with 1% of the votes, whereupon he dropped out), and is now president of the American Values organization.

- James Dobson is a special case – a special nutcase. Quoting his website, he “earned a Ph.D. in Education with a major in Child Development from the University of Southern California”, is a “licensed psychologist in California”, is “heard daily on more than 3,000 radio facilities in North America... on approximately 6,300 facilities in 116 countries, and appearing on 80 [US] television stations daily”, has an “estimated listening audience [of] over 200 million people every day” and is founder of the Colorado-based Focus on the Family (which in 2000 had an annual budget of \$128.8 million, ~1,300 employees, and 2.3 million subscribers to their ten monthly magazines). He has been described as “[maybe] the best-known and most respected man in twentieth-century American Christendom.” In an article in *The New Republic* entitled “The religious right’s new kingmaker”,¹⁷ senior editor Michael Cowley wrote:

... no one helped [George W.] Bush win [the 2004 presidential race] more than Dr. James Dobson. Forget Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson, who in their dotage have marginalized themselves with gaffes... Forget Ralph Reed, now enriching himself as a lobbyist-operative, leaving the Christian Coalition a shell of its former self. Forget Gary Bauer, now known chiefly as a failed presidential candidate... Dobson is now America’s most influential evangelical leader, with a following reportedly greater than that of either Falwell or Robertson at his peak.

The following are some statement by Dobson [along with some of my comments in square brackets]:

Does the Republican Party want our votes, no strings attached – to court us every two years, and then to say, “Don’t call me; I’ll call you” – and to not care about the moral law of the universe? [Happiness is knowing “the moral law of the universe”!] Is that what they want? Is that the way the system works? Is this the way it’s going to be? If it is, I’m gone, and if I go, I will do everything I can to take as many people with me as possible... [God] has called us to be His representatives in our nation and in our world. [Happiness is being God’s representative!] Select candidates who represent your views and work for their election.

In another statement, Dobson gave his meaning for “the moral law of the universe”:

This is the understanding that God did it through His Son, Jesus, and what we read in Scripture is not a series of suggestions but these are commandments. These are absolutes. [So don’t try beating your slaves to death or selling your daughter into slavery by any other than approved methods!] These are eternal

¹⁷ Available at <http://slate.msn.com/id/2109621/>.

truths. There is an immutable understanding of the nature of the universe, and this is the permanence of marriage, and this is the offense of premarital sex and extramarital sex – it's all of these things. It's the value system that comes out of this. [It's truly amazing that the first symmetry-breaking fluctuation in the total void, leading to the Big Bang and then this universe, finds “premarital sex and extramarital sex” – and especially homosexually – so offensive! Yet, if Dr. Dobson, who managed to get his Ph.D. in Education says that such is the “immutable understanding of the nature of the universe”, then who am I to say that he's a raving idiot who belongs in a loony bin.]

Dobson then goes on to describe the horrible concept of humanism:

[It] begins with the assumption that God doesn't exist [which actually isn't correct; it begins with the assessment that the concept of 'God' has no meaning; it's just an abbreviation for “I dunno”]; therefore there are no immutable truths and you make up your own rules as you go along. [Which is right, e.g., always use your brain as best you can.] The policies are set by what seems right... and in that whole understanding there are no absolutes [Well, that's not correct: there is the absolute that people should always use their brains as best they can] – you live on the basis of what seems right. [Which is a helluva lot better than living your life on the basis of pure unadulterated balderdash!] This is the culture of death [Gimme a break – it's the culture of the scientific method]; this is abortion and infanticide and euthanasia and AIDS. [Riiiiiiight] This is death. [No, actually, but what you're saying sure is stupid.]

And of course, Dobson goes on to describe his glorious alternative to humanism:

This is a grand strategy. This is a grand design. It may look simplistic but there's really great wisdom in it because it is saying, “As the world goes to hell, we've got to become even more of a beacon, not of psychological truth but of ultimate truth and continue to campaign for righteousness.” I want you to understand something. This is really important. You hear me talk about the evil of abortion, homosexuality, and safe sexology and all this stuff going on – and all these are very, very important – but there is a foundational issue below that. Those are all social and political issues that flow out of something that is more important to me, which is the defense of righteousness. [Happiness is defending 'righteousness' – if only the Christianists and Islamists could agree on what it means!]

Where the Christianist and Islamists apparently do agree is that children shouldn't learn to think for themselves but be indoctrinated in religious stupidity.

For example, the following is summary paragraph from an article entitled “The Continuing Assault on Public Education”, published by The People for the American Way (author unspecified):¹⁸

Years ago Jerry Falwell said, “I hope I live to see the day when, as in the early days of our country, there won’t be any public schools. The churches will have taken them over again and Christians will be running them.” This spirit still persists in Religious Right leaders like Focus on the Family’s James Dobson, who has supported a growing movement to convince Christian parents to pull their children out of public schools altogether. In recent years, two other Religious Right leaders, Robert Simonds of Citizens for Excellence in Education and D. James Kennedy of Coral Ridge Ministries, have promoted initiatives to encourage all Christian parents to withdraw their students (and their support) from public schools nationwide. Politicians like Rep. Tom Tancredo (R-CO) – who proudly touts that he has “been calling for an end to the government monopoly school system” for over 20 years – and radio personalities like Dr. Laura Schlessinger have also played high-profile roles in this movement. In her April 9, 2002 broadcast, Dr. Laura said, “I stand with Dr. James Dobson. Take your kids out of public schools.”

Actually, though, Dear, I agree with the desirability of ending “government-monopoly school system[s]”, but my reasons (which I’ll show you in a later X-chapter) are definitely different from those advocated by the crazy Christianists, who want to “educate”/ indoctrinate/ brainwash children in Christian balderdash.¹⁹

But it’s difficult to discern how far the Christianists’ stupid ideas have polluted the Republican Party. What isn’t so difficult, however, is to find many Republicans espousing similar stupidity, examples of which follow.

- Tom DeLay (Republican from Texas, and as I write this, the current Majority Leader of the House of Representatives and hence the second most-powerful Republican in the House):²⁰

He [Jesus or God] is using me, all the time, everywhere, to stand up for a biblical worldview in everything that I do and everywhere I am... Only Christianity offers a comprehensive worldview that covers all areas of life and thought – every

¹⁸ Available at <http://www.pfaw.org/pfaw/general/default.aspx?oid=4181>.

¹⁹ Dear: You can find more current information about activities about the Christian Right at the homepage for the Americans United for Separation of Church and State: <http://www.au.org/site/PageServer>.

²⁰ Subsequently, when he was indicted by a Grand Jury, DeLay resigned from the House; currently (2007/07/01) he’s awaiting trial on charges of money laundering and conspiracy to launder money.

aspect of creation. Only Christianity offers a way to live in response to the realities that we find in this world – only Christianity.

DeLay is the same brainwashed nut (or maybe his problem is that he inhaled too much insecticide when he was a pest exterminator) who said that the murders at the Columbine, Colorado high school occurred “because our school systems teach our children that they are nothing but glorified apes who have evolutionized out of some primordial mud” – to which an appropriate response may be: “Obviously not all of us are have so ‘evolutionized’; therefore, obviously not all of us are so ‘glorified’!”

That DeLay is certainly not the only Republican with such a bizarre worldview is illustrated by the following quotation from *Economist.com*.²¹

There is no shortage of politicians, holding some of the more extreme views of the Christian right, who can be counted on to back the church leaders to the hilt. Tom Coburn, the new senator from Oklahoma, has called not just for outlawing abortion but for the death penalty for doctors who break such a law. Another new senator, John Thune of South Dakota, is a creationist. A third, Jim DeMint of South Carolina, has said single mothers should not teach in schools.

- Judge James Leon Holmes (a rabid Catholic and president G.W. Bush’s nominee to the US District Court for the Eastern District of Arkansas, who was confirmed by the Senate on 6 July 2004):

The great social problems we face... are caused in large part by our societal abandonment of the ancient moral code that regards human life as sacred... [“Sacred”? Moses (and/or God) reportedly didn’t consider the lives of first-born Egyptian or all-but-virgin Canaanite women “sacred”!] The pro-abortionists counsel us to respond to these problems by abandoning what little morality our society still recognizes... [Unless of course “morality” means “use your brain as best you can”.]

The Constitution was intended to reflect the principles of natural law [i.e., Catholic teachings]... [not] the theory of moral relativism, which is the antithesis of natural law... [Be damned! The Constitution was intended to be exactly what it is: an attempt to establish a government in which “we the people” rule!] We [either “the Royal We” or “we, the radical right” – I’d certainly disagree if he meant “we the people”!] are left with some unease about this notion that Christianity and the political order should be assigned to separate spheres [i.e., the separation of church and state that Washington, Jefferson, Madison and others

²¹ The article (at http://www.economist.com/printedition/displayStory.cfm?Story_ID=3375543) is from the 11 Nov. 2004 edition of the *Economist.com* and is entitled “American values – the triumph of the religious right”; the author doesn’t seem to be identified.

promoted]... Christianity transcends the political order and cannot be subordinated to the political order... [Identical statements are made by Islamists, of course with the substitution of the word ‘Islam’ for ‘Christianity’]

Christianity, in principle, cannot accept subordination to the political authorities, for the end to which it directs men is higher than the end of the political order [Ah yes: your getting into your imagined la-la land after you die, similar to the “end” pursued by the terrorists of 9/11, certainly takes priority over what “we the people” want]; the source of its authority is higher than the political authority... [Ah yes: your God is to rule the people – and no doubt you plan to be one of your God’s spokesmen] The final reunion of Church and state will take place at the end of time, when Christ will claim definitive political power of all creation, inaugurating an entirely new society based on the supernatural.

On what data can any sane human anticipate (and anticipate it with relish, no less) a “society based on the supernatural”? And the answer appears to be: no sane person can. It takes someone who has been brainwashed with such ideas and thereby longs for a theocracy – of course with them in control.²²

- Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia (described by President G.W. Bush as “a model of the sort of judge I’d like to appoint”) is another who doesn’t seem to understand the meaning of “we the people”. Illustrative of Scalia’s stupidity are his following statements made at *The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life* at the University of Chicago Divinity School and published in an article entitled *God’s Justice and Ours* in the May 2002 issue of *First Things*:²³

...government... derives its moral authority from God. [And the data that support that speculation are...? Sorry, he doesn’t provide any.] Government is the “minister of God” with powers to “revenge”, to “execute wrath”, including even wrath by the sword... [Although he could be quoting Islamists, Scalia is here quoting “Saint” Paul.²⁴]...

²² Dear: A more recent example is the nomination of Richard Honaker to the U.S. District Court for the District of Wyoming. If you’ll check out the 2008/01/31 letter to appropriate senators from the Americans United for Separation of Church and State, you’ll find quotations from Honaker that show that he’s another Christian nutcase (see http://www.au.org/site/DocServer/Honaker_opposition_letter.pdf?docID=2301).

²³ Available at <http://www.firstthings.com/ftissues/ft0205/articles/scalia.html>.

²⁴ For example, Dear, recall the following horrible stuff written by “Saint Paul” (*Romans 13*, 1-5), to which Scalia reverentially refers in his referenced speech:

“Every person must submit to the supreme authorities [plural!]. There is no authority but by act of God, and the exiting authorities [e.g., Judge Scalia, President Bush,...] are instituted by him [God!];

Indeed, it seems to me that the more Christian a country is the less likely it is to regard the death penalty as immoral. Abolition [of the death penalty] has taken its firmest hold in post-Christian Europe, and has least support in the church-going United States. [An apt description – and a terrible indictment of “the church-going United States”.] *I attribute that to the fact that, for the believing Christian, death is no big deal.* [Italics added] Intentionally killing an innocent person is a big deal: it is a grave sin, which causes one to lose his soul [cough, cough]. But losing this life, in exchange for the next?... For the nonbeliever, on the other hand, to deprive a man of his life is to end his existence. What a horrible act! [Anyone who’s conned into “believing” that in death, one “exchanges” this life for another is a prime candidate to join a Jihad against all ‘infidels’]...

The mistaken tendency to believe that a democratic government, being nothing more than the composite will of its individual citizens [I don’t have such a “mistaken tendency”: all data (and all revolutions) suggest that it’s so!], has no more moral power or authority than they do as individuals [Well, that’s not so – so long as “we the people” have more power than individuals do!] has adverse effects in other areas as well. It fosters civil disobedience [such as the “civil disobedience” of Gandhi and Martin Luther King!], for example, which proceeds on the assumption that what the individual citizen considers an unjust law – even if it does not compel him to act unjustly – need not be obeyed. St. Paul would not agree [Well, then, St. Paul: blow it out your ear!]: “Ye must needs be subject,” he said, “not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.”

“For conscience sake.” The reaction of people of faith to this tendency of democracy to obscure the divine authority behind government [What do you mean obscure? How can anybody “obscure” zero data? You mean: “challenge” your authority!] should not be resignation to it but the resolution to combat it as effectively as possible. [By all means – such as providing some reliable data to support such an idiotic notion!] We have done that in this country (and continental Europe has not) by preserving in our public life many visible reminders that – in the words of a Supreme Court opinion from the 1940s – “we

consequently, anyone who rebels against authority [e.g., Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King,...] is resisting a divine institution [!], and those who so resist have themselves to thank for the punishment they will receive [!]. For government, a terror to crime [as defined by those in power!], has no terrors for good behavior [as defined by those in power!]. You wish to have no fear of the authorities? Then continue to do right [as defined by them!] and you will have their approval [never mind that they’re Nazis or religious-right fascists of America], for they are God’s agents [Scalia, Bush,... are God’s agents!] working for your good [as defined by them – who are certainly not working for their own good... Riiiiiiight]. But if you are doing wrong [as defined by this new breed of theocrats], then you will have cause to fear them; it is not for nothing that they hold the power of the sword [You bet it’s not for nothing – they intend to use it!], for they are God’s agents of punishment, for retribution on the offender [and to clinch their hold on power, by punishing or killing all dissidents]. That is why you are obliged to submit. It is an obligation imposed not merely by fear of retribution but by conscience. That is also why you pay taxes. The authorities are in God’s service and to these duties they devote their energies.” [And anyone who buys into such stupidity deserves the dictators they’ll get.]

are a religious people, whose institutions presuppose a Supreme Being.” [Or, stated more accurately, people in power have chosen to brainwash kids with this stupidity.]

These reminders include: “In God we trust” on our coins, “one nation, under God” in our Pledge of Allegiance, the opening of sessions of our legislatures with a prayer, the opening of sessions of my Court with “God save the United States and this Honorable Court”, annual Thanksgiving proclamations issued by our President at the direction of Congress, and constant invocations of divine support in the speeches of our political leaders, which often conclude, “God bless America”. All this, as I say, is most un-European [in fact, it’s un-human!], and helps explain why our people are more inclined to understand, as St. Paul did, that government carries the sword as “the minister of God”, to “execute wrath” upon the evildoer.

What astounding stupidity! And the author is not some zonked out street-corner schizophrenic (as one might expect), but a current justice of the Supreme Court!

And of course there is the tradition in this country (as there is throughout the world) of professing a belief in God, because that was the prevailing worldview (a worldview concocted by savages). But because more people than just the supreme religious authority of Saudi Arabia used to say that the world was flat (and executed “wrath” upon the “evil doers” who said otherwise), doesn’t mean the world is flat! Rather than defend the *status quo* with the sword (and the rack and burning at the stake), how about submitting such *status quo* to scientific examination?

What data support the speculation that God exists? [None!] What predictions follow from this speculation? [None!] Can these non-predictions be tested? [No!] Can the speculation be falsified? [No!]. Then, throw the stupid concept of God into the trash can labeled “Human Mistakes” – there to become moldy, decay, and eventually rot away, along with concepts such as “God’s chosen people”, “superior race”, and “flat earth”. And to think that such stupidity is promoted not by some barnyard preacher but by a member of our Supreme Court (and one that G.W. Bush describes as “a model of the sort of judge I’d like to appoint”) is not only mind boggling and sad, but says to me that American is sick.

- Stupidity similar to the above examples (from Republican members of the legislative and judicial branches of our current federal government) is

unfortunately rampant also in Republican members of the administrative branch, e.g.,

“All things equal, I would prefer to have a child in a school that has a strong appreciation for the values of the Christian community. In a religious environment the value system is set... [to stupidity!]” (Ron Paige, Secretary of Education, 2000–2004.)

“Unique among the nations, America recognized the source of our character as being godly and eternal, not being civic and temporal [That’s not correct; for example, it’s the same stupidity that led the Israelites astray for the past ~3,000 years.]... we have no King but Jesus... [The separation of church and state is] “a wall of religious oppression.” (John Ashcroft, Attorney General, 2000–2004.)

Yet, in spite of the fact that President G. W. Bush chose such people as members of his cabinet, it’s been difficult to discern how fundamental a “Christian fundamentalist”/ nut he is. He made statements such as the following (given in his 2005 Inaugural Address)

From the day of our founding, we have proclaimed that every man and woman on this earth has rights, and dignity, and matchless value, because they bear the image of the maker of heaven and earth... We go forward with complete confidence in the eventual triumph of freedom... Not because we consider ourselves a chosen nation; God moves and chooses as He wills... History has an ebb and flow of justice, but history also has a visible direction, set by liberty and the Author of Liberty... May God bless you, and may He watch over the United States of America.

But it isn’t clear if Bush is just another politician playing a religious card or if he “truly believes” the nonsense that his speechwriters concoct.

Recently, however, a *New York Times* reporter, David Kirkpatrick, gained access to recordings of telephone conversations between then-Governor Bush (who was unaware that the conversations were being recorded) and a (former) friend, Doug Wead (“a former Assemblies of God minister who was well connected in conservative evangelical circles”). Thereby, and similar to the case when Nixon’s private tapes were exposed, a fairly reliable glimpse of some of Bush’s thoughts (at least during the time period of about 1998–2000) have become available. The conversations emphasized interactions between Bush and “evangelical Christians”, because Wead had

been a “liaison” to them during the presidency of Bush, Sr. Let me show you some of Bush Jr.’s comments by quoting Kirkpatrick’s article:²⁵

Preparing to meet with influential Christian conservatives, Mr. Bush tested his lines with Mr. Wead. “I’m going to tell them the five turning points in my life,” he said, [were] “accepting Christ, marrying my wife, having children, running for governor, and listening to my mother.”

In September 1998, Mr. Bush told Mr. Wead that he was getting ready for his first meeting with James C. Dobson, founder of Focus on the Family, an evangelical self-help group. Dr. Dobson, probably the most influential evangelical conservative, wanted to examine the candidate’s Christian credentials. “He said he would like to meet me, you know, he had heard some nice things, you know, well, ‘I don’t know if he is a true believer’ kind of attitude,” Mr. Bush said.

Mr. Bush said he intended to reassure Dr. Dobson of his opposition to abortion. Mr. Bush said he was concerned about rumors that Dr. Dobson had been telling others that the “Bushes weren’t going to be involved in abortion,” meaning that the Bush family preferred to avoid the issue rather than fight over it. “I just don’t believe I said that. Why would I have said that?” Mr. Bush told Mr. Wead with annoyance.

By the end of the primary, Mr. Bush alluded to Dr. Dobson’s strong views on abortion again, apparently ruling out potential vice presidents including Gov. Tom Ridge of Pennsylvania and Gen. Colin L. Powell, who favored abortion rights. Picking any of them could turn conservative Christians away from the ticket, Mr. Bush said. “They are not going to like it anyway, boy,” Mr. Bush said. “Dobson made it clear...”

Early on, though, Mr. Bush appeared most worried that Christian conservatives would object to his determination not to criticize gay people. “I think he wants me to attack homosexuals,” Mr. Bush said after meeting James Robison, a prominent evangelical minister in Texas.

But Mr. Bush said he did not intend to change his position. He said he told Mr. Robison: “Look, James, I got to tell you two things right off the bat. One, I’m not going to kick gays, because I’m a sinner. How can I differentiate sin?”

Later, he read aloud an aide’s report from a convention of the Christian Coalition, a conservative political group: “This crowd uses gays as the enemy.” It’s hard to distinguish between fear of the homosexual political agenda and fear of homosexuality, however... “This is an issue I have been trying to downplay,” Mr. Bush said. “I think it is bad for Republicans to be kicking gays.”

²⁵ See the 20 February 2005 issue of *The New York Times*; the title of the article by David D. Kirkpatrick is “In Secretly Taped Conversations, Glimpses of the Future President.”

Told that one conservative supporter was saying Mr. Bush had pledged not to hire gay people, Mr. Bush said sharply: “No, what I said was, I wouldn’t fire gays.”

As early as 1998, however, Mr. Bush had already identified one gay-rights issue where he found common ground with conservative Christians: same-sex marriage. “Gay marriage, I am against that. Special rights, I am against that,” Mr. Bush told Mr. Wead...

Mr. Bush took stock of conservative Christian views of foreign policy as well. Reading more of the report from the Christian Coalition meeting, Mr. Bush said to Mr. Wead: “Sovereignty. The issue is huge. The mere mention of Kofi Annan in the UN caused the crowd to go into a veritable fit. The coalition wants America strong and wants the American flag flying overseas, not the pale blue of the UN.”

As eager as Mr. Bush was to cultivate the support of Christian conservatives, he did not want to do it too publicly for fear of driving away more secular voters...

From that glimpse, I gain the impression that Bush is, above all, just another politician: willing to do pretty much whatever it takes to gain power. That is, I get the impression that although Bush is so uneducated as to “believe” that some giant Jabberwock in the sky created this universe, that Jesus is his “personal savior” (apparently incapable of saving him, however, from making a fool of himself), and that (as he said on 29 June 2002) “We need no-nonsense judges who know that our rights come from God”, yet he doesn’t appear to have bought into all the all the “hell-fire and damnation” curses on homosexuals (and others) nor into all the “end-time” or “rapture-time” nonsense.

This “end time” and “rapture time” nonsense is so bizarre that, were it not for your exposure to similar nonsense in Mormonism, I expect that you would have great difficulty understanding how anyone could be so stupid as to believe it. Yet, although you have been exposed to some of it, I expect that you’ve done little more than dip your toe in the water. Therefore, let me ask you to go a little deeper by reading the following from an article by Chip Berlet entitled “How Apocalyptic and Millennialist Themes Influence Right Wing Scapegoating and Conspiracism.”²⁶ I encourage you to read Berlet’s full article; it can provide you with a “spring board” if you want to dive deeply into the subject; with it and Google, you could then spend at least the

²⁶ This article appeared originally the Fall 1998 issue of *The Public Eye* magazine; a 1999/4/15 revision is available at http://www.publiceye.org/apocalyptic/Dances_with_Devils_2.html.

next decade swimming in an ocean of insanity, derived from the New Testament's *Book of Revelation* or *The Apocalypse of John* (where *apocalypse* is the Greek word meaning 'revelation'), also just called *Revelations*.²⁷

Apocalyptic millennialism [or "millenarianism" = "the doctrine of or belief in a future {and typically imminent} thousand-year age of blessedness, beginning with or culminating in the Second Coming of Christ. It is central to the teachings of groups such as Plymouth Brethren, Adventists, Mormons, and Jehovah's Witnesses; belief in a future golden age of peace, justice, and prosperity"] provides a basic narrative within the US political right, claiming that the idealized society is thwarted by subversive conspiracies. During the 1980s and 1990s, the main demonized scapegoat of the US hard-right shifted seamlessly from the communist Red Menace to international terrorists, sinful abortion providers, anti-family feminists, homosexual "special rights" activists, "pagan" environmentalists, liberal secular humanists and their "big government" allies, and globalists who plot on behalf of the New World Order. The relatively painless nature of the shift was due in part to the basic underlying apocalyptic paradigm, which fed the Cold War and the witch-hunts of the McCarthy period. To understand this dynamic requires stepping back a few paces to the roots of fundamentalist belief.

One of the core ideas of the fundamentalist Christian Right during this century has been that modern liberalism is a handmaiden for collectivist, Godless communism. Many conservative Christian anticommunists believe that collectivism is Godless, while capitalism is Godly. They often link liberalism to Godless collectivism; then to the notion of a liberal secular-humanist conspiracy; and finally conclude that globalism is the ultimate collectivist plot. Prior to the collapse of communism, many leaders of the new Christian Right had already embraced a variation on their long-standing fear of secret elites in league with Satan: the secular humanist conspiracist theory. According to George Marsden, the shift in focus to the secular humanist demon:

"...revitalized fundamentalist conspiracy theory. Fundamentalists always had been alarmed at moral decline within America but often had been vague as to whom, other than the Devil, to blame. The "secular humanist" thesis gave this central concern a clearer focus that was more plausible and of wider appeal than the old mono-causal communist-conspiracy accounts. Communism and socialism could, of course, be fit right into the humanist picture; but so could all the moral and legal changes at home without implausible scenarios of Russian agents

²⁷ Dear: As I showed you a little in the "excursion" **Qx** and will show you more in **Yx** (and as you probably know anyway!), speculations in the *Book of Revelation* about "the end of times" and a "new Zion" were used as the foundation of Mormonism (which is what "Latter Day" means in the "official name" of Mormonism, i.e., the "Church of... *Latter Day* Saints").

infiltrating American schools, government, reform movements, and mainline churches.”

A number of contemporary Christian Right ideologues promote the secular humanist conspiracist theory, including: Pat Robertson, founder of the Christian Coalition; Beverly LaHaye, leader of Concerned Women for America; her husband, the Rev. Timothy LaHaye, a well-known Christian author; and Dr. James Dobson, founding President of Focus on the Family, whose syndicated radio program is on thousands of stations.

The shift in focus from anti-communism to the claim that secular humanism now plays the key subversive role in undermining America is reflected in right-wing author John Stormer’s two books, the second an update for the 1990s of his influential 1964 book *None Dare Call it Treason*. Similarly, some militant Protestant fundamentalists within the antiabortion movement, influenced by hard-right theological activist Francis A. Schaeffer, claim a conspiracy of secular humanists as the source of Godless disregard for what they argued is sinful murder of the unborn. In 1991 David A. Noebel of Summit Ministries, an ultra-conservative Christian training center located outside Colorado Springs, Colorado wrote the 900 page *Understanding the Times* textbook used in 850 Christian schools enrolling a total of over 15,000 students. The book argues that secular humanism has replaced communism as the major anti-Christian philosophy.

Secular humanists – pictured as the torchbearers of liberal Godlessness and New Deal statism – are scapegoated from a variety of perspectives: economic, anti-elitist, and moral, as well as religious. The idea of the secular humanist conspiracy also parallels and buttresses the resurgent libertarian theme that collectivism destroys individual initiative and saps the vigor of the free market system. It also echoes the concerns of conservatives, neoconservatives, and paleoconservatives over creeping moral decay and the failure of New Deal liberalism. This congruence of various sectors of the right, each opposing liberal secular humanism for its own reasons, has resulted in some remarkable tactical coalitions following the rise of the New Right in the late 1970s, especially around issues of public school curricula and government funding for education.

For many conspiracy-minded Christians, communism was but one manifestation of Satan’s age-old, one-world conspiracy. They argue that if the ultimate villainous agent of control is Satan, the ideologies promoted by demonic agents can easily shift from Godless communism to secular humanism, and from global communism to a new world order. The collapse of communism in Europe allowed a shift in focus to other aspects of the alleged conspiracy – the collectivism and statism promoted by liberalism and secular humanism. As mentioned earlier, more secular hard-right groups had long contended that behind Moscow Bolshevism and Wall Street capitalism were the same shadowy secret elites with their traitorous allies in Washington. Removing Soviet communists from the alleged secret team still leaves other dangerous players in the field.

Conspiracism in the Christian Right often is overlooked by the mainstream media, despite the prominence of those who promote it. Prior to the 1998 elections, Dr. James Dobson led a well-publicized campaign to pull the Republican Party into alignment with Christian Right moral principles. Dobson and his colleague Gary Bauer co-authored *Children at Risk: The Battle for the Hearts and Minds of Our Kids*, which sees an escalating civil war with the forces of Godless secular humanism. Dobson praises Noebel's Summit Ministries, especially its youth training seminars and its high school curriculum that immerse students in apocalyptic conspiracist theories about the secular humanist menace.

Dobson's endorsement of Summit is significant because it illustrates how some of the more doctrinaire leaders of the Christian Right are comfortable with Old Right conspiracism. Among Noebel's previous works are *Communism, Hypnotism and the Beatles*, and *The Homosexual Revolution: End Time Abomination*. Summit Ministries has a longstanding relationship with the conspiracist John Birch Society [JBS] placing large ads in the John Birch Society's publications over many years. In at least one instance, in 1983, Summit Ministries appears to have served as a conduit for tax-exempt donations for the JBS. Noebel recently absorbed the newsletter of Fred Schwarz' hard right Christian Anti-Communism Crusade.

Even when not directly tied to diabolical schemes, conspiracism is widespread in the Protestant Christian Right. Pat Robertson's *The New World Order* is littered with conspiracist allegations and references, including his invocation of the Freemason conspiracy "revealed in the great seal adopted at the founding of the United States". Robertson links Freemasonry to End Times predictions of a "mystery religion designed to replace the old Christian world order of Europe and America". Later in the book he says:

"In earlier chapters, we have traced the infiltration of Continental Freemasonry by the new world philosophy of the order of the Illuminati, and its subsequent role in the French revolution. We then were able to find clear documentation that the occultic-oriented secret societies claiming descent from Illuminism and the French Revolution played a seminal role in the thinking of Marx and Lenin."

As Michael Lind and Jacob Heilbrunn have pointed out in a critique of the book published in *The New York Review of Books*, Robertson moves beyond the Illuminati/Freemason conspiracy and incorporates allegations that originate in anti-Semitic sources.

Again, Dear, it's difficult to determine how many Americans are infected with such ignorance. Recall from earlier in this chapter that the Apollo project engineer Dom Stasi wrote:

Though 30 years ago they had no substantive national influence, today, by their own literally incredible estimate, born-again Evangelicals represent 38% of voting age

Americans. This year [2004] they appeared in record numbers casting, according to Barna Research, an estimated 53% of the total vote...

In an article by Ronald J. Sider, however, he states:²⁸

Barna's polls anywhere from 35 to 43 percent of the total US population meet these criteria for being born-again... Barna limits the term 'evangelical' to a much smaller group – just 7 to 8 percent of the total US population. In addition to meeting the criteria for being born-again, evangelicals must agree with several other things such as the following: Jesus lived a sinless life; eternal salvation is only through grace, not works; Christians have a personal responsibility to evangelize non-Christians; Satan exists. Obviously this definition identifies a much more theologically biblical, orthodox group of Christians.

In turn, how many of these “evangelical born-again” have bought into the “rapture-time” nonsense is unclear to me. Yet, one “data point” that's available is from review of the *Left Behind* series of books:²⁹

The *Left Behind* series of novels about events following the Rapture has been a phenomenal commercial success. The authors are Jerry Jenkins, writer-at-large for the neo-evangelical, psychologized Moody Bible Institute, and Tim LaHaye, well-known author (over 40 books), “noted authority” on Bible prophecy (e.g., *Revelation Unveiled*), and promoter of the heretical “Four Temperaments” theory... More than 65 million copies have been sold (over 75 million counting the graphic novels and children's versions), generating more than 650 million dollars in sales since first published in 1995...

Similar craziness is rampant in Shiite Muslim countries, such as Iran. What follows is the first portion of an article that appears to have been written by Joseph Farah and was posted 21 September 2006 at WorldNetDaily.com.³⁰

Iran leader's UN finale reveals apocalyptic view; Ahmadinejad evokes return of messianic Islamic 'Mahdi'

WASHINGTON – While most of the reporting and analysis of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's speech at the UN focused on what he had to say about the West and specifically the US, his chilling closing remarks were lost on most listeners – and apparently all reporters.

²⁸ The article is entitled “The Scandal of the Evangelical Conscience – Why don't Christians live what they preach?” and is available at <http://www.christianitytoday.com/bc/2005/001/3.8.html>.

²⁹ For example, see <http://www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/BookReviews/left.htm>, from which the quotation was taken.

³⁰ Available at http://www.worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=52071.

The last two paragraphs of his remarks revealed his steadfast and driving conviction... that a messianic figure, known as the “Mahdi” to Muslims, is poised to reveal himself after an apocalyptic holocaust on Earth that leaves most of the world’s population dead.

“I emphatically declare that today’s world, more than ever before, longs for just and righteous people with love for all humanity; and above all longs for the perfect righteous human being and the real savior who has been promised to all peoples and who will establish justice, peace, and brotherhood on the planet,” Ahmadinejad said. “Oh, Almighty God, all men and women are Your creatures and You have ordained their guidance and salvation. Bestow upon humanity that thirsts for justice, the perfect human being promised to all by You, and make us among his followers and among those who strive for his return and his cause.”

With Iran on the verge of producing nuclear weapons and already in possession of sophisticated medium-range missiles, mystical pre-occupation with the coming of a Shiite Islamic messiah is of particular concern because of Iran’s potential for triggering the kind of global conflagration Ahmadinejad envisions will set the stage for the end of the world.

Ahmadinejad is on record as stating he believes he is to have a personal role in ushering in the age of the Mahdi. In a Nov. 16, 2005, speech in Tehran, he said he sees his main mission in life as to “pave the path for the glorious reappearance of Imam Mahdi, may Allah hasten his reappearance.”

According to Shiites, the 12th imam disappeared as a child in the year 941. When he returns, they believe, he will reign on earth for seven years, before bringing about a final judgment and the end of the world.

Ahmadinejad is urging Iranians to prepare for the coming of the Mahdi by turning the country into a mighty and advanced Islamic society and by avoiding the corruption and excesses of the West.

All Iran is buzzing about the Mahdi, the 12th imam and the role Iran and Ahmadinejad are playing in his anticipated return. There’s a new messiah hotline. There are news agencies especially devoted to the latest developments.

“People are anxious to know when and how will he rise; what they must do to receive this worldwide salvation,” says Ali Lari, a cleric at the Bright Future Institute in Iran’s religious center of Qom. “The timing is not clear, but the conditions are more specific,” he adds. “There is a saying: ‘When the students are ready, the teacher will come’.”

Ahmadinejad and others in Iran are deadly serious about the imminent return of the 12th imam, who will prompt a global battle between good and evil (with striking

parallels to biblical accounts of “Armageddon”). Some interpretations of the events that precede his coming include a war that wipes out most of the world’s population...

From all of which it seems perfectly clear (at least to me) that a helluva lot of Americans and Muslims are bonkers, or more explicitly, they’re religious nuts, forming and holding fast to “beliefs” based on zero reliable evidence.

The consequences for humanity are large: my guess is that there’s a ~10% chance that such idiots will cause a world war to end all world wars (for at least a thousand years). And the worst part of it all is that the idiots on both sides, Islamists and Christianists, don’t seem to care if such a war does occur. I’ll go into this huge problem in the next chapter; first, however, you have a problem of your own that you should be working on – by getting more eXercise!