



Human Interest

The monthly newsletter of the
 Humanist Association of the Greater Sacramento Area (HAGSA)
 A Membership Chapter of the American Humanist Association
 2004, April

Fostering
 Reason, Ethics
 and
 Civic Values

Evolution And The Nature Of Science: Challenges In Teaching

The March 5 speaker was Samantha Hens, who is a skeletal anthropologist and on the faculty of California State University Sacramento. She spoke on evolution and the challenges she has had in teaching it in the Bible Belt (specifically Tennessee) and in Sacramento.

Dr. Hens said that, in technologically simple societies, creation myths have been used to explain the origins of the world and of people. There has been a great variety of such myths, many of which show a lot of imagination. In modern times, the introduction of the scientific method has allowed us to test ideas against the evidence provided by the real world. Science and religion are two methods people use to gain the "truth." Science is based on natural causality and evidence. Religious statements are based on faith, with no evidence required.

There are many creation myths; there is only one scientific explanation of origins—evolution through natural selection.

Dr. Hens continued with a quick history of evolutionary thought. The circumnavigation of the globe began to give evidence that the world was not as static as had been believed. There were plants and animals that had previously been unknown to Europeans. There was also evidence of extinctions. Buffoon (whose name became an undeserved term of derision) claimed that changes in the environment could result in changes in life

forms. Dr. Hens gave three sources that helped Darwin come up with the idea of evolution through natural selection. One was the voyage of the Beagle. The other two were the book, "Principles of Geology," by Lyell and the "Essay on Population" by Malthus. Since Darwin's time, the work of Mendel became known and we have recently developed DNA analysis. The evidence gained since then has made the scientific case for evolution through natural selection stronger than ever. Evolution is not a belief; it is based on evidence.

Finally, Dr. Hens gave a sometimes-amusing account of her experiences in teaching evolutionary theory in college. There is a lot of ignorance among young people, as many high school biology instructors are afraid to go against the community norms in many areas that prevent good biology teaching. She wanted to reach out and dispel such ignorance, but realizes that there is a significant number of young people who cannot be reached because they have closed their minds as a result of religious indoctrination.

—Wayne Luney, Recorder

Good and Bad Marriages

The March 21 program was presented by Carolyn Rich Curtis and Craig Johnson. They are licensed marriage and family therapists and both have served as president of the local chapter of the California Association of Marriage and Family Therapists.

The two took turns explaining what makes bad marriages and, later in the program, what makes good marriages. They often reverted to role playing to give examples of what they meant. Their approach was based on the work of John Gottman, author of *An Introduction to a Scientifically Based Marital Therapy*. They started by saying that most relationships start out with a 5:1 ratio of positive to negative interactions. If this ratio reaches 1:1 or worse there are real prob-

lems for the marriage, especially since bad feelings tend to be more intense than good ones.

They said that men are more easily aroused than women and that this is a result of the working of evolution through our hunter-gatherer ancestors. The "fight or flight" response and the resulting quick arousal for men once had survival value. Women, on the other hand, are more sen-

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April Meetings Mark Your Calendar!

Friday, April 2
 at 19:00 (7 pm)

Panel Discussion: A Humanist Way of Judging Our Economy

*Panelists: Leon Lefson
 and Prof. Marc Tool
 Moderator: Ted Webb*

Sunday, April 18
 at 15:00 (3 pm)

Hank and Cleo Kocol The Lewis and Clark Expedition

See page 3 for details.

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Notice Board

Ailing Members

If you know of a HAGSA Member who is sick or undergoing suffering of any kind, please call or send an email message to one of the members of the **Caring Committee**. The members of that committee are listed, under **Functionaries**, on page 5.

Submitting Articles

Do you have an article to submit to Human Interest? Send it as an email message, or attachment to a message, to:

articles@hagsa.org

Alternatively, please call me at 916 773-3865 for mailing instructions.

—**Bill Potts, Editor and Publisher**

HAGSA Web Site

The HAGSA website is now at its permanent address at **http://hagsa.org**

The email address for inquiries is **contact@hagsa.org**

The Webmaster is **Bill Potts** (**webmaster@hagsa.org**)



April Birthdays

Best wishes to the following members who celebrate their birthday in April:

<i>Donald Yost</i>	<i>3rd</i>
<i>Elaine Potts</i>	<i>4th</i>
<i>Walter Gunnarsen</i>	<i>21st</i>
<i>Wayne Luney</i>	<i>23rd</i>
<i>Nadell Gayou</i>	<i>25th</i>

If we've missed your birthday, it's probably because you haven't told us when it is. To do so, call either member of the Caring Committee (see Functionaries, page 5) or send an email to:

birthdays@hagsa.org

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Humanist Counselor/Celebrant

HAGSA member, Phillip LaZier, is one of ten Humanist Counselors and Celebrants in California.

He can be reached at 362-7224 or, via email, at **phillazier@aol.com**

Humanist Manifesto III

HAGSA will place copies of Humanist Manifesto III on the literature table at each meeting.

If you wish to sign a copy, HAGSA will mail it to the AHA for you.

This new notice board is an attempt to tidy up the clutter that has been a characteristic of page 2.

AHA Conference

This year's American Humanist Association Conference is next month—from May 6 to 9 at the Stardust Resort and Casino in Las Vegas, NV. The conference theme is **Oasis in the Desert**.

If you don't have Internet access, you may obtain information by calling the AHA at the phone number in the center of this page. If you have Internet access, go to **http://hagsa.org/ahaconference**.

You only have until April 4 to take advantage of the Stardust Hotel's special rate of \$80 per night. To get the rate, you must call them directly at (800) 634-6757 and give them the Group Code for the conference: AHA0504.

Those receiving awards this year are Daniel C. Dennett (Humanist of the Year Award), Barbara and Joseph Gerstein (Humanist Pioneer Award), Aileen Hernandez (AHA Feminist Caucus's Humanist Heroine Award), Michael Newdow (Humanist Pioneer Award), Joe Nickell (Isaac Asimov Science Award), and Nadine Strossen, of the ACLU (ARL's Religious Liberty Award).

Barry Lynn, Executive Director of Americans United for the Separation of Church and State will make the closing plenary address on Sunday, May 9.

If you want to car pool, call me or email me (at the phone number and/or email address on page 5). I'll let everyone who contacts me know who else has done so; then you can make your own arrangements. I'm using 16 Southwest Airlines Rapid Rewards points to get there the easy (and cheap) way.

—**Bill Potts, President**

HAGSA Member Wins Two Poetry Contest Prizes

Anatole Lubovich recently submitted three poems and won first prizes for two of them in the 78th annual Berkeley Poetry Contest.

One was for *The Periodical Room*, in the *People* category. The other was for *To My Road Hog* (a poem he has read at a HAGSA meeting), in the *Humor* category.

Those who have heard Anatole read his excellent poems at some of our meetings will not be surprised by his success in the contest.

Coming HAGSA Events

Unless otherwise stated, all HAGSA meetings are held in the Fahs room of the UUSS, 2425 Sierra Boulevard, Sacramento 95825.

**Friday, April 2
at 19:00 (7 pm)**

Panel Discussion: A Humanist Way of Judging Our Economy

**Panelists: Leon Lefson
and Prof. Marc Tool
Moderator: Ted Webb**

Marc Tool and Leon Lefson are both Sacramento notables. They will explore our free enterprise system, following which the audience will become part of the program. It seems that all are troubled these days by a system that cuts millions out of health insurance, turns out individual billionaires together with the poor in large numbers, and which spends trillions of dollars on wars with the resulting destruction of hundreds of thousands of lives in Iraq, El Salvador, Guatemala, Vietnam, and on and on. Marc Tool, in one of his publications, notes that "the American economy has been judged by many to be inadequate."

Tool is Professor Emeritus of Economics, having taught in several universities before CSUS, where he chaired the Department of Economics. He has lectured at several US universities and at many universities in Sweden, the Netherlands, Austria and Switzerland, and at additional great educational institutions in Europe.

Lefson has made friends, teaching in his own way, in many parts of the world. He is a retiree of state government, having been an administrator in the welfare field, and in the 1950s worked for the United Nations. He has been and is an activist for peace, social justice and human rights. In the dialogue, Leon will be engaging in what he calls his favorite hobby, deciphering the mythology of private and governmental gobbledygook and of the system generally.

Ted Webb is Minister Emeritus of UUSS.

**Sunday, April 18
at 15:00 (3 pm)**

Hank and Cleo Kocol The Lewis and Clark Expedition

Hank and Cleo Kocol are HAGSA members who hail from the Pacific Northwest.

President Thomas Jefferson, who wanted to explore the territory recently ceded by France to the United States through the Louisiana Purchase, instigated the expedition. Lewis and Clark were the first people of European descent to traverse North America through what is now the United States. The expedition was highly successful.

Hank and Cleo retraced much of their route and took slides of their travels, which will be shown at the meeting.

Friday, May 7

There will be no meeting on this date, because of the conflict with the AHA Annual Meeting in Las Vegas, which quite a few AHA members will be attending.

**Sunday, May 23
at 15:00 (3 pm)**

Esther Franklin and Pete Holmquist H.L. Mencken and Walt Whitman

**Friday, June 4
at 19:00 (7 pm)**

Herb Silverman The Candidate Without a Prayer (probable title)

**Visit the HAGSA website
at <http://hagsa.org>**

Other Meetings

Unitarian Universalist Society of Sacramento 2425 Sierra Boulevard

Sunday Forums at 13:00 (1 pm)

April

4th: Jeannie Keltner, Cuba

**11th: Dr. Ruth Reck, *The threat of
global warming***

**18th: John Roundtree, *Karl Marx—
more relevant than ever***

25th: (To be announced)

Atheists and Other Freethinkers

**Sierra II Community Center
Room 10**

**2791 24th Street
from 14:30 to 17:00
(2:30 to 5:00 pm)**

Sunday, April 11

Whirlwind Survey of PseudoAstronomy

Liam McDaid, astronomy coordinator at Sacramento City College, will present AOF with a whirlwind tour of pseudo-astronomy under the title, "Astrology, Ancient Astronauts, Popular Sky Goals and the Ongoing End of the World." Presentation is followed by Q&A and light refreshments. The public is welcome.

Caring Committee

Having trouble getting to meetings, because of poor health, poor vision, or other problems of mobility?

Call either Margo Gunnarsen
or Aida Somkuti.

Their phone numbers are on page 5.

Rationally Speaking

Open letter to Colin Powell

By Massimo Pigliucci, PhD, Department of Botany, University of Tennessee
Published March 2004, © Massimo Pigliucci, 2004



Dear Mr. Powell:
Like most Americans of either political persuasion, I think you are a fundamentally decent person, principled, and honest. Heck, I would have liked to see you as the first American Vice President with a Democratic ticket (this country apparently isn't ready for a black or a woman President, though many other democracies have jumped through at least the latter hoop on the long road to civilization).

It is therefore with sincere hope that I ask you to formally resign from the Bush administration before the upcoming elections. That, of course, would help the American people put in perspective a President who ran a campaign as a "compassionate conservative," only to clearly demonstrate that he is neither (he is not treating gays or Haitians with compassion, and the ballooning deficit that he created makes it clear that he sure ain't fiscally conservative).

More importantly, your resignations would help the rest of the world avoid four more years of an administration bent on destroying the environment for economic gain, on demolishing nations to score cheap political points, and on risking the destabilization of international finances just so that a crooked minority of rich people can get just a tinsy bitsy more rich than they already are.

However, the fundamental reason for you to resign is because you are a decent man, and resignation at this point is the only decent thing to do. Mr. Powell, most Americans believed you when you went to the United Nations, sticking your neck way out in order to substantiate Bush's case that Iraq was a clear and present danger to the US, that Saddam Hussein was building an arsenal of nuclear and biological weapons (you know, nothing compared to what

the US already has, but that's another matter ...), and that he was also somehow connected with Osama Bin Laden's Al Qaeda operations.

A year after the beginning of the war we know beyond reasonable doubt that Iraq was not a direct threat to the United States, for the simple fact that there are no detectable amounts of weapons of mass destruction on Iraqi territory. Moreover, it is true that Al Qaeda is now connected to Iraq, but it is the American invasion and the fall of Hussein that has created that connection, in yet another example of alleged good intentions gone bad in American international policy (other examples include the funding and political backing of both Osama and Saddam, when it was convenient to do so against the Soviet and Iranian threats respectively—I particularly like that photo of Don Rumsfeld shaking hands with Hussein, back in 1983).

Of course, intelligent observers did have serious doubts about your show at the United Nations to begin with. I mean, simply pointing to fuzzy dots on a satellite image and saying, "See? Here, this is a chemical weapons factory!" did seem a bit far fetched even then. I, for one, didn't believe you for a second. But there was your perceived honesty and integrity that did leave some reasonable doubt that you could be, after all, right.

Well, you were not, and it seems to me that the only decent thing to do at this point—if you really are as honest and deserving of respect as I still think you may be—is to admit that you and Bush were wrong, and leave the latter to face the consequences.

Yes, I know, you have been saying that surely no decent person can regret the departure of Hussein and the liberation of Iraq. I completely agree on the first point, though the second one will depend greatly on what will happen there during the next few months (you don't really think that an Iran-style theocracy

would be an improvement, do you? And yet, at the moment, that seems the most likely outcome of upcoming democratic elections).

But that wasn't why you and Bush (and Cheney, and Rumsfeld, and the rest of that fine gang) advocated war. If it were a matter of losing American lives and jeopardizing American international prestige in order to liberate oppressed people, why start with Iraq? Pakistan or North Korea would have made much worthier targets, especially considering that we know they have nuclear capability. Not to mention other crooked countries, such as Saudi Arabia (remember that Bin Laden and most of his followers come from there, not from Iraq?), or Iran (look at what sham the "democratic" elections have been there very recently).

No, what you said to the world that fateful day at the United Nations was that the reason for the US to invade Iraq was that Hussein was working toward developing the capacity for direct nuclear strike on America. He wasn't, you were wrong, and honest people of integrity admit their mistakes and try to amend the consequences, if possible. It is the decent thing to do, Mr. Powell.

Massimo Pigliucci's monthly columns can be found at <http://fp.bio.utk.edu/skeptic>.

Marriages (Continued from page 1)

sitive to social cues and can more easily tell when a relationship is going wrong. A good strategy, they claim, is for the wife to reduce the husband's arousal and for the husband, in turn, to accept the influence of the wife. Try to defuse the argument but, at the same time, do not pretend that differences do not exist. Isolation from one's spouse is not a solution if the marriage is to continue.

They cautioned that relapse after therapy is fairly common and that therapy "tune-ups" every six months or so should be helpful.

—Wayne Luney, Recorder

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President's Message



The tawdriness of the Bush administration was once more revealed in March when the top-level troops (Dick Cheney, Condoleezza Rice, Scott McClellan, Donald Rumsfeld, and others) were deployed to discredit Richard Clarke, his book (*Against All Enemies*), and his testimony to the 9/11 Commission.

On ABC's Good Morning America on March 22, one of the things Rice said was, "I can tell you that when we got to Camp David, it was a map of Afghanistan that was unrolled on the table." At the White House press briefing, the same day, Scott McClellan said, "And at the National Security Council meeting, what happened? There was a map that was unrolled on the table, and it was a map of Afghanistan." It's not clear whether they're both talking about the same meeting. However, the similarity in the wording is very revealing and leads one to believe that these are not independent and original statements. Rather, they are, more than likely, Karl Rove talking points, memorized by Rice, McClellan and all the other rascals. That a senior Cabinet member like Rice would be dependent on force-fed talking points is, of course, appalling.

This, however, should all come as no surprise to any sentient person who has been following the antics of the Bush administration. But it does reinforce what we already know: for them, the ends justify the means, no matter how dishonest or nefarious those means may be.

Dick Cheney claimed, contrary to Richard Clarke's assertions, that the Bush administration made terrorism a top priority in the first eight months of 2001 and that Clarke didn't know what he was talking about, because he was "out of the loop." Think about that for a moment. They were supposedly giving terrorism top priority, but they were leaving the country's top counter-terrorism expert (with 30 years experience under Reagan, Bush the Elder and Clinton) out of the loop? If that isn't a potential case of being hoist by their own petard, then the members of the fourth estate aren't doing their jobs.

Speaking of the fourth estate, the members of the press and the broadcast media do seem to have improved their critical faculties in the wake of the Democratic Primaries, in which the pugilistic style of Howard Dean may not have won him the nomination, but did

stiffen the spines of the other contenders, including John Kerry. Scott McClellan is being given a much harder time in his daily press briefings than was Ari Fleischer. The reporters are asking demanding questions and refusing to be fobbed off with obtuse or spin-loaded responses. When McClellan tries to move on to the next question, they persist in their demands for a straight answer. They don't get one, of course, but McClellan's credibility is damaged (something that could actually be redundant). Even though Helen Thomas has something akin to pariah status in the Press Briefing Room these days, her fine example is now, somewhat belatedly, being followed by her colleagues.

One of Donald Rumsfeld's remarks (as reported by Richard Clarke), in the wake of the 9/11 attacks, is very revealing. When asked why he wanted to go after Iraq, rather than Afghanistan, he said that Iraq had better targets. Not only is the man a loose cannon, he's also an incredibly immoral loose cannon. Soon after Clarke had questioned the wisdom of Rumsfeld's statement, he was called into a private meeting with George Bush, in which Bush urged him to find a connection between 9/11 and Iraq. Needless to say, Clarke could find no connection—and said so.

Meanwhile, when Bush isn't on the campaign trail or lying about his opponent's voting record, he's busy with his little hammer, chipping away, brick by brick, at the wall of separation between church and state. What he is unable to accomplish through Congressional votes, he does by stealth, chicanery and executive orders. Humanists and religious liberals will do their best to give him the bum's rush on this basis alone. We can only hope that others will become sufficiently aware of his appalling (or, rather, non-existent) stewardship of the economy, the environment, civil rights, civil liberties, health and national security to grease the skids for him.

—Bill Potts, President

Humanists Support Dynamic Role for Marriage

Washington, DC, February 24, 2004—In endorsing a constitutional amendment to ban same-sex marriages, President Bush exhibits a disappointingly narrow view of love, commitment, and family. Humanist leaders explain that marriage is a progressive, vital institution.

“The institution of civil marriage is dynamic rather than static,” said Mel Lipman, president of the American Humanist Association, “having progressed dramatically over a relatively brief span of time.”

Since the adoption of our Constitution, race restrictions on marital choice have been eliminated, laws that allowed marriage to be used as a means of subjugating women eliminated, divorce regulations equalized to protect both parties, and government can no longer intrude on sexual intimacy. In just the last generation, we have seen an increase in the age at which people marry, and in the rate at which they decide to “unmarry.” Marriages are no longer oppressively arranged but entered into equally through love, choice and commitment.

Bush’s recommendation would result, for the first time since the failed and repealed prohibition amendment, that the Constitution was modified in an attempt to control personal behavior and restrict individual liberties. In Bush’s endorsement speech, he cited America’s religious roots as support for his argument and made the outrageous claim that opposite-sex marriage is “honored and encouraged in all cultures and by every religious faith.”

Lipman responded, “Many religious groups are supportive of equal rights for same-sex couples. Bush’s proposal to write discrimination into our Constitution on religious grounds is in direct contradiction to the first amendment guarantee of religious liberty. Marriage in the United States is secular, not sacramental.”

AHA executive director Tony Hileman added, “The arguments in favor of a constitutional amendment are on the losing side of human rights and civil liberties. The right of same-sex couples to marry enhances individual liberty and does so at no expense to the common good. Same- and opposite-sex couples in committed relationships should enjoy equal protections and benefits and not be treated separately. Separate is never equal.”

Humanists Laud Supreme Court Decision to Uphold Church-State Separation

Washington, DC, February 25, 2004—Today, the U.S. Supreme Court declared that a state may specifically prohibit the funding of religious instruction, freeing states to offer scholarships for secular studies without being compelled to sponsor religious practice. “With this decision, the Court has demonstrated regard for the principle of church-state separation, which is the bedrock of religious freedom for all Americans,” stated Tony Hileman, executive director of the American Humanist Association (AHA).

This case, *Locke v. Davey*, challenged the Washington State Promise Scholarship awarding financial aid based on academic, income, and enrollment. Davey, a student enrolled in a ministry program, was denied funding based on the Washington State Constitution, which disallows funds for religious instruction or for programs that prepare students for the ministry.

The Supreme Court 7-2 vote decided that the federal Free Exercise Clause does not require Washington to fund religious instruction. It has further implications in setting a clear precedent that states can offer greater protection in terms of church-state separation than the federal government.

“The Court’s decision is encouraging as we are in the midst of challenge after challenge to the First Amendment, where public funds are being directed to faith-based initiatives, school vouchers, and social services,” concludes Hileman.

California Court Refuses to Grant Special Rights to Catholic Charities

Washington, DC, March 2, 2004—The California Supreme Court set a significant precedent yesterday in declaring that all employees in their state, including those employed by religious organizations engaged in secular services, must have access to health care plans that include birth control coverage. AHA Executive Director Tony Hileman responded, “To provide special privileges for religious organizations goes against the law’s intent to provide quality healthcare for California workers, and provides unnecessarily favorable treatment to religious groups that runs afoul of the Establishment Clause of the U.S. Constitution.”

Hileman continues, “Just as discriminatory organizations may be morally opposed to hiring people of color but may not discriminate in their hiring, so must religious or-

ganizations in California provide equal birth control benefits whether or not they are morally opposed to contraception.”

Attorney Richard Ackerman, representing the Life Legal Defense Fund filing a brief supporting Catholic Charities, exemplifies the discriminatory perspective of the losing side in this case. In response to the decision, Ackerman displays disbelief that his public interest, but faith-based law firm, could be required to hire homosexuals or pay for abortions.

The AHA finds this case consistent with the Supreme Court’s *Locke v. Davey* decision last week, which made clear that states may offer greater protection in terms of church-state separation than the federal government. AHA president Mel Lipman says, “The state of California certainly has an interest in providing adequate health care coverage to its workforce and in supporting women’s reproductive rights. By forcing religious organizations that provide secular services to play by the rules the state does not offend the guarantee of religious liberty nor does it establish a religion.”

“Public services must be free from overt sectarianism. Therefore, Catholic Charities must abide by the laws if it intends to engage in public services and not disregard women’s reproductive rights in the process,” concludes Lipman.

Rights of Humanist School Children Up for Grabs in Court Case on Pledge of Allegiance

Washington, DC, March 24, 2004—Today, the Supreme Court heard arguments in the controversial case to remove “under God” from the Pledge of Allegiance. Plaintiff Michael Newdow insisted that it is unconstitutional for children attending public schools to be led in recitations of a Pledge that invokes religion.

“Whatever the Court does in this case will decide whether or not Humanists are to be regarded as second-class citizens,” says Mel Lipman, President of the American Humanist Association, whose members are among those most affected by this case.

AHA executive director Tony Hileman concurred, “This is one of the biggest moments for Humanists, who have been fighting government endorsement of religion for decades.” The AHA submitted a friend-of-the-court brief on behalf of Newdow that emphasizes how the current

Continued on page 11: Pledge

Church/State Separation

AU Criticizes Bush 'Recess' Appointment Of Alabama Attorney General William Pryor To Federal Bench

11th Circuit Nominee Has Extreme Record

February 20, 2004—Americans United for Separation of Church and State today blasted President George W. Bush's "recess" appointment of Alabama Attorney General William Pryor to a federal appeals court.

"This action shows utter contempt of the process of judicial selection," said Americans United Executive Director Barry W. Lynn. "It's also proof that Bush is determined to stack the federal courts with far-right judicial activists."

Continued Lynn, "An extremist like William Pryor should not be awarded a seat on the federal bench, even temporarily." Lynn called the action, "an election-year payoff to the Religious Right."

Last year, Americans United issued a report highly critical of Pryor's tenure as Alabama attorney general. The report details Pryor's many attacks on church-state separation. It notes that Pryor has questioned the Supreme Court's role as final arbiter of constitutional conflicts and even argued that the First Amendment does not fully apply to the states.

Pryor was a strong supporter of former Alabama Chief Justice Roy Moore, who displayed a two-and-half-ton Ten Commandments monument in the state Judicial Building. Although Pryor's office was legally required to prosecute Moore for defying a federal court order to remove the monument, Pryor repeatedly stated his belief that government agencies should be permitted to display religious symbols.

AU's report noted that on April 12, 1997, Pryor appeared at a rally on Moore's behalf. Moore, then a state judge in Etowah County, was under fire for displaying a Ten Commandments plaque in his courtroom and opening jury sessions with prayer.

"God has chosen, through his son Jesus

Christ, this time, this place for all Christians—Protestants, Catholics and Orthodox—to save our country and save our courts," Pryor told the crowd.

Lynn called Pryor's appointment to the U.S. 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals "an insult to all Americans who value religious freedom." He called on the Senate to make certain that Pryor is not reappointed once his term expires in January of 2005.

AU Criticizes Bush Endorsement Of Marriage Amendment Proposed Constitutional Change Threatens Religious Liberty, Individual Rights

February 24, 2004—Americans United for Separation of Church and State today criticized President George W. Bush for endorsing a marriage amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

Speaking at a press conference this morning, Bush asserted, "The union of a man and woman is the most enduring human institution, honored and encouraged in all cultures and by every religious faith.... Marriage cannot be severed from its cultural, religious and natural roots without weakening the good influence of society."

Said the Rev. Barry W. Lynn, Americans United executive director, "President Bush is just wrong. A growing number of religious groups perform marriages for same-sex couples. Bush's proposal gives some religious traditions favored treatment.

"The Federal Marriage Amendment is a grave mistake," Lynn continued. "The Constitution should protect the rights of all Americans; it should never be rewritten to take rights away.

"I do not want to see the legacy of Thomas Jefferson and James Madison revised by President Bush under pressure from Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell," Lynn concluded.

The Bush endorsement is widely seen as an election-year gambit to shore up support among the Religious Right, which has demanded that Bush do more to oppose efforts to legalize gay marriage.

In a recent letter to members of Congress, Americans United warned that a proposed "Federal Marriage Amendment" would set a dangerous precedent by restricting individual rights. The measure (H.J. Res. 56), introduced by U.S. Rep. Marilyn Musgrave (R-CO), would define marriage as consisting "only of the union of a man and a woman."

A Federal Marriage Amendment, the AU letter asserts, would harm religious liberty by writing the view of marriage favored by certain religious groups into constitutional law for all to follow. The letter notes that some religious denominations approve of same-sex unions and others do not.

"Far from protecting religion, the Federal Marriage Amendment would harm religion by expressing a preference for those religions that limit marriage to a man and woman and by relegating to second-class status the members of religions that have chosen to recognize same-sex unions," reads the AU letter. "Not only would the Amendment thereby contravene the longstanding Establishment Clause principle that government should not endorse some religious perspectives over others, but it would do so through a change to the Constitution itself, reflecting the government's greatest imprimatur and rendering this preference even more egregious."

Religious Right groups and their allies have been pushing for a marriage amendment in light of recent state court rulings requiring state governments to recognize gay marriages or civil unions. While religious groups have the right to advocate for the amendment, Americans United asserts in its letter to Congress that the drive is misguided because the amendment "would enshrine into the Constitution a particular religious viewpoint and would severely limit the religious liberty of millions of Americans."

Americans United's letter says the amendment is unnecessary as a protection of the free exercise of religion. Some amendment supporters contend that new constitutional language is necessary because the freedom of houses

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Marriage Amendment (Continued from page 7)
of worship to decide whom they will marry will be threatened if some states approve gay marriage.

The AU letter, sent to the House and Senate Feb. 5, refutes that claim. AU notes that the religious freedom provisions of the First Amendment bar “any court or legislature from requiring any religious institution or person to perform marriage ceremonies for anyone. Indeed, the Free Exercise Clause protects houses of worship in their freedom to limit marriages on whatever theological grounds they choose. Thus, a church may limit marriage to its own members, require marrying couples to promise to raise children in that faith, refuse to perform ceremonies for anyone who has been divorced, or impose other limitations based on that faith’s tenets and beliefs.”

AU Praises High Court Ruling Against State Funding Of Religious Education

February 25, 2004—Americans United for Separation of Church and State today lauded the U.S. Supreme Court ruling that concluded states cannot be required to extend scholarship aid to college students training to become members of the clergy.

In a 7-2 ruling, the high court turned away a Washington state college student’s claim that his religious liberty rights were harmed when state officials denied a scholarship after learning he had enrolled in a religious college to study pastoral ministries. State officials cited the Washington Constitution, which includes a provision barring public funding of religion.

“This is a huge defeat for those who want to force taxpayers to pay for religious schooling and other ministries,” said the Rev. Barry W. Lynn, executive director of Americans United. “This maintains an important barrier to efforts to fund school vouchers and other faith-based programs. Americans clearly have a right to practice their religion, but they can’t demand that the government pay for it.”

Writing for the majority in *Locke v.*

Davey, Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist wrote that, “Training someone to lead a congregation is an essentially religious endeavor. Indeed, majoring in devotional theology is akin to a religious calling as well as an academic pursuit.”

The 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in 2002 that Washington State engaged in religious discrimination when it offered state aid for secular education but denied it for religious education.

The federal appeals court ruling put at risk constitutional provisions in 37 states that bar government funding of religion. Americans United filed a friend-of-the-court brief urging the Supreme Court to invalidate the 9th Circuit’s decision.

“Religious Right lobbyists have argued over and over again that if government provides funds for secular activities it must do so for religious activities as well,” Lynn said. “The high court has squashed that tired argument, pointing to the fact that this nation has a long-held tradition against levying taxes to fund religion.”

AU’s Lynn said the decision is also a defeat for President George W. Bush’s “faith-based” program.

“The Bush administration has urged states to implement ‘faith-based’ programs, saying that government must fund religious social services just as it does secular social services,” Lynn continued. “The ‘faith-based’ initiative suffered a severe blow with today’s high court ruling.”

ACLU Calls Bush Support for Marriage Amendment Un-American

February 26, 2004—Responding to President Bush’s official endorsement of a constitutional amendment to deny marriage rights to same-sex and unmarried couples, the American Civil Liberties Union said that the amendment supported by the White House is much broader than advertised and would not only ban civil unions but could completely deny a broad range of government benefits to unmarried couples, be they gay or straight.

“President Bush’s endorsement of this mean-spirited amendment shows that he is neither compassionate nor concerned with the rights of all Americans,” said Anthony D. Romero, Executive Director of the ACLU. “Gays and lesbians are our neighbors, our co-workers, our friends. They serve as firefighters, police, doctors and professional athletes. They laugh at the same jokes and worry about car payments and credit card debt. Amending the constitution to deny them the same rights we all take for granted just isn’t very American.”

The proposed amendment could undermine state domestic partnership, adoption, foster care and kinship care laws as well as deny all unmarried couples legal protections for their relationships by overriding any federal or state constitutional protections and federal, state and local laws.

Americans United Urges Senate Panel To Reject Marriage Amendment

March 3, 2004—A Senate subcommittee should reject a constitutional amendment defining marriage as solely between a man and a woman, says Americans United for Separation of Church and State.

In a hearing this morning, the Senate Subcommittee on the Constitution, chaired by Sen. John Cornyn (R-Texas), is looking at the November ruling in *Goodridge v. Department of Public Health*, in which the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court held that gay couples have the right to marry under the state’s constitution.

President George W. Bush recently announced his support of a constitutional amendment defining marriage as “only of the union of a man and a woman.” Bush’s endorsement came after an aggressive lobbying campaign by his Religious Right allies.

In a press statement today, the Rev. Barry W. Lynn, Americans United’s executive director, decried the notion that the Massachusetts high court’s ruling was out of line and opposed any scheme to alter the U.S. Constitution.

“I’m not worried about gay marriage,” Lynn said. “I am, however, very wor-

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ried about the marriage between President Bush and Religious Right zealots. Our Constitution has never been amended to take away minority rights, and we should not be taking such an action now.

“The reaction to the Massachusetts ruling has been shrill and over-the-top. There is nothing radical about preserving individual liberty and demanding equal protection for all,” Lynn continued. “Nor is it extreme to uphold the separation of church and state, which is also what that decision did.”

Last month, Americans United sent a letter to the Senate opposing congressional approval of a federal marriage amendment. Americans United maintained that an amendment would harm religious liberty by writing the view of marriage favored by certain religious groups into constitutional law for all to follow.

Lynn called on the Senate subcommittee to refrain from supporting an amendment to the Constitution that would limit liberty, not bolster or protect it.

Americans United Urges Senate Panel Not To Fund California Mission Churches Proposed Federal Upkeep Of Church Buildings and Religious Icons Violates U.S. Constitution

March 9, 2004—Americans United for Separation of Church and State today urged a Senate panel to reject a plan to allocate \$10 million in federal funds for mission churches in California.

Today’s hearing focused on the California Missions Preservation Act (S. 1306), a measure that would earmark public funds for the repair and upkeep of 21 Roman Catholic mission churches and their associated religious artworks and artifacts.

In testimony before the Senate Subcommittee on National Parks, the Rev. Barry W. Lynn, Americans United executive director, said federal aid to religion violates the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. Houses of worship, he said, must be supported by vol-

untary giving, not government subsidies. Nineteen of the 21 churches are still owned by the Catholic Church and provide mass and other religious services for active parishes.

“Preservation of historic buildings is important, but preservation of the constitutional right to religious liberty is vital,” said Lynn. “These missions are houses of worship; they are not simply museums. Funds to fix the ceilings and windows and to revitalize the religious icons on the walls must come from their congregants or from the tens of thousands of yearly visitors and from America’s charitable foundations. I believe that the people of California and tourists from around the nation can preserve these mission buildings without passing the collection plate to Uncle Sam.”

Lynn insisted that the cost of church maintenance has long been regarded as the responsibility of individual donors, not the government. He noted that James Madison, the Father of the Constitution, vetoed a congressional appropriation of a small parcel of land to a Baptist church in Mississippi.

“Madison was hardly hostile to religion,” observed Lynn, “but was faithful to his original understanding that religious groups had to rely on voluntary giving, not tax funding coerced by the State.”

Lynn, an expert in church-state law, pointed out that the U.S. Supreme Court on at least three occasions has ruled against the use of direct public funding to maintain churches and church schools.

Concluded Lynn, “The history of religion in America is a story of voluntary giving, not a chronicle of government subsidy. In no small measure, the vitality and diversity of religious discourse should be credited to the rigorously ‘hands off’ approach government has taken toward religion. Governments do not choose favorite faiths for assistance; they do not bail out religious groups like some ailing corporations. In America, religions make it or break it by themselves.”

IRS Urged To Investigate Austin Church For Holding Republican Fund-Raiser

March 12, 2004—The Internal Revenue Service should investigate an Austin church that allowed a Republican rally and fund-raiser in its sanctuary, says Americans United for Separation of Church and State.

In a formal complaint to the Internal Revenue Service today, Americans United asserted that the Westover Hills Church of Christ engaged in illegal partisan politicking by allowing Legacy PAC to hold a Feb. 5 “Call to Victory” event at the church. The meeting featured state Republican Party officials and GOP candidates, and during the event, the PAC collected money for Republican campaigns.

Federal tax law prohibits 501(c)3 tax-exempt organizations, including churches, from intervening in political campaigns on behalf of candidates for public office.

The partisan character of the event at the Austin church was confirmed by William O. Pate, a local university student who attended “Call to Victory” and drafted a written summary of the meeting. The student’s report of the event and documents about it from Legacy PAC’s website were submitted to the IRS by Americans United.

Two officials with the Texas Republican Party spoke at the event - party Chair Tina J. Benkiser and Treasurer Susan Howard Chrane. During their remarks, Benkiser and Chrane promoted Republican candidates, including President George W. Bush. Republican candidates also distributed literature and sought votes at the event, which opened with a prayer led by a church elder.

During the meeting, an official with the Legacy PAC announced that he intended to collect \$5,000 for Republican candidates in the church that night. Church collection plates were then passed through the pews.

Said the Rev. Barry W. Lynn, Americans United executive director, “I am shocked that politicians and clergy would convert a church sanctuary into a

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Fund Raiser (Continued from page 9)

smoke-filled back room. Houses of worship are supposed to focus on winning souls, not winning elections.”

In a March 12 complaint to the IRS, Lynn wrote, “Church support of this partisan event appears to violate the IRS Code, which prohibits intervention by tax-exempt organizations in political campaigns on behalf of candidates for public office. The church not only allowed its facilities to be used by Republican candidates seeking office, but also permitted a political action committee to fund-raise for Republican candidates in the church sanctuary. This appears to be a clear violation of federal tax law.”

Section 501(c)3 of the IRS Code prohibits tax-exempt organizations, including churches, from intervening in political campaigns on behalf of or in opposition to candidates for public office.

The IRS has a “zero tolerance” policy for violations. In 1995, the federal agency revoked the tax exemption of the Church at Pierce Creek in upstate New York after the church paid for newspaper advertisements against presidential candidate Bill Clinton in 1992. The IRS investigation was sparked by a formal complaint filed by Americans United. The federal courts later upheld the revocation.

Americans United sponsors a special non-partisan effort called “Project Fair Play” that seeks to educate houses of worship about the requirements of federal tax law relating to politics. In cases where the facts warrant, AU reports incidents to the IRS.

“We are always reluctant to take the step of asking the IRS to investigate a church,” said Lynn, “but in some cases, the apparent disregard of federal law is so flagrant and egregious that there is no other choice.”

Supreme Court Set To Hear Arguments In Dispute Over Pledge Of Allegiance

March 18, 2004—The high-profile debate over the Pledge of Allegiance in public schools will have the attention of the nation’s top court next week.

On March 24, the U.S. Supreme Court

will hear arguments in *Elk Grove Unified School District v. Newdow*. The lawsuit, brought by California parent Michael Newdow, argues that school-sponsored recitation of the Pledge violates the constitutional separation of church and state due to the religious phrase “under God.”

The 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals agreed with Newdow, but California school officials and the Bush administration joined forces to call on the high court to reverse the ruling. Americans United for Separation of Church and State and its allies filed a friend-of-the-court-brief asserting that the First Amendment prohibits public schools from sponsoring religion.

The Rev. Barry W. Lynn, Americans United executive director, said the *Newdow* case is extraordinarily important.

“I’m not going to predict how the Supreme Court will rule,” said Lynn. “But since 1948, the high court—in case after case—has never allowed public schools to promote religion. I hope the justices continue that wise policy. Parents, not politicians, have the right to decide what religious rituals their children participate in.”

Congressional Panel Told ‘Faith-Based’ Initiative Threatens Church-State Separation

Funding Scheme Forces Taxpayers To Underwrite Proselytism And Foster Discrimination

March 23, 2004—President George W. Bush’s “faith-based” initiative threatens the constitutional separation of church and state by ushering in a new era of government-supported religion, Americans United Executive Director Barry W. Lynn told a congressional subcommittee today.

Testifying before the House Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, Drug Policy, and Human Resources this morning, Lynn urged members of Congress to oppose President George W. Bush’s efforts to expand his faith-based initiative.

“We continue to careen dangerously down the path of government-supported religion,” Lynn said.

“Congress has a duty to apply the brakes.”

Lynn outlined several objections to the faith-based initiative, noting that it will require taxpayers to underwrite religious proselytism, foster discrimination with taxpayer money and force the government to play favorites among religious groups.

Regarding religious proselytism, Lynn told the committee, “The president has repeatedly stated his desire to fund groups that permeate their programs with an all-encompassing religious element. In fact, he often argues that this religious component is what makes these programs successful. In light of this, claims by the administration that tax funds will not be used to promote the spread of religion ring hollow.”

Lynn added that the initiative will further discrimination.

“Every poll I have seen shows that the American people do not believe faith-based groups should be able to take tax money and engage in discrimination when hiring staff to provide what are supposed to be non-religious services,” he said. “They will not stand idly by while the nation’s civil rights laws are placed on the chopping block.”

Finally, Lynn warned that the funding plan is dangerous because it allows government to treat religious groups unequally.

“Nearly all of the money disbursed under ‘faith-based initiatives’ so far has gone to Christian groups, including one grant to TV preacher Pat Robertson’s Operation Blessing,” observed Lynn. “James Towey, director of the White House Office on Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, said last year that Wiccans are unlikely to get any aid because they are a ‘fringe’ group whose members lack ‘loving hearts.’ What is this, if not rank bigotry?”

Lynn concluded by noting that James Madison, the Father of the Constitution, opposed taxpayer funding of religion.

“Madison would have been horrified at the notion that Congress or the president would embark on the reckless journey of taxpayer funding of religion,” Lynn told the subcommittee. “His words of wisdom remain relevant today, if only we will listen.”

Members' Letters

To the Bee

The fix on Social Security *[appeared 2004-03-07]*

Re "Social Security curbs urged," Feb. 26: Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan's recommendations to reduce Social Security benefits or raise the eligibility age to deal with the budget deficit ignore several important truths. Social Security, preserved for working Americans, is a trust fund, not a slush fund to be used for irresponsible tax breaks for a privileged few. Working people did not cause the deficit. The tax breaks plus military appropriations are what have caused the problem.

Since the Depression, Social Security has been the life preserver for millions of retirees, disabled people, widows and surviving children. Today, more than 4 million children rely on this program.

Social Security in 2004 will be \$150 billion in the black, with surpluses all the way to 2018. President Bush uses the surplus to make the federal budget deficit appear smaller. The government should not take away our entitlements, leaving only crumbs, while continuing tax breaks for those to whom the money is icing on their already mammoth cakes.

—Joan B. Lee, Sacramento

Reporting rape *[appeared 2004-03-17]*

Re "Women voice outrage over Sheriff's Department's silence on assault," March 11: That the Sheriff's Department didn't report the rape near Sunrise Mall was reprehensible, but WEAVE's weak statement about it has compounded the problem. Not only did the woman endure rape, she was also cut multiple times on her face and arms. In addition, this did not concern just one man, but four men, and in the circumstances cited, few women could have protected themselves.

To say women always have to be aware of possible rapists is sadly true, but to pass off this torturous rape as "just another" is to put the onus on the victim and not on the perpetrators.

Women want to know when such horrendous attacks have taken place. Although most women in our society realize they are targets for some men's wrath and we are always alert, extraordinary assaults are different. If we hear about them we can get extra protection. We can have family drive us from work, we can car pool, we can shop with two or three others and so on.

Passing this horror off as nothing out of the ordinary or not reportable because the police "don't know enough" is a slap in the face to all women.

—Cleo Kocol, Roseville

Faith in America *[appeared 2004-03-21]*

Individual religious liberty is one of the basic principles upon which our country is founded. The denominationally diverse Framers of the Constitution knew from historical experience that church-state entanglement threatens religious freedom. Modern pluralism demands that the various faiths unite in the effort to preserve the prerogative to practice their beliefs as they choose.

Proponents of the First Amendment from all theological viewpoints share the belief that "under God" in the pledge is unconstitutional. Newdow is going to Washington not as a disgruntled atheist, but as a concerned citizen seeking to protect the right of all Americans to worship if, when and where they please.

—Gerald Bachman, North Highlands

Brights' worldview *[appeared 2004-03-21]*

Many of our nation's most divisive social issues—cloning, gay/lesbian marriage, abortion rights, contraception rights, acceptance of others' beliefs, and the "under God" pledge controversy—can be traced to the belief that an ancient book is a better source of information than is modern science, logic and the concept fostered by the enlightenment of individual social freedom. The book, written by tribal men, is seen as laying down "sacred law" for women, homosexuals and the rest of us. Literally, that means that women and homosexuals should do today what the men of an ancient world thought was right for those times. Full of archaic fallacies and internal contradictions, this book denies many contemporary scientific/medical facts and social realities.

Applying ancient recipes to modern problems is untenable. Another way of understanding ourselves and the universe is called naturalism. A worldview unburdened of the supernatural and mystical (a Brights' worldview) can help resolve issues in science, morality and social mores. Isn't it time for a new Enlightenment?

—Paul Geisert, Sacramento
Co-Director, The Brights' Net

Looking for the cure to the epidemic of obesity in America *[appeared 2004-03-23]*

My mother fed me and my siblings fried everything with loads of lard and butter! Plenty of pies, cookies, cakes, pancakes, syrup, bacon and eggs. I was slender as a child but am now obese. I raised my children on much the same high-calorie foods. All are now in their mid-30s and slender. Now we primarily eat healthy foods along with junk food on occasion.

What's the difference between us? Exercise! I don't, they do.

When my children were young we did not own a television or video games. When we did purchase a TV, the kids were in their teens and too busy to sit in front of a boob tube.

If this country wants to cure obesity, stop scaring parents about "strangers," which keeps children indoors glued to the TV! Design the front porch back into architecture. Spread the rumor that it's bad to let kids have TVs in their rooms. Throw away the video games, cell-phones, computers and e-mail. Get them bicycles, skates, backpacks and magnifying glasses. Encourage them to explore their universe—even if it's in their own back yard!

—Pat Kelley, Fair Oaks

Pledge (Continued from page 6)

Pledge imposes a religious belief on those without such beliefs. "The First Amendment does not require hostility toward religion but mandates government neutrality toward religion," explains Hileman.

As stated in the AHA's brief, and reinforced today by Newdow, the Pledge, "indeed brings religion into the public school classroom in an intimidating fashion. Students who are singled out due to their inability to pledge allegiance to their country will be disfavored over those who support the majority religious belief in our society: monotheism." Newdow argues that reciting the Pledge is not a passive reading of a historic document but an active, daily swearing of loyalty to one's country and, since 1954, this oath requires an avowal of the existence of a single God and that our nation is subservient to that God.

During the oral arguments, which debated both the issue of standing and the merits of "under God" in the Pledge, Chief Justice Rehnquist admonished people in the courtroom for applauding Newdow's assertion that the 1954 Congress voted to include "under God" in the Pledge for political reasons.

"It is difficult to predict the outcome," said Hileman, "yet the Supreme Court hasn't specifically permitted the endorsement of religion in public schools in over fifty years—the Court must recognize that 'under God' is not the language of patriotic ceremony but rather governmental endorsement of sectarian religion."