

# **An Atheist's Reaction to War with Iraq**

**March 19, 2003**

**by David Fitzgerald**



How does the reaction of Atheists to the prospect of war in Iraq differ from that of the Religious? No matter what Pat Robertson tells you, there is no unified world agenda among the godless, for the simple reason that Atheists, Humanists, Agnostics -call them what you will- are free thinkers. We run the gamut from sweet little feisty grandmas to surprisingly thoughtful punk rockers and everything in between. Sometimes we share nothing more than the lack of belief in gods and other imaginary beings. In fact it might be argued that the majority of Atheists don't even realize that they are Atheists - they simply live religion-free lives. Perhaps they say they consider themselves "spiritual" but they neither worry about gods nor could be bothered to worship any of them.

But I'll risk saying all would agree that Patriotic Atheist Americans cherish life and freedom, and fight fiercely to preserve these values. Yes, there are Atheists in foxholes. There are Atheist Americans in Iraqi foxholes right now. Like most Americans I support our troops, but like many Atheists, I seriously question whether this war is justified, especially in the name of religion.

In our secular democracy it is not appropriate for the President of the United States to call the nation to prayer like a star-spangled muezzin. I am wary of President Bush and our tax-supported chaplains assuring our armed forces that God is with them and that He will grant victory against the fanatics of the Middle East, just as their leaders assure terrorists that God is on their side and will ensure victory against the great Satan of America.

We are bombarded with "God Bless America" bumper stickers. We watch this administration and military officials hard-sell fear & test-market war; create, spin-doctor or bury evidence as it suits them; change their rationales repeatedly; duck questions and bully the press; ignore overwhelming protest; push to curtail the most basic civil rights; alienate our allies; and continue to line up the post-war contracts, all while piously invoking the name of God.

Yet in spite of all this, the question for Atheists remains the same as everyone: Is Bush telling the truth? All the evidence says no. There is neither a connection between Iraq & Al-Qaeda nor are there weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. And all signs make it clear that Iraq was targeted as future scapegoat long before now, even long before 9-11 if we can believe Jay Bookman's report in the Atlanta Journal-Constitution. It seems abundantly clear that Bush and his cronies are intent on using the pretext of a war on terrorism to create an Imperial America, sacrificing economic health, international goodwill, peace and security for military hegemony. Bush brings all the Orwellian doublethink to life, American-style: War will be Peace. Ignorance will be Strength. Freedom isn't Free? It isn't even Freedom.

As human beings we need to take responsibility for our own lives, and follow our consciences rather than wait for

divine aid or protection. I hope that those who cherish their faith also cherish their reason, such as Missouri GOP Chairman Jack Walters, who recently resigned in protest and gave eloquent & compelling reasons for opposing the Bush administration's hypocritical conniving. Because despite the fundamental disagreements Atheists have with religion, opposition to this unjust war could prove to be what unites believers and nonbelievers alike.

-David Fitzgerald  
(03/19/2003)

(with tremendous gratitude to Jim Heldberg & Katie Harrar for their editorial expertise)

The author can be emailed at [fitz@sfatheists.com](mailto:fitz@sfatheists.com).