

A Humanist in the Bible Belt

Autor tekstu: **William Harwood**

Collected Papers 1974-2002

Reviewed by **Bernard Katz**

A Humanist in the Bible Belt is a slam-dunk. Turn to any of these succinct, bomb-shell essays and you'll be so illuminated that you won't have to turn your night light on if you read them in bed.

To see what delights you're in for, let me copy from his „preface" where he writes in the third person: "When Dr. William Harwood wrote a series of letters to a Canadian newspaper, they were responses to a present and local situation. They were not designed to elicit responses that would prove he was living in the redneck anus of the universe, among the same kind of wonderful folks who gave the world the Crusades, the Inquisition, the Thirty Years War, the Salem witch trials, the Moral Majority, Ayatollah Khomeini, ethnic cleansing, and the Taliban. That was just the way it turned out.

"To a victim of god addiction, right and wrong are whatever his god's speechwriter says they are. Are such believers insane, intestinally challenged, or simply untaught?

„Persons handicapped by unintentional ignorance despite being capable of rational thought will find the antidote in this collection of letters, journal articles, book reviews, and satire. Unteachables will not."

He's not kidding! In this 416-page paperback, you can find a virtual garden of reading. Here's his cornucopia:

- In the section „Stop the World, I Want to Get off," there are sixteen pithy essays. Here's a sample from "Why I Am Not a Terrorist": „If that means believing that the earth is flat, as the Judeo-Christian Bible states in seven places, or that humans did not evolve from lower life forms, or that gods are allowed to play favorites and help their pets steal other people's lands, or that species suicide by overpopulation is virtuous, or that victimless behavior can be evil, or that eating different kinds of food from the same plate can be evil, or that right and wrong are whatever a dice-tossing god's scriptwriter says they are, 'Heads, it's a sin and tails, it's a virtue,' or that savoring the masochism of self-inflicted celibacy enables a sadist in the sky to get its orgasm-substitute—then for the mind-deadening opiate of an afterlife belief, accepting such absurdities is a price the intestinally challenged are willing to pay." What a marvelous sarcastic summary of what's wrong with religious terrorists — and I might add zealots too!

- In the smallish section „Secular Metaphysics," there are three tightly written essays. The third section is "The Bible: It Aint Necessarily So" with its thirty-six delightfully informative essays that will appeal to both genders. For instance, take the essay „Gods, Goddesses and Bibles: The Canonization of Misogyny." Here Harwood tells it as it is: „It is doubtful, however, that men were ever exploited by women prior to the Male Revolution of 3500 BCE in the manner in which women since that date have been oppressed and dehumanized by men. There was never, for example, a female-absolutist equivalent of the sixth-century CE synod of Macon, at which Christian bishops earnestly debated whether women were human beings, possessed of 'souls,' or the seventh-century Council of Nantes that, in its third canon, restricted immortality to males and pronounced women 'soulless beasts' whom the chief male god had given Man to use as he saw fit." Strong enough? By the way, make sure you read "Joshua: The Jewish Hitler," and "Jesus the Nazirite: Real Person or Literary Creation?" for an objective analysis of biblical tales.

- The next section is called "Satire," Here you will find excerpts from his book *The Autobiography of God* — a no-holds-barred analysis of deity.

- The last section is a plethora of book reviews: 102 of them! Short, to the point, with a distinct style, and so iconoclastic that I call Harwood „the H. L. Mencken" of our Secular Humanist movement. In fact, one of his reviews is „H. L. Mencken on Religion." In this series you will find an evaluation of some of the books and authors you may already have on your bookshelves or are interested in reading. Some that may just get you salivating are *Alien Abductions: Creating a Modern Phenomenon*; *The Jesus Mysteries: Was the „Original Jesus" a*

Pagan God?; The Great Deception: And What Jesus Really Said and Did; Who Killed Jesus: Exposing the Roots of Anti-Semitism in the Gospel Story of the Death of Jesus; Who Wrote the Gospels?; The Vanquished Gods: Science, Religion, and the Nature of Belief; Rocks of Ages: Science and Religion in the Fullness of Life; Queen Jane's Version: The Holy Bible for Adults Only; Judgment Day for the Shroud of Turin; The Supernatural, the Occult and the Bible; Science, Good, Bad and Bogus; Secrets of the Amazing Kreskin; The Koran; The Quest for the Historical Muhammad; The Roving Mind; Restoring the Goddess: Equal Rites for Modern Women; Close Encounters with the Religious Right; Jews Without Judaism: Conversations with an Unconventional Rabbi; The Scars of Evolution: What Our Bodies Tell Us About Evolution.

As you can see, there's more than enough sampling to satisfy just about everyone's interests. Note that I did not give Harwood's evaluation as to whether the book was good or bad. I leave that to the curiosity of the adventurer.

I repeat: all in all, this is a slam-dunk, with basket after basket of enjoyable and illuminating commentary. Dr. Harwood is just the scholar to fill the great H. L. Mencken's shoes!

(Available from www.lstbooks.com or www.amazon.com or www.bn.com or from the special orders desk at any bookstore.)

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William Harwood

[Pokaż inne teksty autora](#)

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