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How Cool!
I've been wanting to control my weight, balance my hormones, and boost my energy!



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BACK TO SCHOOL TIP #21

Remember to arrange refrigerator shelving to leave the bottom shelf open for pizza boxes and bottles laid in a horizontal fashion.



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natural resistance BY MARY O'BRIEN

Nuclear Rapture

A thrilling prophecy of Armageddon?

During the weeks leading up to my country's March 2003 invasion of Iraq, I received a letter from Diane, a friend I met during the summer of 1964, when we cheerfully cleaned toilets at a United Presbyterian campground on the shores of Lake Tahoe.



Her Feb. 23, 2004 letter exuded the same cheerfulness she has poured into 40 years of Christmas and birthday cards to me, but this time she poured it into what she called "the news."

"Zecariah 14:12 says," she wrote, "And this will be the plague with which the Lord will strike all the people who fought against Jerusalem: their flesh shall dissolve while they stand in their feet, their eyes shall dissolve in their sockets, and their tongues shall dissolve in their mouths."

"Watch out, Saddam," she added. "One nuclear bomb can ruin your day!"

After all, what more literal way to fulfill Zecariah's prophecy of a sadistic, vengeful God than with a nuclear bomb?

"Read Zechariah 12," she urged me. "It describes how God is making 'Jerusalem a VERY HEAVY stone for ALL peoples,' and He says He will destroy all the nations who come against Jerusalem. And then He says the whole nation of Israel will see that Jesus was their Messiah."

"This is certainly an exciting time to be alive," she concluded without a hint of irony.

"Love, Di. P.S. Bob and I are going to Carmel in March for our 31st anniversary."

Presumably the joyful anniversary trip was going to go forward even if, meanwhile, the flesh of Iraqi children was dissolving while they stand in their feet.

A few years after she and I cleaned toilets, Diane had become, in her words, a "born-again Christian," and her letters began to resemble tracts. I told her that I missed Diane, the person, amid all the Bible quotations. Over the years she has tried to tone the quotes down, but the possibility of Bible prophecy being fulfilled by the Iraqi war was just too thrilling. Her February 2003 letter was bursting with sentences from her book of God.

There is no question that compassion, self-sacrifice, kindness, and care have blossomed countless times because people followed Jewish, Islamic, or Christian teachings. Likewise, there is no question that Crusades, jihad, missionary cruelties, suicide bombings, inquisitions, justification for shooting children, and nuclear holocaust have blossomed because people accepted interpretations taught within those same religions.

Perhaps religious-based care (at least for humans) arises when religious teachings encourage adherents to pay attention to real, flesh-and-blood people who are poor, suffering, lonely, hungry, or otherwise vulnerable. This was the religion of my Presbyterian minister father and social worker mother, for instance.

Atrocities arise when religious teachings encourage adherents to pay attention to written words, prophecies, dogma, and religious ideology *instead of* to real, flesh-and-blood people who are suffering.

It's a matter of what you focus on: the real person, or dogma about that person. Religion can foster compassion, through attention to the world's inhabitants; or it can be a force for barbarism, through attention to religious dogma.

Throughout the years, Diane has been extraordinarily kind to her own children, grandchildren, husband and me. But through immersion in one religion's dogma, the possibility of nuclear war has become a matter of rapture for her. Real, suffering Iraqi, Palestinian, or Israeli children have "disappeared" from her religious eyes, which now gaze only upward toward her vengeful God.

President Bush is not unlike my friend Diane. Funny, cheerful, probably even kind to friends and family. But he apparently hates non-Christian, capital "E" Evil more than he loves small "c" children.

As president, Bush has been pushing for the development of "usable" nuclear weapons; guidance of small A-bombs to their targets from outer space; reduced time to launch a nuclear strike; and pre-emptive, first use of nuclear weapons, even against non-nuclear nations. His 2005 budget reduces funds available for U.S. efforts to curb the spread of weapons-grade plutonium and uranium throughout the world.

Dissolving flesh, eyes, tongues. Dissolving evil. Armageddon. Is this what it means to be a nation under God?

Mary O'Brien of Eugene has worked as a public interest scientist since 1981. She can be reached at mob@efn.org