

August 7, 2008

[David Warren](#) does the Solzhenitsyn honors today.

*Prophetic writers are a holy nuisance to everyone, but especially to themselves. The gift of prophecy renders a man incapable of a quiet life, incapable of enjoying idle pleasures, incapable of looking the other way -- when it is to no immediate personal advantage to be staring at the truth. But it cannot take away the normal human desire for such comforts.*

*Nobody could have wished to be Alexander Solzhenitsyn, poet of the Gulag, and of its "zeks" (hapless prisoners). Providence compelled him to experience at first hand everything he would immortalize, from the prison camps to the terminal wards to betrayals of every imaginable kind. And to these it added something more cruel: moments in which victories were achieved against improbable odds, each overturned in the next moment.*

*Yet providence also instilled the strength to resist illusion, and few men have endured what Solzhenitsyn repeatedly endured, more stoically. From the moment of his first arrest in 1945, he ceased to entertain the illusion that communism could reform itself; and later the illusion that after the final collapse of communism, the Russian people would emerge in any other condition than they did: scarred and debilitated by their experience of enslavement, and by their complicity in the machinations of evil. ...*

[Paul Greenberg](#) too.

Our final essay on Reagan by [Mark Steyn](#) is from the Daily Telegraph, UK.

*"We are a nation that has a government - not the other way around." Of all the marvelous Ronald Reagan lines retailed over the weekend, that's my favourite. He said it in his inaugural address in 1981, and it encapsulates his legacy at home and abroad.*

*I like it because too often we "small government" conservatives can sound small ourselves - pinched and crabbed and reductive. Reagan made small government a big idea. I always think of him in those broad-shouldered suits, arms outstretched, an inch of cuff: he was awfully expansive about shrinking government.*

*In the speech, he meant it domestically: it was an age when every government cure for inflation only doubled it. He slew that double-digit dragon so comprehensively that today the word "inflation" is all but obsolescent, at least as a political issue.*

*But, in the broader sense, Reagan's line about nations that have governments is a good way to weigh up the world. Across central and eastern Europe, from Slovenia to Lithuania to Bulgaria, governments that had nations have been replaced by nations that have governments - serving at the people's pleasure.*

*The intelligentsia persist in believing this had nothing to do with Reagan or Thatcher: they maintain that the Soviet empire would have collapsed anyway, their belated belief in the inevitable failure of communism being in no way inconsistent with their previous long-held belief in the inevitable triumph of communism. And anyway, they continue, if anyone was responsible, it was Mikhail Gorbachev. ...*

In his weekly campaign piece for WSJ, [Karl Rove](#) outlines McCain's path to a win.

*Notwithstanding the hype about Barack Obama, here is where the presidential race stands: John McCain was within an average of 1.9% of his Democratic opponent in last week's daily Gallup tracking poll.*

*It shouldn't be this close. Sen. Obama should be way ahead. It's not that Sen. McCain has made up a lot of ground. [Pollster.com](#)<sup>1</sup> shows that the Republican steadily declined from March through June as the*

*Democratic contest dominated the news. Mr. McCain stabilized in July, and then ticked up slightly. But the most important political fact of July is that Mr. Obama has lost altitude. Gallup now projects that 23% of this year's electorate will be swing voters, more than twice the share in 2004.*

*It seems that each candidate is underperforming with his base. Mr. Obama's problem is that only 74% of Democrats in the latest Fox Poll support him, while Mr. McCain gets 86% of Republicans. But Mr. McCain's support lacks the same intensity Mr. Obama receives. The latest Pew poll found that 24% of voters "strongly" support Mr. Obama, compared to 17% for Mr. McCain. ...*

**Tony Blankley** writes about this year's anointed one.

*It's getting tricky to know how to refer to he who presumes to be the next president. It was made clear several months ago that mentioning his middle name is a forbidden act. (Pass out more eggshells.) Then, having nothing honorable to say, Obama warned his followers last week that Sen. McCain would try to scare voters by pointing to Obama's "funny name" and the fact that "he doesn't look like all the presidents on the dollar bills."*

*Now, putting aside for the moment the racial component of His warning, what are we to make of the "funny name" reference? Many people have "funny" names. Some people think my last name -- being very close in spelling to the adverbial form for the absence of content -- is funny.*

*Certainly, former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee's name is funny. Many on the left have had great fun with President Bush's last name. But we all have found our names perfectly serviceable and would expect people to call us by the names by which we identify ourselves.*

*But He has made it clear that the mere use of His name would be freighted with coded innuendoes of something too horrible to say straightforwardly. One has to go back to Exodus 3:13-14 to find such strict instructions concerning the use of a name. Moses explained: "Indeed, when I come to the children of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they say to me, 'What is His name?' what shall I say to them?" And God said to Moses, "I Am Who I Am." And He said, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, 'I Am has sent me to you.'" ...*

**Karen Tumulty** asks a rhetorical, "Have the Clintons Gotten Over It" and answers, "No."

*... Meanwhile, if Hillary Clinton's feelings are still bruised, her husband's are positively raw. The former President is particularly resentful of suggestions—which he believes were fueled by the Obama camp—that he attempted to play upon racial fears during the primaries. Not helping is the fact that Obama has yet to follow up on the tentative dinner plans he and Bill Clinton made at the end of the primary season. "It's personal with him, in terms of his own legacy," says a friend of Bill Clinton's. "And the race stuff really left a bad taste in his mouth."*

*Bill Clinton's resentment came through in an interview with ABC News during his recent trip to Africa. Asked what regrets he might have about his role in his wife's campaign, he bristled and then shot back, "I am not a racist. I never made a racist comment." He struggled to render a positive comment about Obama's qualifications for his old job. "You could argue that nobody is ever ready to be President," Clinton said. "You could argue that even if you've been Vice President for eight years, that no one can ever be fully ready for the pressures of the office." Pressed again, he responded with an endorsement that could hardly have been a weaker cup of tea: "I never said he wasn't qualified. The Constitution sets qualification for the President. And then the people decide who they think would be the better President. I think we have two choices. I think he should win, and I think he will win." ...*

[Politico](#) writes on Jon Voight coming out of the closet. The Hollywood closet occupied by those who love freedom and think we are best served by market solutions.

Jon Voight intended to turn heads with the “very strong points” in his Washington Times op-ed last week. But he probably didn’t expect so many of them to reside in Hollywood.

In a sign of the growing interest in politics this election year, bloggers who normally focus on the entertainment industry are expanding their presence in one of the Internet’s other spheres of influence.

Voight’s piece slammed Democratic candidate Barack Obama, praised GOP contender John McCain and even repudiated his own Vietnam War protests as the naive flailings of a deluded youth. It was a stunning bit of self-revelatory memoir from the now-conservative “Coming Home” star.

The political blogosphere, of course, went ballistic. ...

[Roger Simon](#) has rough words for Random House.

*Although it has for some time been a division of German media giant Bertelsmann, Random House has been one of the distinguished names in American publishing since the halcyon days of Bennett Cerf. So it is particularly repugnant to see the company knuckling under to essentially the same reactionary, anti-democratic, anti-free speech forces that repressed the Danish cartoons. As we learned in the [Wall Street Journal](#) today, the company has decided not to publish Sherry Jones’ historical novel “The Jewel of Medina” about Mohammed’s child bride Aisha. The book was part of a \$100,000 two-book contract with the [author](#). ...*

[Walter Williams](#) says we're becoming a nation of thieves.

*... Much of the justification for the welfare state is to reduce income inequality by making income transfers to the poor. Browning provides some statistics that might help us to evaluate the sincerity and truthfulness of this claim. In 2005, total federal, state and local government expenditures on 85 welfare programs were \$620 billion. That's larger than national defense (\$495 billion) or public education (\$472 billion). The 2005 official poverty count was 37 million persons. That means welfare expenditures per poor person were \$16,750, or \$67,000 for a poor family of four.*

*Those figures understate poverty expenditures because poor people are recipients of non-welfare programs such as Social Security, Medicare, private charity and uncompensated medical care. The question that naturally arises is if we're spending enough to lift everyone out of poverty, why is there still poverty? The obvious answer is poor people are not receiving all the money being spent in their name. Non-poor people are getting the bulk of it. ...*

We close today with a couple of items that prove God has a sense of humor. [Bill Clinton](#), in his AIDS fighting role, has come out for monogamy. And [Al Gore](#) has a new 100 foot boat named Bio Solar One. That's right, BS One

---

---

---

Death of a prophet

by David Warren

Prophetic writers are a holy nuisance to everyone, but especially to themselves. The gift of prophecy renders a man incapable of a quiet life, incapable of enjoying idle pleasures, incapable of looking the other way -- when it is to no immediate personal advantage to be staring at the truth. But it cannot take away the normal human desire for such comforts.

Nobody could have wished to be Alexander Solzhenitsyn, poet of the Gulag, and of its "zeks" (hapless prisoners). Providence compelled him to experience at first hand everything he would immortalize, from the prison camps to the terminal wards to betrayals of every imaginable kind. And to these it added something more cruel: moments in which victories were achieved against improbable odds, each overturned in the next moment.

Yet providence also instilled the strength to resist illusion, and few men have endured what Solzhenitsyn repeatedly endured, more stoically. From the moment of his first arrest in 1945, he ceased to entertain the illusion that communism could reform itself; and later the illusion that after the final collapse of communism, the Russian people would emerge in any other condition than they did: scarred and debilitated by their experience of enslavement, and by their complicity in the machinations of evil.

Solzhenitsyn was, as all great writers, of an experiencing nature, able to assimilate what he had not lived to what he had lived. It took him little time, once exiled to Europe then America, to see through the illusions of the post-Christian West, and to describe -- knowingly and exactly -- the spiritual emptiness of our purposeless freedom. The Russians had had materialist servility imposed on them by a monstrous regime; we were meanwhile imposing it on ourselves -- in the flaccid consumerism of the "mall culture," and by our deafness to every noble calling.

Much of his long masterpiece, *The Gulag Archipelago*, paradoxically depicts the triumph of the human spirit under terrible oppression, and is carried along by an inspiring lyricism. There is drollness and humour throughout, and the stark presentation of life among the zeks has developed, from the skeletal sketches of *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovitch*, into the flesh of a magnificent painting. There is a profound overriding conceit: the Gulag as metaphor of "the prison of this world," that reminds one of the *Divine Comedy*. We plunge into the torments of a hell on earth, but having descended, we then find ourselves constantly rising. The tone of the book is as far removed from bitterness as the subject can allow, and there is real charity in depictions of the camp weasels, the guards, and petty bureaucrats -- caught up with the prisoners in a mysterious human solidarity.

It is possible that the Red Wheel cycle of novels is greater still, but if so, this is lost on me. Later novels of the series have yet to be translated into English, and the volumes I have seen, which appeared in the 1980s, were different in kind from what I had come to expect. Solzhenitsyn in these books seems to become an historian of ideas. The books have been dismissed in the West as "polemical," but their author is no more "writing an op-ed" on the Russian Revolution than he was in *The Gulag Archipelago*. He seems instead to be taking up from Dostoyevsky, showing the reasoning of, initially, fairly decent men, as they progress from idealistic revolutionary whimsy, to terrible crimes in power -- but with an empathy beyond Dostoyevsky's.

Behind Solzhenitsyn the prophet we find Solzhenitsyn the human being, imaginatively projected into the lives of his characters, and unwilling to reduce them to caricatures. Tolstoy I suspect (reading no Russian) was less willing to give an enemy the benefit of the doubt; and Solzhenitsyn makes us appreciate what is human even in a Lenin.

He was not a polemicist: he really was a literary composer, in the grand tradition of the realistic novel. His memorable speeches -- from his Nobel Lecture to his Harvard Address in the 1970s, which every educated person read -- were themselves less polemical than their author's reputation. There is unconcealed naivete -

- a prophetic naivete -- when he tells us, repeatedly, that simply by telling the truth, and facing the truth, our devils may be routed. When he does offer to analyse political realities in political terms, he sounds narrow and mean. He did try to play the politician sometimes, especially towards the end of his life, and those efforts were quite forgettable.

His voice and his books have shared in the eclipse of the Evil Empire; we think of him now as a figure from a past epoch. But in another generation I think Solzhenitsyn will be returned to, and his prophetic qualities better appreciated. For Solzhenitsyn had the gift to place human events on a stage larger than human life.

## **Jewish World Review**

### **The return of a prophet**

by Paul Greenberg

*This is an abridged version of a column that originally appeared in 1994, when the Russian author Alexander Solzhenitsyn, who died Sunday at 89, returned to Russia from his long exile.*

It's like reading that Tolstoy is touring Soviet Russia to see the Moscow subway and the Gulag. It's like having Dickens arrive in 20th-century England to catch the Beatles.

Alexander Solzhenitsyn has come back to the Big Gulag he left in 1974 (Leonid Brezhnev, secretary-general and chief warden) to find it wide open, flying the old czarist flag and hurling off in all directions. It's as if Ivan Denisovitch, the hero of his classic book about the Gulag, had grown old, free and a stranger in a not quite strange land.

That this climactic return should be seen by so many as anti-climactic — as just another writer going home after his glory days — only adds to the extraordinary ordinariness of a story that could be called "The Return of S." By Gogol, probably.

Neither the Russians nor the world may know quite what to think of Solzhenitsyn, or even want to. He has always been a man out of his time, plodding along the most unexpected paths, remaining obscure when one had expected him to take center stage, only to emerge into the news long after interest in him had waned.

It's a toss-up whether Solzhenitsyn has more grievously offended East or West. The political and cultural elites of both don't know quite how to classify him, even if they pretend to. The reservations routinely attached to their praise rings much louder than the praise. "He was a courageous man, but ..." But he's a fascist, an imperialist, a crank, an anti-Semite, an ingrate, an eccentric, a loner, a hater, a nationalist ... pick your own snap judgment.

What he is, is his own man. Which is why he got in trouble over there and disappointed over here. He is a great resource, but one that can be tapped only on its own terms. He will always disappoint those who think they can use him to reflect their own, conventional wisdom.

Solzhenitsyn's politics are simple: He hates revolution, having seen its results. He despises ideology and the other savageries of modernity. He loves tradition, stability and time in which to make things, like books and peace.

Because he loves Russia does not mean he hates others. And he can chastise his countrymen as only a lover can. He would have Russia cleanse its air, water and conscience; tend its own garden and rediscover its soul. A familiar messianic vision. Only this time it comes from a prophet unarmed—except with words. Being Solzhenitsyn's words, they were enough to threaten a vast tyranny.

Twenty years before it dawned on many others that freedom cannot have much meaning in a cultural and spiritual vacuum, Solzhenitsyn was being irritatingly candid about the society that had given him refuge — its

empty materialism, its mundane obscenity, its substitution of cheap sentimentality for abiding faith, and its worship instead of "imperfect man, who is never free of pride, self-interest, envy, vanity and dozens of other defects."

Solzhenitsyn took especial aim at American society's loss of "civic culture," especially among its "ruling and intellectual elites." And he said these things at Harvard. In short, he wasn't the sort of guest who can be counted on to ignore the peeling paint and cracks in the walls.

It was Solzhenitsyn who wrote in "First Circle" that every real writer is "a second government." Whereupon the usual solemn idiots speculated about his platform, his appointees, his polls, as if he had been referring to the kind of transient power that politicians exert, rather than the transforming power of real words, of a Thoreau or Orwell or, yes, a Solzhenitsyn. Not even the Gulag was ever the same after "One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovitch." Words change things.

**Telegraph, UK**

### **Reagan Knew Why The EU Won't Work**

by Mark Steyn

"We are a nation that has a government - not the other way around." Of all the marvellous Ronald Reagan lines retailed over the weekend, that's my favourite. He said it in his inaugural address in 1981, and it encapsulates his legacy at home and abroad.

I like it because too often we "small government" conservatives can sound small ourselves - pinched and crabbed and reductive. Reagan made small government a big idea. I always think of him in those broad-shouldered suits, arms outstretched, an inch of cuff: he was awfully expansive about shrinking government.

In the speech, he meant it domestically: it was an age when every government cure for inflation only doubled it. He slew that double-digit dragon so comprehensively that today the word "inflation" is all but obsolescent, at least as a political issue.

But, in the broader sense, Reagan's line about nations that have governments is a good way to weigh up the world. Across central and eastern Europe, from Slovenia to Lithuania to Bulgaria, governments that had nations have been replaced by nations that have governments - serving at the people's pleasure.

The intelligentsia persist in believing this had nothing to do with Reagan or Thatcher: they maintain that the Soviet empire would have collapsed anyway, their belated belief in the inevitable failure of communism being in no way inconsistent with their previous long-held belief in the inevitable triumph of communism. And anyway, they continue, if anyone was responsible, it was Mikhail Gorbachev.

In fact, it was Reagan who was responsible for Gorbachev. The Politburo would have gone on rotating the same old 1950s waxworks - Brezhnev, Chernenko, Andropov - for another decade or three, had not Washington's military build-up so exposed the old guard's inability to keep up that, in 1985, it turned in desperation to someone new.

Gorbachev was doomed from the beginning. He couldn't turn the Soviet Union into a nation that has a government because at heart it was only a government, not a nation: its purpose was to facilitate communist rule, and nothing else. Or, as David Frost put it after Gorbachev was detained at his dacha during the abortive 1991 coup: "He went for a weekend in the country and returned to find he didn't have a country to have a weekend in."

Today, it's easy to apply Reagan's line around the world. Grenada is a nation that has a government; Mugabe's Zimbabwe is a government that has a nation. Those are the easy ones. But Reagan's distinction

also cuts to the heart of the European question. When the 13 colonies came together to form the United States, they already shared so much in common that they didn't need to express their sense of nationhood in an overbearing central government.

However, because there is no natural demos binding Scotland and Greece, the European Union has decided to come at things from the other direction. It's not a nation that has a government. So instead its plan is to start with a government in the hopes that a nation - or quasi-nation - will follow.

M Giscard and co seem to think that, if you have a commission and a council and a parliament and a president and a foreign minister and a common defence policy and a public prosecutor and a citizenship and a flag and an anthem and banknotes and a continent-wide minimum wage, then you have the bones and internal organs of nationhood and you can put flesh on them later.

That gets it exactly back to front. They're just the outward symbols, and, without the deeper assumed ties, are as meaningless for the European Union as they were for Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. As [Charles Moore pointed out on Saturday](#), most of the junk in the so-called European Constitution isn't in the least bit constitutional.

That's to say, it's not content, as the American Constitution is, to define the distribution and limitation of powers. Many of my New Hampshire neighbours wander round with the constitution in their pocket so they can whip it out and chastise over-reaching congressmen and state representatives at a moment's notice. Try going around with the European Constitution in your pocket and you'll be walking with a limp after 48 hours. It's full of stuff about European space policy, water resources, free expression for children, the right to housing assistance, preventive action on the environment, etc.

They may well be worthy planks in a political platform, but they're not constitutional matters. Yet what else is there? The European Constitution attempts to supplant genuine national identities with an ersatz bureaucratic identity - a government identity, from which a new national identity will follow. For Ronald Reagan, America was the "shining city on a hill". For M Giscard and his fellow founding fathers, the European Union is affordable housing on an environmentally protected hill. I can't see it working myself.

The Tories have an established modus operandi on Europe: first, they tell us they're going to stand firm; then they sign on to it anyway; finally, they assure us it doesn't mean anything. The biggest question facing the country today is this: is the United Kingdom to be a nation state or merely a westerly region of a highly centralised European entity? The Tories, as a matter of policy, have fudged that question for 15 years, and in so doing have assisted the remorseless march of the Euro-fantasists. So I'm afraid I cannot agree with my eminent colleagues. This Thursday, vote UKIP.

As for the European Constitution, I can understand why after fascism, Nazism and communism, Europeanism seems comparatively benign - not a Blitzkrieg, just a Bitzkrieg, an accumulation of fluffy trivialities that nevertheless takes for granted that the natural order is a world in which every itsy-bitsy activity is licensed and regulated and constitutionally defined by government.

By contrast, Ronald Reagan took afternoon naps and ended the Cold War. "They say hard work never killed anyone," he said, "but I figure, why take the risk?" There speaks a man who understands the virtues of limited government. I slept easier in my bed knowing he was sleeping easier in his.

What McCain Should Do Next

by Karl Rove

Notwithstanding the hype about Barack Obama, here is where the presidential race stands: John McCain was within an average of 1.9% of his Democratic opponent in last week's daily Gallup tracking poll.

It shouldn't be this close. Sen. Obama should be way ahead. It's not that Sen. McCain has made up a lot of ground. [Pollster.com](http://Pollster.com)<sup>1</sup> shows that the Republican steadily declined from March through June as the Democratic contest dominated the news. Mr. McCain stabilized in July, and then ticked up slightly. But the most important political fact of July is that Mr. Obama has lost altitude. Gallup now projects that 23% of this year's electorate will be swing voters, more than twice the share in 2004.



It seems that each candidate is underperforming with his base. Mr. Obama's problem is that only 74% of Democrats in the latest Fox Poll support him, while Mr. McCain gets 86% of Republicans. But Mr. McCain's support lacks the same intensity Mr. Obama receives. The latest Pew poll found that 24% of voters "strongly" support Mr. Obama, compared to 17% for Mr. McCain.

Old doubts about Mr. Obama remain. In a late June Washington Post poll, 46% said Mr. Obama lacked the experience to do the job, the same number as in March, before he spent \$119 million to run ads extolling himself. In February 2000, 59% said George W. Bush, then governor of Texas, had the experience to be president. That number grew as the campaign wore on. Now Mr. Obama faces new doubts over perceptions that he's arrogant, self-centered and calculating.

So what should Mr. McCain do? He's rightly raising questions about Mr. Obama's fitness to be president, starting with his failure to admit that the surge in Iraq worked. Mr. McCain should stay at it, though he'll need help to make the case.

Mr. McCain was correct to seize on Mr. Obama's insinuations that the GOP would mount racist attacks against him. Now Mr. McCain needs to find ways to describe an Obama who is running on empty rhetoric. He needs to do to Mr. Obama what Walter Mondale did to Gary "Where's the Beef?" Hart in the 1984 Democratic primaries. Given Mr. Obama's thin résumé and accomplishments, this can be done, with a sustained effort.

But to win, Mr. McCain must also make a compelling case for electing John McCain. Voters trust him on terrorism and Iraq and they see him as a patriot who puts country first. But they want to know for what purpose?

In the coming weeks, he needs to lay out a bold domestic reform program. He gave a taste on energy, but with a few missteps. He should appear in front of manufacturing plants where jobs depend on affordable energy, small businesses affected by fuel prices, and farms hurt by skyrocketing fertilizer costs -- and not in front of oil rigs. He needs to describe the consequences of specific domestic policy decisions. He must explain how his proposals on energy, health care, jobs and education will make a difference for ordinary families.

Mr. McCain also needs to elevate his arguments. It's not only that he opposes tax increases and Mr. Obama favors them. Mr. McCain must also make the principled case that there should be a limit to what government can take from its citizens. This argument will appeal to a large majority of voters. The top income tax rate is 35% and, according to the Tax Foundation, 89% of Americans believe that government should take no more than 30% from anyone's paycheck.



Mr. McCain should also talk about issues that increase Republican enthusiasm and win over independents, such as earmarks and judicial activism. And he should not shy away from appeals for bipartisanship. He's done it -- and talking about it undermines Mr. Obama, who hasn't. It also explains who Mr. McCain is. Mr. McCain should welcome opportunities to go against the grain. Defending free trade in manufacturing states is gutsy and feeds his maverick, straight-talk image.

He will be pleasantly surprised to find out how many people in Ohio and elsewhere understand that their state's prosperity depends on knocking down trade barriers.

Then there's character. Mr. McCain is the most private person to run for president since Calvin Coolidge in the 1920s. He needs to share (or allow others to share) more about him, especially his faith. The McCain and Obama campaigns are mirror opposites. Mr. McCain offers little biography, while Mr. Obama is nothing but.

The Republican Party's convention next month is Mr. McCain's biggest chance to improve his posture. The best minds in his campaign should be carefully working on its script. Everyone knows conventions are show, but voters want to see if a candidate can put on a good one that rings true.

Mr. Obama has the easier path to victory: reassure a restive electorate that he's up to the job. Mr. McCain must both educate voters to his opponent's weaknesses and persuade them that he has a vision for the coming four years. This will require a disciplined, focused effort. Mr. McCain has gotten this far fighting an unscripted guerrilla campaign. But it won't get him all the way to the White House.

*Mr. Rove is a former senior adviser and deputy chief of staff to President George W. Bush.*

## **Real Clear Politics**

### **He Is Who He Is**

by Tony Blankley

It's getting tricky to know how to refer to he who presumes to be the next president. It was made clear several months ago that mentioning his middle name is a forbidden act. (Pass out more eggshells.) Then, having nothing honorable to say, Obama warned his followers last week that Sen. McCain would try to scare voters by pointing to Obama's "funny name" and the fact that "he doesn't look like all the presidents on the dollar bills."

Now, putting aside for the moment the racial component of His warning, what are we to make of the "funny name" reference? Many people have "funny" names. Some people think my last name -- being very close in spelling to the adverbial form for the absence of content -- is funny.

Certainly, former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee's name is funny. Many on the left have had great fun with President Bush's last name. But we all have found our names perfectly serviceable and would expect people to call us by the names by which we identify ourselves.

But He has made it clear that the mere use of His name would be freighted with coded innuendoes of something too horrible to say straightforwardly. One has to go back to Exodus 3:13-14 to find such strict instructions concerning the use of a name. Moses explained: "Indeed, when I come to the children of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they say to me, 'What is His name?' what shall I say to them?" And God said to Moses, "I Am Who I Am." And He said, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, 'I Am has sent me to you.'"

So perhaps we can call Him, for short, Sen. I Am (full code name: I Am who you have been waiting for).

Another aspect of the now-infamous dollar-bill incident that has gone unmentioned is Sen. I Am's choice of the dollar-bill reference itself.

He could have just said He doesn't look like other presidents. Even that is a little too cute for the nasty little point He slyly was trying to make, but at least He would be identifying Himself merely with the universe of American presidents. But His overweening pride found such company too base and demeaning for Him. So He needed to include Himself in the grander company of George Washington, Abe Lincoln, Jefferson and perhaps Andy Jackson. (I doubt He had in mind Woodrow Wilson on the \$100,000 bill or Grover Cleveland on the \$1,000.)

Perhaps I shouldn't dwell on these matters, but the more I watch this man the more stunned I am at His overconfidence and towering pride. I have known a number of great and powerful men (and read biographies of many more), and they surely don't lack confidence or ego. But who among the great would have answered the question posed to the junior senator from Illinois a few weeks ago as He did? Asked whether He had any doubts, He said "never."

Is He so foolish as to think He has the world figured out to the last detail, or is He so proud of His intelligence that He cannot confess to ever having any doubt? Either explanation renders His judgment of dubious presidential caliber.

Here is a man who talked almost contemptuously of Gen. Petraeus. Explaining His differences with the general, He said that His "job is to think about the national security interest as a whole; (the generals') job is just to get their job done (in Iraq)." Of course, right at the moment, the junior senator from Illinois doesn't yet have "His" job, while Gen.

Petraeus, as confirmed Centcom commander, has direct responsibility for both Afghanistan and Iraq and everything in between and around them. But in the mind of Sen. I Am, He already is, while He thinks the man who is perhaps our greatest general in two generations is just another flunky carrying out routine orders. It is repulsive to see such a mentality in a man who would be president.

All of us have our shortcomings, of course. But there is none so dangerous both to a man and to those for whom he has responsibility than the sin of pride. In the sixth century, Pope Gregory the Great recognized that pride breeds all the other sins and is therefore the most serious offense. St. Thomas Aquinas reaffirmed that pride is rebellion against the very authority of God.

Let me quote a private e-mail correspondent, who states the case better than I could: "Pride indeed is the cardinal vice -- it swings open the door to most of the other theological vices, and undermines the classical virtues of prudence, courage and justice. It thrives, not on what one has, but on what others do not have. And even when one has diligently practiced the most admirable virtues, there always lurks the danger that at some moment one will look in the mirror and say: 'Oh my! What a wonderful person I am!' Thus does the vice lunge from its hiding-place."

For a man, his personality is his destiny. If he becomes president, his flaws become the nation's dangers. The voters must judge carefully both the personalities and the ideas of those who would be president.

## Time

### [Have the Clintons Gotten Over It?](#)

By Karen Tumulty

The July 31 cocktail reception outside Palo Alto, Calif., had been billed as an evening for letting bygones be bygones, a coming together of Hillary Clinton's Silicon Valley backers with Barack Obama's to help the New York Senator retire her campaign debt. But as Clinton took questions from the 150 or so people who had paid \$500 and up a head to listen, it became clear that the healing process was far from over. "For so many of my supporters, just like so many of Barack's supporters, this was a first-time investment of heart and soul

and money and effort and sleepless nights and miles of travel," Clinton said. "You just don't turn it off like that."



Those comments — now playing in clips on YouTube—speak to not only the bruised feelings of Clinton's many supporters. Embedded in those remarks, say friends and advisers, are hints of Clinton's own feelings in the aftermath of a race in which she fought so hard and still fell short. In public, Clinton is doing everything she is asked — and then some — to help the man who defeated her get elected to the White House. She raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for Obama from her extensive network of donors and has spoken to many of the groups, including key unions, that backed her in the primaries. She is set to hit the campaign trail on his behalf, starting with rallies and voter-registration drives this month in Nevada and Florida. "I'm doing all I know to do," she insists.

But behind the united front, says an adviser, "it's not a great relationship, and it's probably not going to become one." In private conversations, associates say, Clinton remains skeptical that Obama can win in the fall. That's a sentiment some other Democrats believe is not just a prediction but a wish, because it would prove her right about his weaknesses as a general-election candidate and possibly pave the way for her to run again in 2012. Clinton is also annoyed that Obama has yet to deliver on his end of an informal bargain, reached as part of their truce, that each would raise \$500,000 for the other. "Hillary has done her part in that regard," says an adviser. "Obama has not."

Underlying it all is a feeling on Clinton's part that Obama has never shown proper regard for a campaign she believes was as historic an achievement as his. True, Obama has asked Clinton to give a prime-time speech on the second night of the convention later this month. But as the odds that she will be Obama's running mate have faded, there are signs that Clinton's backers could demand one last show of respect before Obama claims the nomination in Denver. Clinton has been giving tacit encouragement to suggestions that her name be placed in nomination at the convention, a symbolic move that would be a reminder of the bruising primary battle. "No decisions have been made," Clinton said when asked in California — to whoops and applause — about that possibility. Still, it was hard to miss what Clinton would like to see in the pointed way she added, "Delegates can decide to do this on their own. They don't need permission." Some of her allies are not so enthusiastic about that kind of gesture. Says Florida Congresswoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz: "We really need to focus at the convention on unifying the party behind Senator Obama."

Meanwhile, if Hillary Clinton's feelings are still bruised, her husband's are positively raw. The former President is particularly resentful of suggestions—which he believes were fueled by the Obama camp—that he attempted to play upon racial fears during the primaries. Not helping is the fact that Obama has yet to follow up on the tentative dinner plans he and Bill Clinton made at the end of the primary season. "It's personal with him, in terms of his own legacy," says a friend of Bill Clinton's. "And the race stuff really left a bad taste in his mouth."

Bill Clinton's resentment came through in an interview with ABC News during his recent trip to Africa. Asked what regrets he might have about his role in his wife's campaign, he bristled and then shot back, "I am not a

racist. I never made a racist comment." He struggled to render a positive comment about Obama's qualifications for his old job. "You could argue that nobody is ever ready to be President," Clinton said. "You could argue that even if you've been Vice President for eight years, that no one can ever be fully ready for the pressures of the office." Pressed again, he responded with an endorsement that could hardly have been a weaker cup of tea: "I never said he wasn't qualified. The Constitution sets qualification for the President. And then the people decide who they think would be the better President. I think we have two choices. I think he should win, and I think he will win."

Mindful of the lingering bitterness, the Obama camp has tried to reach out to the sizable professional political class that has surrounded the Clintons for a generation. In late July, for instance, the campaign hosted what was by all accounts a well-received session at former Senator Tom Daschle's downtown Washington office for about 50 of the Clintons' most prominent backers. But it was telling that only a handful of their leading female supporters showed up. Will a genuine reconciliation ever occur? Said a longtime Democrat with a foot in both camps: "Yes, but only at the convention." Democrats worried about unifying the party before November are hoping that's not too late.

## Politico

### [Voight ignites a blog storm in Hollywood](#)

by Jeffery Ressler

Jon Voight intended to turn heads with the "very strong points" in his Washington Times op-ed last week. But he probably didn't expect so many of them to reside in Hollywood.

In a sign of the growing interest in politics this election year, bloggers who normally focus on the entertainment industry are expanding their presence in one of the Internet's other spheres of influence.

Voight's piece slammed Democratic candidate Barack Obama, praised GOP contender John McCain and even repudiated his own Vietnam War protests as the naive flailings of a deluded youth. It was a stunning bit of self-revelatory memoir from the now-conservative "Coming Home" star.

The political blogosphere, of course, went ballistic. Then Jeffrey Wells, who runs the movie and pop culture site Hollywood-Elsewhere.com, took Voight to task for his right turn and wrote that, if he were a studio executive, he might think twice before hiring Voight for any future film work. "[Voight is] obviously entitled to say and write whatever he wants," wrote Wells. "But it's only natural that industry-based Obama supporters will henceforth regard him askance. Honestly? If I were a producer and I had to make a casting decision about hiring Voight or some older actor who hadn't pissed me off with an idiotic Washington Times op-ed piece, I might very well say to myself, 'Voight? Let him eat cake.'"

Voight seemed particularly taken aback by Wells' blog postings, which many have interpreted as a call for blacklisting the actor. "It's out of line to insinuate that we should blacklist people for speaking their minds," Voight told Politico. "It's a strange thing when people in this country can't express their opinions without being attacked." He added that Hollywood liberals frequently discuss topical issues, and "it's an important time for people on the conservative side to speak out."

But Voight also told Politico that his op-ed "speaks for itself" and he didn't have much interest in getting on a soapbox or becoming a poster boy for right-wing Hollywood. "Listen," he said, "I don't want to make a big deal out of this. I made some very strong points, and you do expect that people are going to respond to it in a variety of ways. And that's how it should be."

Though Wells mostly covers films and highly esoteric cineaste topics such as proper screen size ratios, he veered into political postings early last year, and, after becoming taken with Obama, he has been devoting more space than ever before to dissecting MSNBC pundit chatter and New York Times op-ed pieces.

"You have to feel it on some level, and I was feeling as strong about [politics] as I was about some movies,"

said Wells. “As I started feeling more comfortable with the subject, it became easier to punch out, I started having fun, and it got some real rises out of people.” He said he has gotten complaints from longtime readers who feel his blog is moving away from entertainment issues, but he doesn’t care.

“I have to explain to people that it isn’t just one realm anymore: Everything is bleeding into everything else,” he insisted. “There’s a political undercurrent to everything now. Even ‘Mamma Mia’ got made because Meryl Streep saw the play a month after 9/11 and loved the way it lifted the audience’s spirits — she wrote a letter to producers, and that got the ball rolling for the movie version.”

As far as his comments about Voight, Wells said his response about a “theoretical” blacklisting was not “offensive, per se” — despite the near “cyber-riot” by political bloggers such as Instapundit, Powerline and the National Review Online, as well as from fellow film writers and commenters who responded to his vilification of Voight with outrage.

**Roger L. Simon**

### **Shades of the Danish Cartoons: Random House in disgrace**

Although it has for some time been a division of German media giant Bertelsmann, Random House has been one of the distinguished names in American publishing since the halcyon days of Bennett Cerf. So it is particularly repugnant to see the company knuckling under to essentially the same reactionary, anti-democratic, anti-free speech forces that repressed the Danish cartoons. As we learned in the [Wall Street Journal](#) today, the company has decided not to publish Sherry Jones’ historical novel “The Jewel of Medina” about Mohammed’s child bride Aisha. The book was part of a \$100,000 two-book contract with the [author](#).

Shame on Random House! This act of abject cowardice and de facto censorship is one of the most disgraceful incidents I can think of in the history of American publishing. As Asra Q. Nomani writes in the *WSJ*: *Random House feared the book would become a new “Satanic Verses,” the Salman Rushdie novel of 1988 that led to death threats, riots and the murder of the book’s Japanese translator, among other horrors. In an interview about Ms. Jones’s novel, Thomas Perry, deputy publisher at Random House Publishing Group, said that it “disturbs us that we feel we cannot publish it right now.” He said that after sending out advance copies of the novel, the company received “from credible and unrelated sources, cautionary advice not only that the publication of this book might be offensive to some in the Muslim community, but also that it could incite acts of violence by a small, radical segment.”*

The “credible” source was one Denise Spellberg, a University of Texas academic who, on receipt of Jones’ galleys, started tattling like a six-year old to Muslims Spellberg felt would be angry with the work. Perry and his cronies simply caved in. That the publishers reference the “Satanic Verses” in their defence is yet more despicable. In the early 1990s, when I was president of West Coast Branch of PEN, we did everything in our power to defend Rushdie *against* the attempts to suppress his freedom of speech. Random House does nothing for its own authors. The natural conclusion of their behavior in this instance is that nothing critical of Islam could ever be written.

PEN and the Authors’ Guild should launch an investigation into this situation and if the allegations are true, should urge a boycott of Random House until it changes its policy. If I were Jones, I would sue the publishing house for all they’re worth.

[Full disclosure: I had three novels published by a division of Random House in the 1980s - Villard Books. At that point, I was very satisfied with the publisher and could not imagine them rejecting a manuscript for the reasons they are now. It’s a different world.]

UPDATE: Some commenters have pointed out that Random House’s behavior is not strictly speaking censorship because the company is not an organ of the state. They are correct. But I submit that that a publishing house the size of Random House has a certain level of public trust. And I would imagine they

would agree. One of the key measures of public trust in the United States is the protection of free speech. Yes, as one commenter stated, this is cowardice but not censorship, but it is a form of cowardice with immense social ramifications about which we should all be concerned.

## **Jewish World Review**

### **A Nation of Thieves**

by Walter Williams

Edgar K. Browning, professor of economics at Texas A&M University, has a new book aptly titled "Stealing from Each Other." Its subtitle, "How the Welfare State Robs Americans of Money and Spirit," goes to the heart of what the book is about. The rise of equalitarian ideology has driven Americans to steal from one another. Browning explains that certain kinds of equality have been a cherished value in America. Equality under the law and, within reason, equality of opportunity is consistent with a free society. Equality of results is an anathema to a free society and within it lie the seeds of tyranny.

Browning entertains a discussion about when inequalities are just or unjust. For example, college graduates earn income higher than high-school dropouts. Some people prefer to work many hours and earn more than others who prefer to work fewer. Students who spend 25 or more hours a week on classroom preparation earn higher grades than students who spend five hours. Most would agree that these inequalities are just. There are other sources of inequalities that are unjust, such as: when incomes result from fraud, corruption, stealing, exploitation, oppression and the like. Such sources of inequality play an insignificant role in producing income inequality in America. Most economists agree that income is closely related to productivity.

Much of the justification for the welfare state is to reduce income inequality by making income transfers to the poor. Browning provides some statistics that might help us to evaluate the sincerity and truthfulness of this claim. In 2005, total federal, state and local government expenditures on 85 welfare programs were \$620 billion. That's larger than national defense (\$495 billion) or public education (\$472 billion). The 2005 official poverty count was 37 million persons. That means welfare expenditures per poor person were \$16,750, or \$67,000 for a poor family of four.

Those figures understate poverty expenditures because poor people are recipients of non-welfare programs such as Social Security, Medicare, private charity and uncompensated medical care. The question that naturally arises is if we're spending enough to lift everyone out of poverty, why is there still poverty? The obvious answer is poor people are not receiving all the money being spent in their name. Non-poor people are getting the bulk of it.

Browning's concluding chapter tells us what the welfare state costs us. He acknowledges the non-economic costs such as infringements on liberty and strains on the political process, but focuses on the quantitative economic costs. The disincentive effects of Social Security have reduced the GDP by 10 percent, the federal income tax (as opposed to a proportional tax) by 9 percent and past deficits by 3.5 percent for a total of 22.5 percent. He guesses that welfare programs have reduced GDP by 2.5 percent. The overall effect of redistributionist policies has created incentives that have reduced GDP by a total of 25 percent. Without those, our GDP would be close to \$18 trillion instead of \$14 trillion.

So what's Browning's solution? First, he reminds us of the biblical admonition "Thou shalt not steal." Government income redistribution programs produce the same result as theft. In fact, that's what a thief does; he redistributes income. The difference between government and thievery is mostly a matter of legality. Browning's solution is captured in the title of his last chapter, "Just Say No," where he proposes, "The federal government shall not adopt any policies that transfer income (resources) from some Americans to other Americans." He agrees with James Madison, the father of our Constitution, who said, "I cannot undertake to lay my finger on that article of the Constitution which granted a right to Congress of expending, on objects of benevolence, the money of their constituents."

For years I've used Professor Browning's and his colleague Mark A. Zupan's excellent textbook "Microeconomics: Price Theory and Applications" in my intermediate microeconomics class. "Stealing from Each Other" is a continuation of his academic excellence.

**James Taranto**

### **Faith-Based Initiative**

**"Bill Clinton made a plea [Tuesday] for a new emphasis on monogamy as a key element in the battle against Aids," London's Independent reports. Seriously:**

The former US president . . . said it was very important to change people's attitudes to sex.

In an interview with the BBC recorded in Africa, Mr Clinton said that increasing support for monogamy was not just a problem for the continent worst hit by Aids but for the world.

"To pretend we can ever get hold of this without dealing with that--the idea of unprotected sexual relations with unlimited numbers of partners--I think would be naïve," he said.

Wait, wait, stop laughing! There is a serious point here. It's easy to dismiss Clinton as a hypocrite, but his failure to practice what he preaches has no bearing on the hygienic merits of his statement. Even if he had put his argument in moral terms, it would be equally valid regardless of his own behavior.

That said, Clinton's hypocrisy does make him a problematic advocate for monogamy, simply because it makes him so hard to take seriously. Even the Independent, a left-wing paper doubtless sympathetic to the ex-president, can't resist a little dig to the effect that Clinton is "not noted for his ability to keep his own marriage vows." Maybe AIDS advocates should find a better spokesman for monogamy.

But who? John Edwards is out for obvious reasons. John Kerry? Not with that "chance encounter on a dock." Barack Obama is busy for the next three or 51 or 99 months. But wait. What about Al Gore? By all accounts, he and wife Tipper have a true and enduring love.

Ah, but Gore is busy too, "saving" the "planet" from "global" "warming." Pity. But wait. This gives us an idea. When it comes to global warmism, Gore has the same problem Clinton has vis-à-vis sex--to wit, an insatiable appetite, for carbon in the erstwhile veep's case. Gore has solved this problem by buying "emissions credits." Essentially, that means he pays someone else for refraining from producing carbon dioxide, allowing him to produce all he wants.

What if Clinton were to do the same thing--pay other people to be faithful to offset his tomcatting around? As it turns out, there's a Web site allowing him to do just that, CheatNeutral.com:

When you cheat on your partner you add to the heartbreak, pain and jealousy in the atmosphere.

Cheatneutral offsets your cheating by funding someone else to be faithful and NOT cheat. This neutralises the pain and unhappy emotion and leaves you with a clear conscience. . . .

First you should look at ways of reducing your cheating. Once you've done this you can use Cheatneutral to offset the remaining, unavoidable cheating.

All Clinton has to do is shell out a couple of million bucks on cheating offsets, and voilà, he's as credible as Al Gore.

One small caveat: The "small print" page of CheatNeutral.com says the site "is satirical in intent." But this doesn't necessarily mean our plan won't work. It all depends on what the meaning of "is" is.

## **Gore Hits the Waves with a Massive New Houseboat**

by Steve Gill

Former Vice President Al Gore, the Nobel-winning self-proclaimed global prophet of green, has made a lot of money from the so-called “crisis” of global warming. He has profited from best-selling books that tout the looming climatic catastrophe, won an Academy Award for a movie about his slideshow presentation that focuses on his “sky is falling” message about a world on the brink of environmental disaster.

His business interests have been focused on the profit side of the equation when it comes to “global warming,” creating a [“carbon credits” program](#) that has put millions of dollars into the pockets of Gore and his environmental cronies. There are also financial interests benefiting from the sudden shift to the ‘environmentally friendly’ light bulbs that he has trumpeted so loudly: his friends at General Electric stand to [make big money](#) from the congressionally mandated demand for their new light bulbs.

There is no question that the alarmism and doomsday scenarios spread by Al Gore have been very, very beneficial to him personally and professionally.

But the question persists as to whether he actually buys into what he is selling. His own behavior clearly indicates that he doesn’t believe we are at a “tipping point” of worldwide environmental destruction. While he preaches that the rest of us must dramatically change our lifestyles and lower our standards of living to “save the planet” he lives by another set of rules himself.

It happens in the air, where he [jets about](#) in private planes that consume massive amounts of energy to spread his message of “conservation.”

His hypocrisy is revealed on land, where he travels in fleets of limos and SUVs to deliver speeches about the dire consequences of ignoring “man-made global warming” — and leaves [4] [the cars](#) running throughout his entire speech in order to ensure that they will be nice and cool when he exits the building and returns to his gas-guzzling vehicles.

His supposedly “green” mansion consumes electricity that [dwarfs the consumption](#) of the typical family home.

And now, in order to complete his hypocrisy trifecta, Al Gore may now be extending his excessive consumption to the water as well. In an amazing display of conspicuous consumption, even for Al Gore, his new 100-foot houseboat that docks at the Hurricane Marina in Smithville, Tennessee is creating a critical buzz among many of his former congressional constituents. Dubbed “Bio-Solar One,” which may reflect some latent Air Force One envy, Gore has proudly strutted the small-town dock claiming that his monstrous houseboat is environmentally friendly. (Only Al Gore would name his boat B.S. One and not get the joke. Or perhaps the joke is on us?)

The boat is a custom-built Fantasy Yacht built specifically for Gore by [Bill Austin](#) of Sparta, Tennessee.





According to Austin, the engines are bio-diesel fueled and Gore can expect to use about two gallons an hour to cruise Center Hill Lake. With a 500 gallon capacity Austin says Gore won't need a refill for "two or three years" though he admits having "no clue" about where Gore could get bio-diesel at the lake. The Hurricane Marina dock doesn't sell it.

"This boat is going to be the Toyota Prius of the houseboat business," Austin proclaims. "It is the most eco-friendly houseboat anywhere in the country and is going to revolutionize the houseboat industry. People are increasingly worried about high gas prices and this is the answer." Austin claims that the "Bio-Solar One" will create 40-50% less carbon emission and use half the fuel of other similar houseboats. "Gore will consume a lot more fuel driving to and from the lake than he will ever use cruising on this houseboat," Austin asserts.

The solar panels have not yet been installed but are expected to arrive from Reno, Nevada "any day" and will be in working order "soon," says Austin.

When the solar panels are installed the Gore boat could power itself and "most of the dock" according to Austin. In the meantime, however, Gore is plugged into the dock as his primary power source.



Austin says he has several other potential customers interested in following Gore's lead. Austin professes reluctance to talk about "other folks business" but notes that a houseboat similar to Gore's will cost between \$500,000 to a million dollars. Austin believes that Gore's "Bio-Solar One" will set the stage for a lot of sales. Land, air and now the sea. Will space will be the final frontier?

Let's not forget: Gore made similar claims about the environmental benefits of the solar panels and other "green" additions he made to his 10,000 square foot home in Belle Meade, a cushy neighborhood in Nashville, Tennessee. The environmental savings promised from his "investments" failed to produce the results that he touted. In fact, his "energy efficient" renovations to his home actually INCREASED his electrical consumption by 10% rather than producing the promised reductions. Ultimately, Gore's water-based excursions on his giant houseboat may prove more environmentally friendly than his fleet of limos, his private jets or his mansion. Perhaps the B.S. One will never live up to its nickname, but the jet ski on the boat is clearly powered by something other than solar or bio-diesel



Maybe AI is buying carbon credits from himself to offset that particular energy usage.



RICHMOND TIMES DISPATCH 8/08 *BRACKINS*

WOW! THAT WAS AN INCREDIBLE QUADRUPLE-REVERSE PIKE WITH A THREE-AND-A-HALF TWIST! ...

HEY, I DIDN'T THINK THE OLYMPIC COMPETITION HAD STARTED.

RELAX...THEY ARE DESCRIBING OBAMA'S LATEST ENERGY POLICY.





# Dry Bones THE NEIGHBORS



