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INCORPORATING ELECTROLITE

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Back to previous
post: [Open](#)
thread 115

Go to Making
Light's front
page.

Forward to next
post: [The](#)
[Huntress](#)

Subscribe (via
RSS) to this
post's comment
thread. (What
does this mean?
[Here's](#) a quick
introduction.)

October 27, 2008

The religious right, gone barking mad

Posted by Teresa at 11:44 PM *

This was my contribution to the link swappage going on in the [the southern end](#) of the Election Day unrest thread. It's [a piece of religious right lunacy](#) that made my jaw drop: [Blood libel! Spectral evidence! Cannibalism!](#) The stupidity that passeth all understanding! Not to mention hearsay taken as fact; viz.:

Block African witchcraft curses against McCain and Palin NOW!

Jim Bramlett

Sep 28 2008 04:12PM

Dear friends:

THIS IS EXTREMELY SERIOUS.

Yes; but [when John Hodgman does it](#), it's *meant* to be funny.

Minutes ago I spoke with friend Dr. Norman G. Marvin, M.D. and he is so concerned at what he has learned about Barack Obama's family in Kenya that he is calling a special prayer meeting in his home to pray against the witchcraft curses attempted by them against John McCain and Sarah Palin.

Dr. Marvin sent me the below e-mail from Flo Ellers. Flo is credentialed with the International Fellowship of Ministries which is based in Washington State. She is also a member of EndTime Handmaidens and Servants of Jasper, Arkansas.

IF YOU KNOW HOW TO DO SPIRITUAL WARFARE, PLEASE PRAY TODAY AND CONTINUALLY THAT ALL SUCH CURSES BE BROKEN AND SATAN'S PLAN FOR AMERICA BE DEFEATED, IN JESUS' NAME. PRAY AND COVER MCCAIN AND PALIN WITH THE BLOOD OF CHRIST. IF YOU DO NOT KNOW HOW TO DO SPIRITUAL WARFARE, IT IS TIME YOU LEARN!!!

Jim

"Spiritual warfare" is a sort of folk thaumaturgy with ambitions to theurgy. If it worked, it would be a branch of black magic. There are "spiritual warfare" adherents out there who publicly take credit for the death of Mother Teresa.

From Flo Ellers. Excerpt. (Emphasis supplied in bold and underlines.)

Two days ago, I listened to a 9-6-08 message by Bree Keyton, a young woman evangelist who had just traveled to Kenya and visited Obama's home village and what she found out about his relations with his tribal people was chilling. And his "cousin" Odinga was dreadful. **She said the witches, warlocks and those involved in satanism and the occult get up daily at 3 a.m. to release curses against McCain and Palin so B. Hussein Obama is elected.**

Why three in the morning? I have no idea. They never say. It's a nice use of a single arbitrary detail to nail down an otherwise bald and unconvincing narrative.

Unfortunately for Ms. Keyton's credibility, and for Jim Bramlett and Flo Ellers's credulity, the story about Odinga being related to Barack Obama is known to be false. You could read all about it in the [St. Petersburg Times](#) clear back in April. At that time, the story was being enthusiastically spread by [Celeste and Loren Davis](#), who claim to be Christian missionaries in Africa, but sound far too petty, spiteful, worldly, and obsessed with right-wing politics to be any kind of effective advertisement for Christianity.

Bree Keyton told the tribal "Christians" you are NOT Christian if you practice "tribalism" where they do voodoo to conjure up a goddess spirit or a "genie" and then come to church on Sunday to worship Jesus! What she discovered there is apparent in most churches around the world; namely, mixture in the church. Some renounced their devilish practices of blood covenant by killing sheep, goats, humans to be inducted into the tribe or to get a wife or to get revenge.

Bree Keyton features heroically in her own stories. More about her in a bit.

She said the current president of Kenya is a Christian. However, Obama's cousin Odinga ran against him and said he rigged the election and stirred up the masses to rape woman and boys, kill and burn and torture Christians, etc. until Obama contacted Condeleeza Rice

Which makes no sense whatsoever. I suspect Rice was nominated for this role solely because she's black.

and she granted Obama the right to contact Odinga and other ruling elders and he "convinced" them to stop terrorizing the Christians. Bree Keyton said the current Christian President was forced by our government (!) to "create" an office for Odinga (to make "peace") so he was made the Prime Minister (!) to make peace between the Christians and Odinga's Muslim religion!

Bree Keyton is way big on special revelations. She says she receives 'em from God. But she has to be mistaken about that source—God wouldn't have omitted to let her know what Muslims actually believe.

Bree Keyton went and visited Obama's tribal people and she found out Obama is 75% Arab

I wonder which one of his Kansas grandparents is secretly an Arab?

and his family are Muslims. Odinga is still trying to become the President of Kenya. If he does, he will make a law forbidding all public preaching and institute Sharia Law. Bree K. said Odinga has made a pact with satan.

I know, I know. Many of those words don't belong in the same sentence with each other. Bree Keyton is a stunningly ignorant and brazen piece of work.

Bree K. also said when Obama visited his tribe in '06 and as late as Jan. '08 he went to every elder's home which has a "shrine" inside to worship the genie and asked for their blessing. She was told Obama and Odinga were both "destined" before they were born to be president/leader of their nation. They say "he is the chosen one". She said Obama's grandmother sacrificed a black and a white chicken to the "goddess of the river" so both whites and blacks will vote for Obama. All Islam loves and worships Obama.

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I can't believe this chit ~~went anywhere near Kenya,~~ or has spoken to any Muslims. (*Sara_k says that Ms. Keyton did make a short trip to Kenya in July and August. This presumably will have been when everyone there told her all those secrets they've been keeping from everyone else.*)

The world is mesmerized by him. Oprah's 200 million followers are out to elect Obama. Also, Dick Morris of Fox News was sent to help Odinga run his campaign! I find that unbelievable.

I find it unbelievable too.

The occultists are "weaving lazy 8's around McCain's mind to make him look confused and like an idiot". Bree K. said we need to break these curses off of him that are being sent from Kenya.

So *that's* what's doing it. Now we know.

Mind, you, the foregoing is just a sample of this document. It's much longer and stranger.

So: **Bree Keyton**, who's cited throughout as the source of this story, is a washed-up chantoosie who by her **own account** got shot in the head one night while opening for a rock band, and thereafter went into the **god biz**. Her **traveling act** appears to be a sort of **musical** (only now it's for God, so you have to listen) **post-Buffy** "hot chick with long blonde hair and **sword**" routine. Seriously, she sells specially blessed **wooden stakes**—which, again, appear to be some sort of folk magic.

Keyton's theology is a **complete mess** of spiritual titillation, conspiracy theory, **special revelation**, and **"spiritual warfare" practices** which, again, appear to owe more to folk magic than to mainstream Christianity. Add to that mixture a dollop each of right-wing fruitbattery, anti-Masonic sentiments, and Alexander Hislop, and you've got it.

I can't imagine *anyone* believing her stories who didn't start out wanting to believe them.

Comments on *The religious right, gone barking mad*:

#1 ::: miriam beetle ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 01:33 AM:

What she discovered there is apparent in most churches around the world; namely, mixture in the church. which in no way resembles "spiritual warfare" & bree's brand of magic, i am sure.

#2 ::: Steve Taylor ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 01:38 AM:

[adlai stevenson]
Yes, but we need a *majority*
[adlai stevenson]

#3 ::: Steve Taylor ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 01:42 AM:

> Keyton's theology is a complete mess of spiritual titillation, conspiracy theory, special revelation, and "spiritual warfare" practices which, again, appear to owe more to folk magic than to mainstream Christianity. Add to that mixture a dollop each of right-wing fruitbattery, anti-Masonic sentiments, and Alexander Hislop, and you've got it.

That reminds me of one of my most treasured possessions, a little booklet called "Mystery 666". It explains how the masons, jews, communists and international bankers are ALL IN IT TOGETHER. There are instructive diagrams.

#4 ::: jmn1man ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 01:55 AM:

Wasn't Clinton's emergency phone call at 3 a.m. also? I guess that explains why Obama couldn't answer the phone. You know I bet Harry Potter has something to do with this somehow.....damn limey elitist, socialist SOB.

#5 ::: Avedaggio ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 01:58 AM:

Steve @ 3:
Don't forget about the Templars and Bavarian Illuminati.

#6 ::: janet1 ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 02:02 AM:

Avedaggio @ 5:
The Bavarian Creme Illuminati? Wow, then this is EXTREMELY SERIOUS!

#7 ::: Kimberly ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 02:28 AM:

"B. Hussein Obama"? Are they so desperate to drive up the "Ack! Muslim!" fear factor that they can't even be bothered to mention his first name?

...Oh. *Right*.

This is also an oblique approach to stripping the 'enemy' of their name, and taking them one step closer to (perceived) inhumanity, isn't it? At least, I think that's what's going on there. It's sickening. These guys are way out on the fringe, right?

#8 ::: Connie H. ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 02:47 AM:

I had assumed the 3 AM time for bad voodoo prayers was to work the difference in time zones so that just as McCain and Palin would be meeting with the press or giving speeches or starting a debate, the fix is in.

(I suppose that does explain all the senior moments....)

Also it gives all the Prayer Warriors a specific time to pray and set up their spiritual shield properly, depending upon what zone in the Bible Belt they're located in.

#9 ::: Dave Bell ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 02:52 AM:

How do some of these nutcases get any traction in the media?

In part, I guess, it's the flipside of the same internettery that gives us a chance to get our messages out, past the entrenched dead hand of the corporate news media. But they're spouting craziness that the aforesaid media seem happy enough to repeat.

Just how much lunacy do you have to deploy to be heard in the modern USA?

#10 ::: chandra ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 02:59 AM:

I shared this crazy with my roommate, and she pointed out that at least we knew that Palin's wardrobe was able to provide these witches, warlocks, satanists, and those involved with the occult with the hair they needed to release their curses.

I wonder if the curses come back every night and that's why they need to be released again each morning. Maybe they're cute and fluffy like kitties! Or maybe I'm just trying to make this better in my head...

#11 ::: Rich McAllister ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 03:14 AM:

Ill wind that blows no good; my local Call of Cthulhu RPG game had a fine time with the "Servants of Jasper" on Saturday.

#12 ::: Nenya ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 03:31 AM:

"B. Hussein Obama"? Are they so desperate to drive up the "Ack! Muslim!" fear factor that they can't even be bothered to mention his first name?

Yes.

Which is a pity for a number of reasons, including the fact that "Barack" and "Hussein" are actually both really good names, meaning "blessed" and "handsome/good" respectively. As the Wikipedia page on the given name Barack notes, it means exactly the same thing as "Benedict". And it's certainly not Sen. Obama's parents' fault that the name Hussein would remind a lot of people of an Iraqi dictator who didn't come to power until their son was 18 years old.

#13 ::: Dom ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 03:50 AM:

Elders' homes have shrines... which they use to summon up a GENie... at 3 a.m... to release curses against McCain?

I'm pretty sure this happens in America, too.

#14 ::: Nix ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 03:56 AM:

Even in the text Teresa quotes there are glaring contradictions to add to the nuttury. e.g. even given the truth of all the other madness in there, why on earth would Obama need to contact someone else (someone unrelated and not in a relevant job, but with skin of the right colour, gasp) for permission to contact his *own cousin*? They can't even remember their lies from one para to the next.

#15 ::: Clifton Royston ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 04:02 AM:

The whole swords and spiritual warfare thing strongly reminds me of an old strain in American folk religion, the "white magic" or "Christian magic" tradition of hexes and *The Long Lost Friend* and the false *Albertus Magnus* and such, which Bellairs drew on so effectively for his YA fantasies. One tends to think that these weird bits of American folklore are gone and forgotten, but they keep running on as an undercurrent and resurfacing in new forms.

If you haven't watched the video of Sarah Palin being blessed against witches by the African witch-hunter, I'd suggest all of you do so. It falls squarely within this magical understanding of Christianity not as a religion to guide ones life and values, but as a source of supernatural power to be manipulated.

#16 ::: Steve Taylor ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 04:51 AM:

Avedaggio at #5 writes:

> Don't forget about the Templars and Bavarian Illuminati.

Oops. I actually did forget catholics. They're part of it too. And the Bilderbergers - though I can forgive anyone who decides they're a mysterious world controlling cabal, because what else would you call them?

#17 ::: BjÄ¶rn LindstrÄ¶m ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 04:58 AM:

Apart from the exact time of three in the morning lending verisimilitude to a crazy story, if I remember my *The Name of the Rose*, that is the time of morning prayer in the religious orders.

#18 ::: Dave Bell ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 05:17 AM:

There's that short-short John the Balladeer story about the shooting match.

Title: "Nary Spell"

(The Baen collection is on several of their CDs, and a quick google shows copies online. According to the CD I have, that's apparently legitimate.)

All those stories are rooted in that folk-magic tradition, darkness and light.

#19 ::: dlbowman76 ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 05:19 AM:

Yowza. Some things just reduce me to unintelligibility and this is near the top of the list. I thought that Christianity was traditionally supposed to be *extremely hostile* to mysticism and animism.

Perhaps 3 AM is significant because at that moment, you can cast the correct runes over your television and point your satellite dish towards Jerusalem, that is when you can tune in to the *666 Club*. Where with an appropriate offering to Baal (a blood sacrifice will do, but apparently he prefers cash), he'll send you a do-it-yourself *Find the Antichrist* kit.

#20 ::: Alex ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 05:35 AM:

If I had John McCain's history of support for UNITA, I'd run a mile from anything involving the word "cannibal".

#21 ::: Marko Kloos ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 05:49 AM:

The really scary part is that their votes count just as much as yours or mine.

#22 ::: Earl Cooley III ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 05:50 AM:

Dom #13: *Elders' homes have shrines... which they use to summon up a GEnie... at 3 a.m... to release curses against McCain? I'm pretty sure this happens in America, too.*

I used to participate in GEnie's SFRT, and I have a Kung Fu Panda shrine. Does that count, or do I need to try harder than that?

#23 ::: Fragano Ledgister ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 06:41 AM:

Muslims worship Obama? I had no idea the Haj was a pilgrimage to Chicago.

#24 ::: Irene Delse ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 06:44 AM:

"African witchcraft curses against McCain and Palin"

Huh? Isn't Palin the one who believe in witchcraft? IIRC, there's a video of her getting "anti-witch" blessings from an African preacher...

Oh, right. The crazies, projecting again.

#25 ::: Serge ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 06:57 AM:

the witches, warlocks and those involved in satanism and the occult get up daily at 3 a.m.

That sounds like my normal wakeup time. No wizard I'm such a wizard of programming.

#26 ::: Serge ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 06:59 AM:

Argh.

"...no wonder I'm a wizard..."

The wizard can't spell.

Wallah Wallah Washington! Saskatoon Saskatchewan!
Shazam!
Kimota!

#27 ::: Rivka ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 07:10 AM:

Whatever happened to Christians believing that no force is equal to omnipotent God?

All of this black-magic-powerful-demons-your-God-is-fighting-my-God stuff seems so profoundly anti-Christian to me.

#28 ::: Nancy Lebovitz ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 07:14 AM:

A pragmatic reading would suggest that if the believers are being encouraged to wake up at 3AM to engage in spiritual warfare, they'll be sleep-deprived and more gullible.

Not in Kansas Anymore: A Curious Tale of How Magic Is Transforming America is probably relevant. It's about traditional (back to the Puritans) and current American magic.

#29 ::: Serge ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 07:31 AM:

Fragano @ 23... *I had no idea the Haj was a pilgrimage to Chicago.*

I can just see the scene as an older woman approaches Obama's Secret Service people.

"Are you the police?"

"No, ma'am. We're musicians."

#30 ::: Jo Walton ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 07:35 AM:

The bit about the genies in the huts reminds me of how in the *Song of Roland* the evil Muslim bad guys worship Apollo.

Also, it's a pity the name of Bree should have fallen into such disrepute.

#31 ::: sara_k ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 07:50 AM:

I couldn't find any IFM that Ms. Keyton is affiliated with. She was however transformed by being shot in the head and did make a short trip to Kenya in July and August.

#32 ::: Fragano Ledgister ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 08:07 AM:

dlbowman76 #19: Presumably that would be the Anal Roberts show.

#33 ::: John Houghton ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 08:15 AM:

The religious right, gone barking mad

FIFY!

The only reason I wouldn't have called them "barking mad" when I had to deal with them as a teen in the '60s was that I hadn't learned the phrase "barking mad" until much later.

peace sign = crow's foot = symbol of death

(My favorite was when I saw some people try to faith-heal a tractor. I'm still not sure how they expected the tractor to "accept the Glory of God" — doesn't the "faith" in "faith healing" refer to the faith of the one being healed?)

#34 ::: dlbowman76 ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 08:21 AM:

Fragano Ledgister (32): (At the risk of outraging someone - eh.) Actually, I think that Jerry Falwell may be the current host.

#35 ::: Zander ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 08:26 AM:

Um, I wouldn't put too much stress on "Barack" being the equivalent of "Benedict." I'm sure that somewhere in the vast corpus of occult lore there is a treatise on numerology by whose system "Obama" can be made to equate to "Arnold"...

#36 ::: Fragano Ledgister ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 08:28 AM:

Serge #29: I'd want a straight-shooting Ray Charles on my side, frankly.

#37 ::: Kip W ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 08:30 AM:

Maybe they really believe that praying is the most effective thing they can do. Maybe they'll stay home on Election Day, as praying is so much more important. Maybe they'll pray instead of making bombs and buying ammunition. Pray they do.

#38 ::: dlbowman76 ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 08:34 AM:

Zander (35): Apart from the obvious one - They both have 6 letters in them. Famously, the ubiquitous barcode is divided into two sections with three binary markers, each represented by the number 6.

Of course, that's a load of hooley, but you'd be amazed how many people out there believe it.

#39 ::: Tracey ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 08:49 AM:

I believe that the "3 a.m." thing is related to Jesus dying at the third hour (according to Mark 15:25; according to John 19:14-16, it was the sixth hour)--a time when, supposedly, the forces of good would be the weakest and the forces of evil in ascendancy.

visited Obama's home village

Does she mean Honolulu, Hawaii?

Bree Keyton said the current Christian President was forced by our government (!) to create an office for Odinga (to make peace) so he was made the Prime Minister (!) to make peace between the Christians and Odinga's Muslim religion!

All of which is balderdash. Raila Odinga--the Kenyan presidential candidate in 2007--is an Anglican, not a Muslim. And Mwai Kibaki--the president of Kenya--is a Roman Catholic, which would not count as "Christian" (i.e., Protestant Christian) for Bree.

Bree K. said Odinga has made a pact with satan.

And I say that there is a three-legged dragon in her basement. Both statements are equally nonsensical.

when Obama visited his tribe in 06 and as late as Jan. 08

The only tribe Barack Obama belongs to is the tribe of Americans. Besides, he was busy sitting in Congress and running for president from 2006 to 2008. And his father died in 1982, so I don't think he'd be visiting his old village.

So, basically, this is just another lie.

All Islam loves and worships Obama.

And here I thought that the point of Islam was the worship of Allah...that is, GOD.

#40 ::: TKay ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 08:58 AM:

"fruitbattery" is my best new favorite word!

#41 ::: Debra Doyle ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 09:00 AM:

Tracy@39: *Raila Odinga--the Kenyan presidential candidate in 2007--is an Anglican, not a Muslim. And Mwai Kibaki--the president of Kenya--is a Roman Catholic, which would not count as "Christian" (i.e., Protestant Christian) for Bree.*

Anglicans don't count as "Christian" for people like that, either . . . all those bells-and-incense liturgical denominations look alike to them.

#42 ::: Raphael ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 09:01 AM:

I first noticed the Kenyan smear- although without the witchcraft angle- earlier this year among PUMAs. Aside from the racist aspects, there's this whole thing with people analysing complicated matters in other countries through the lense of US partisan hate. Judging from the reports I've seen, what happened in Kenya was that during the election, the government tried to pull all kinds of dubious stuff- for instance, the electoral commission interrupted vote counts for hours at a time when the government was ahead, and apparently, the police arrested and killed people with opposition connections before anyone had done anything- and then, people started to riot, and both sides committed various atrocities, including ethnic cleansings.

It looks like neither side has a clean record- apparently, both sides prepared, trained, and instructed their supporters (and in the government's case, the security forces) to fight it out after the election- but thanks to the crazyness in the US election campaign this year, now many American right-wingers (and even centrists) buy into the simplified partisan "evil opposition thugs do horrible things because they lost an election" version of the events. Aside from the short-term purpose of making people in the USA scared of riots, in the long term it might well contribute to the dumbing down of US foreign policy.

I don't believe this chit went anywhere near Kenya, or has spoken to any Muslims.

Now that's the point where I'm not following you. Do you think that fundies can only believe crazy things about places where they haven't been? Is that description of Kenya really crazier than some fundie descriptions of the USA? I can well imagine US Evangelical missionaries going to Kenya, being horrified by the folk magic practised by some people and the support for that horrible atheomuslimosocialist Osama something, and then interpreting it according to their worldview. And they might get their views of Kenyan politics spoonfed by anti-Odinga partisans. For all I know, some Kenyan Christian fundamentalists might even believe things very much like the stuff in the letter. (Please correct me on this if you know more about Kenya than I do, though.)

dlbowman76 @19: *I thought that Christianity was traditionally supposed to be **extremely hostile** to mysticism and animism.*

Yes- that's *the reason why* the people behind this letter try to smear Obama by linking him to it.

Irene Delse @24: The people behind this don't see *believing* in magic as the problem- they believe in magic themselves. It's just that they see it as something evil.

#43 ::: Fragano Ledgister ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 09:01 AM:

Serge #29: I'd want a straight-shooting Ray Charles on my side, frankly.

#44 ::: Raphael ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 09:04 AM:

Myself @ 42: *For all I know, some Kenyan Christian fundamentalists might even believe things very much like the stuff in the letter.*

I wrote this before I had read Tracy's post at 39. Ok, so I guess even crazy people in Kenya would leave out the part about Odinga being a Muslim.

#45 ::: Fragano Ledgister ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 09:14 AM:

I should note that one of my students is a Luo from Kenya (same ethnic group as Raila Odinga and Barack Obama Sr.). She is (a) very black in colour, and (b) Roman Catholic.

The Luo are no more Arab than the Gikuyu** (the ethnic group of Kenyan president Mwai Kibaki).

*No prizes for guessing her sympathies in the current elections.

**Ob. Personal note: My one published monograph was edited by a Gikuyu, Wanjiku Ngugi, the daughter of Kenyan novelist Ngugi Wa Thi'ongo.

#46 ::: Fragano Ledgister ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 09:17 AM:

Jo Walton #30: The name of Bree will never fall into disrepute in all those places where good beer is revered.

Sincerely,
Barliman Butterbur

#47 ::: Chad ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 09:22 AM:

For your consideration:

The Warrior of **Light**. (That's apparently Bree's incantations in the background).

Don't miss the last 10 seconds.

#48 ::: Chad ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 09:24 AM:

...make that 30 seconds. I sped it up in my mind.

#49 ::: Summer Storms thought someone should know ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 09:46 AM:

Just to let you know, the LiveJournal feed for this entry is completely borked.

#50 ::: Serge ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 09:48 AM:

Fragano @ 23... Yes, muslim worships Obama. Silk absolutely *adores* him.

#51 ::: ADM ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 09:52 AM:

sigh

I've been trying to work on a post about thinking that people on the Right are stupid. One of the things that has bothered me most about this election, and the last two as well, is that left-wing intellectuals are demonized by those on the right, while we tend to classify right-wing conservatives as ignorant (but we can change them!).

Somehow, being liberal has come to be characterized as immoral, as a rejection of all things right. To be liberal is to embrace all forms of kink, to want to redistribute nice, hard-working white people's money to the lazy brown people who will just spend it on drugs and HD TVs that the nice white people can't afford, and to undermine our army what is fighting the ebil baby-killing tearists. But being conservative is equally characterized as being racist, sexist, pro-fat-cat at the expense of one's own family, superstitious, anti-society, and ... almost, but not quite, fascist. And worse -- fascists who live in the country, don't go to the dentist, and are so iggerant they don't know better.

Kind of. At lest those are the generalizations that pop into my head before the second cup of tea.

But that really does piss me off. I can't do anything about the people who demonize me except live a life that shows I'm not a demon -- or at least that I practice the tolerance and support for the constitution that I preach. And I can continue to point out that there are plenty of very intelligent, well-educated conservatives. They aren't conservative because they are stupid or gullible -- they have another value system. I don't agree with it, but unfortunately, my understanding of first amendment rights tells me they have a right to disagree on fundamental things.

And then Teresa posts something like this, and I am tested, because ... it's really hard to fight the idea that there are a lot of stupid and ignorant people out there who are easily captured by the fearmongers so that they can be used to destroy the things I believe in.

It's a funny thing when beliefs clash. Noodling around in the back of my historian's mind is that we are heading into something akin to the Wars of Religion. For many of us, our guiding beliefs are grounded in the principles of modern liberalism as expressed in the US Constitution. But it's almost as if the threats to those beliefs by conservative Christians have turned our love for liberalism into less a separate set of principles and more into a quasi-religion. think that plays very well into the world view of most of these conservative Christian (including the really not very good Christians who believe in folk magic a la Bree Kenyon), who want to see the world as involved in a struggle between Dark and Light, heading towards the eventual Apocalypse where they will be the winners.

As I said, these thoughts are barely starting to coalesce in the back of my mind. (and I realise that, if I were grading this, I'd be pointing out the big 'left thesis about a mile back' bit)

But it seems to me that we all might be missing the real points of contention here. I'm honestly not sure we're all playing in the same reality here, let alone on the same field with the same rules. In that way, I think that those on the liberal side may well be the true conservatives, and ones who are simply unable to recognize that we are up against a paradigm shift ...maybe?

#52 ::: R. M. Koske ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 09:54 AM:

#50, Serge -

Wool is the worsted of the lot, but even it is corduroy to him.

#53 ::: Seth Gordon ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 09:59 AM:

I'm reminded of something Gary Wills pointed out in *Head and Heart: American Christianities*.

Seventeenth-century European Catholics believed in all sorts of Dark Powers working to make their lives miserable, and used all sorts of folk-magic amulets and charms and what-not to ward them off. The Puritans, being good Calvinists, believed that the amulets and charms were idolatrous and off-limits to Christians, *but they still believed in the Dark Powers*. This anxiety over demonic influence was one of the (15,000 or so) factors feeding into the witch hysteria.

#54 ::: dlbowman76 ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 10:02 AM:

(50, 52) - They're all just common thieves, out to fleece decent honest folks.

#55 ::: Teresa Nielsen Hayden ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 10:11 AM:

50, 52, 54: They're a sleazy, shoddy, chintzy lot.

#56 ::: Patrick Nielsen Hayden ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 10:13 AM:

I've fixed the markup error that appears to have screwed up the LiveJournal feed, but the feed isn't updating. We didn't create the LJ feed, so we can't tinker with it at that end.

#57 ::: Fragano Ledgister ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 10:27 AM:

Serge #50: But Linen, clearly, leaves leftist Marx.

#58 ::: rahaeli ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 10:30 AM:

PNH@56:

Once you've edited the post, it should update on the LJ feed the next time LJ polls the RSS feed, which is generally within half an hour or so.

#59 ::: Fragano Ledgister ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 10:31 AM:

Teresa #55: They're passing off shoddy as homespun.

#60 ::: Emma ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 10:31 AM:

There's a quote from *Waiting for the Galactic Bus* that seems particularly apposite: *Coming from America now, from the great vindictive mass, always vocal but never heeded... True believers coming to the fore with the same old theme -- don't you make out you're better than the rest of us -- defining a narrow God by what they themselves hated and feared.*

I want to make a high-sounding statement about how they have been left behind by society and if there were enough opportunity for them they would not be as they are, but that would be preaching to the choir. The thing is, they have begun to scare me, and I never thought I would say that.

#61 :: Scott Harris :: (view all by) :: October 28, 2008, 10:33 AM:

"Oprah's 200 million followers are out to elect Obama."

Well, if the majority of them are US citizens eligible and registered to vote, that's kind of game over, don't you think? Unless you're calling for some sort of election fraud...

#62 :: innocentsmith :: (view all by) :: October 28, 2008, 10:41 AM:

From the "post-Buffy" link above:

It is refreshing to have a very feminine lady wielding a heavy sword.

eyebrow lift

It's not just my imagination/relative youth, is it? This really is the craziest damn election in living memory, isn't it?

#63 :: Rosa :: (view all by) :: October 28, 2008, 10:41 AM:

ADM #51 - it is hard, and it's hard not to think everyone who **looks** like Bree's supporters **think** like them - just like it's always hard, for me, to run up against someone who looks like me except for being a Social Darwinist or a white supremecist.

The truth is, most human beings believe of magic of one sort or another - there has been witch hysteria in Kenya in recent news, and I know a lot of Catholics who really believe in publishing a prayer in the newspaper to effect some change in their lives, and Baptists whose first thought when a person's behavior changes drastically is that a demon is working in the person.

Those beliefs can and often do coexist with a belief in the need for a civil society that fosters religious freedom. They don't have to be destructive to public life. (Well, hunting down and killing witches is always bad. But not praying at them really hard in the privacy of your own living room - that's only bad to the extent that it might lead to other actions.)

It's the hate and fear underneath that's the problem, not the supernatural beliefs.

#64 :: Carrie S. :: (view all by) :: October 28, 2008, 10:52 AM:

One tends to think that these weird bits of American folklore are gone and forgotten, but they keep running on as an undercurrent and resurfacing in new forms.

Saw a book in the craft section of Barnes and Noble the other day that is all about how to draw your own hex signs. I was tempted to pick it up, because such symbol systems fascinate me.

All of this black-magic-powerful-demons-your-God-is-fighting-my-God stuff seems so profoundly anti-Christian to me.

It's called Manichaeism. Wikipedia has [an OK, if brief, article on it](#), but if you don't want to trust Wikipedia (not an unreasonable idea :) I'm sure there's other stuff out there.

#65 :: Serge :: (view all by) :: October 28, 2008, 10:57 AM:

RM Koske, Fragano and Teresa... Hopefully a surge of voters in favor of Obama will be felt next Tuesday.

#66 :: dlbowman76 :: (view all by) :: October 28, 2008, 11:03 AM:

Serge (65): Although gloating isn't nice, if I were in their shoes, I'd say "Seersuckers!"

#67 :: Carrie S. :: (view all by) :: October 28, 2008, 11:10 AM:

#65: Twill be nice to see, if it happens.

#68 :: Andy Smith :: (view all by) :: October 28, 2008, 11:12 AM:

"There are a spiritual warfare adherents out there who publicly take credit for the death of Mother Teresa."

She was 87 when she died. Epic fail.

#69 ::: Raphael ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 11:20 AM:

Emma @60:

I want to make a high-sounding statement about how they have been left behind by society and if there were enough opportunity for them they would not be as they are, but that would be preaching to the choir.

I guess many of them have successfull middle class lifes.

#70 ::: Daniel Klein ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 11:28 AM:

68: It's a spiritual war won by attrition! They made her not stay young forever!

#71 ::: Chris Quinones ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 11:38 AM:

Y'know, Microsoft Windows Update runs automatically on my laptop at **3 AM**. Hmmmmm...

Steve Taylor, 3: If you think "Mystery 666" is wacky, go do a search on Amazon for "National Sunday Law." That's a fine bit of crazy.

Nix 14: *why on earth would Obama need to contact someone else...for permission to contact his *own cousin*?*

Channels, silly!

dlbowman, 38: Obama has 5 letters, Arnold has 6. But that only reinforces your point.

TNH, 55: Tawdry, even.

#72 ::: Teresa Nielsen Hayden ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 11:43 AM:

Chris (71): Oh, that's right -- they were a textile.

#73 ::: Stevey-Boy ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 11:45 AM:

Carrie @64: I wonder if that's a book with a Homeland Security tag to be filed in the terrorist weapons guide folder.

Serge @65: They'll cotton on that weave all got to show up to improve the fabric of our society.

#74 ::: dlbowman76 ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 11:46 AM:

Chris (71) - Ahhh, but you see you've fallen right into his trap! Barack Hussein Obama has EIGHTEEN letters, and eighteen is six times three! There, I've run rings 'round you logically!

(goes back to tuning DIY Antichrist Detector...)

#75 ::: Jim Lund ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 11:56 AM:

The Testimonials section of Bree's website has some unintentional comedy gold:

â€œBree has ministered to the residents at Highlands Maternity Home and we have seen lives impacted for the Kingdom of God. We are thankful for the pro-life message...â€
Rev. Robert Michaels, Highlands Maternity Home

Those poor pregnant women, now suffering from impacted babies, the horror, the horror!

#76 ::: Xopher ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 12:05 PM:

I still think the term 'black magic' has racial overtones and should probably be avoided, but that's me.

dlbowman76 *Barack Hussein Obama has EIGHTEEN letters*

So does Ronald Wilson Reagan, and it has them in the right distribution. Also, it's an anagram of Insane Anglo Warlord. Which also proves that the Episcopal Church is really a wholly-owned subsidiary of Pepsicola, or vice versa, or something.

Any two things can be dubiously connected, even without outright making shit up like these morons. And for any connection, however dubious, there will be someone stupid enough to believe it.*

*Sounds like an epsilon-delta proof that can be refuted easily with recourse to the fact that there IS a lower limit to human stupidity (debatable whether it's "too stupid to remember to breathe" or "so stupid it creates a singularity that sucks the person into Bizarro World"); I would point out, however, that the level of stupidity known as "will believe ANYTHING" is above the outright-existence-failure level.

#77 ::: beth meacham ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 12:08 PM:

Sarah Palin is in a **Spiritual Warfare Prayer Group**, you know.

This election is being fought on all the astral planes.

#78 :: Xopher :: (view all by) :: October 28, 2008, 12:09 PM:

"believe it's significant," that should read. Meh.

#79 :: albatross :: (view all by) :: October 28, 2008, 12:09 PM:

Look at the polling numbers. This is the fringe of a fringe of wackos. It is no more representative of America than the set of Wiccans, people with PhDs in math, or polygamists living in LDS offshoot enclaves.

Traditional media and the blogosphere both serve as huge amplifiers of interesting weirdness, taking very rare events and very weird people, and raising them to prominence. That's entertaining and informative, but it's also an opportunity to deeply fool yourself about what reality looks like. Especially when the focus is used to find people who are weird along some disturbing or scary lines, or along lines that support some broader worldview you want to promote.

#80 :: Xopher :: (view all by) :: October 28, 2008, 12:26 PM:

albatross 79: *It is no more representative of America than the set of Wiccans*

As a Wiccan, I'd like to point that I am ENTIRELY representative of America!

Gay, Wiccan, Liberal/Socialist, fannish, theremin-owning, ADHD-having, head-shaving chocolatier, that's me. What could BE more typically American?

#81 :: kouredios :: (view all by) :: October 28, 2008, 12:28 PM:

I was recently linked to [Sojourner.net](#) from another blog I read, and I'm finding it a balm for the craziness at the moment, as well as a way to remind myself that not all, in fact probably a very small minority of, Christians in the U.S. are this irrational and fruitbatter. (Yum! fruitbatter!)

#82 :: Madeleine Robins :: (view all by) :: October 28, 2008, 12:32 PM:

The boggle, she just does not stop.

I particularly like how, in Keyton's website, the word "pray" appears to replace the word "think." As in "If you have not yet become a partner, pray about becoming one." Which explains a bunch.

There are people who have a different value system from mine. And then there are the fruitbats. Yikes.

#83 :: Madeleine Robins :: (view all by) :: October 28, 2008, 12:32 PM:

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There are people who have a different value system from mine. And then there are the fruitbats. Yikes.

#84 :: Nancy Lebovitz :: (view all by) :: October 28, 2008, 12:38 PM:

#79 :: albatross:

Thanks. That's a bunch of good points.

#85 :: Fragano Ledgister :: (view all by) :: October 28, 2008, 12:38 PM:

Allsopp's *Dictionary of Caribbean English Usage* reminded me recently that term used in some Caribbean countries for the common fruit-bats of the islands (as distinguished from the plain word 'bat', used of moths) is 'rat-bat'. Might I, in all humility, suggest that it is much more apposite for Ms Keyton and her sort.

#86 :: ajay :: (view all by) :: October 28, 2008, 12:39 PM:

As a Wiccan, I'd like to point that I am ENTIRELY representative of America!

Gay, Wiccan, Liberal/Socialist, fannish, theremin-owning, ADHD-having, head-shaving chocolatier, that's me. What could BE more typically American?

I dunno... (Eddie Izzard voice) Do you have a flag?

#87 :: Graydon :: (view all by) :: October 28, 2008, 12:44 PM:

Experiential world models -- that always happens when you do that; happened like that when your father did that, etc. -- have great predictive power, but almost zero explanatory power.

Scientific world models -- where you start asking what you're doing when you do that, and how much of it -- have great explanatory power but **less** predictive power. (Much more scope, but at a personal level that's not really relevant.)

The real advantage on a personal level to the scientific world model approach is that it's robust under change; no matter who is in the White House or what the definition of marriage is, $F=ma$, you can't push on a rope, many more are born than can possibly live, and deeper layers are older. It's easy to have personal difficulties fitting some aspect of change into your actual world view, but the core stable things generally **are** core stable things.

I think there is also a way in which religion and science really are fundamentally opposed; most religions consider error to be inherently bad in some way. (And the particular strain of syncretist christian right in question considers error to result in eternal damnation, so they're terrified of it.) In science, error is something you don't want, but which will always be with you; in one sense, it has to be measure (we got 3.312, OK, what are the error bars on that?) and in another sense must be acknowledged because that's what you do; new information, new results, better instruments, will over time expose lots of what you currently consider correct as being wrong.

I think this terror of error, combined with the rapid pace of social change (which really "wildly improved communications"), drives a lot of the anxiety; combined with a remarkable factual ignorance, and of course you get weird magical approaches insecurity management.

#88 :: Alex Cohen :: (view all by) :: October 28, 2008, 12:51 PM:

Barack is most etymologically related to the once-common Jewish name Baruch. You know... Baruch atah Adonai, eloheinu melech ha'olam...

#89 :: Joel Davis :: (view all by) :: October 28, 2008, 12:57 PM:

I wonder who the chef in black endorses?

<http://www.grubshack.com/essays/satanic.html>

<http://www.grubshack.com/essays/satanic2.html>

<http://www.grubshack.com/essays/satanic3.html>

#90 :: John Houghton :: (view all by) :: October 28, 2008, 12:58 PM:

I find it charming that once a pun is dropped* in a conversation, that more puns will weave their way through the thread† at warp speed.

*at least if it is noticed, I left a bilingual pun recently that attracted no comment.

†preposterous, I know.

#91 :: Rymenhild :: (view all by) :: October 28, 2008, 01:01 PM:

Could the 3 a.m. reference possibly relate to the 3 a.m. phone call? *Sorry, Prime Minister Putin. Barack Obama can't pick up the phone to deal with the international crisis. He and his circle of warlocks are busy releasing curses.* Then again, there's the problem of time zones. The phone call doesn't come at 3 a.m. Kenya time.

Jo Walton #30: One of my professors and I actually agreed yesterday that Barack Obama needs his own chanson de geste. He may have Saracen ancestry, but he's a true Christian ready to fight the unbeliever!

(In case the tone I'm using doesn't come through, my tongue is firmly in my cheek.)

#92 :: dlbowman76 :: (view all by) :: October 28, 2008, 01:04 PM:

Fragano Ledgister (85) - Alas, to my ear, Rat-Bat is far too appealing to be an effective descriptor for this lot. Rat-Bat for me conjures an ordinary, everyday, middle-class bat who one day is bitten by a radioactive rat. As a result, he gains the powers of a rat, such as *Nouvelle Cuisine*. Then, by mid-afternoon, just before the dinner rush, Rat-Bat swoops into the windows of Michelin-starred restaurants, dispensing advice and frightening the staff.

#93 :: Mez :: (view all by) :: October 28, 2008, 01:06 PM:

g - g - g - g!
gasps

Barking mad? This is surely near the terminus of the line Barking is merely one station upon? Someone with the right map could possibly find it; it's far beyond me.

tries to retain faith in the 'betterability' of humanity Also, fwuffy kittens; and a pony. Sigh.

#94 :: Kelly McCullough :: (view all by) :: October 28, 2008, 01:07 PM:

To cross two earlier threads of this discussion: Shouldn't it be "weft behind"? Or is that too warped?

#95 ::: **Kelly McCullough** :: (view all by) :: **October 28, 2008, 01:13 PM:**

@ #90 John Houghton, crossposting thread puns who could bewave it?

#96 ::: **RMKrist/PurpleGirl** :: (view all by) :: **October 28, 2008, 01:22 PM:**

ajay @ #86: LOL. Yes, I can just see/hear Izzard doing that routine and asking the flag question.

Perhaps we should have a design competition to make a flag so that we can claim the continent?

#97 ::: **Xopher** :: (view all by) :: **October 28, 2008, 01:26 PM:**

Another punwar looms. I hope we can salvage the thread before it unravels completely.

#98 ::: **Xopher** :: (view all by) :: **October 28, 2008, 01:27 PM:**

ajay 86: Of course I have a flag! Well, a banner. For my coven.

See? Typically American.

#99 ::: **Lee** :: (view all by) :: **October 28, 2008, 01:47 PM:**

Nenya, #12: Note also that the reason Saddam Hussein was always referred to by either his full name or his first name only in the American press was that King Hussein of Jordan is a US *ally*. Funny how no one ever remembers that...

I've also pointed out to people that when Iran went nuts under the Ayatollah, Iraq was our ally in that conflict. And they look at me as if I'd lost my mind. I swear, the Republicans' greatest achievement is to have reduced the public's attention span to a limit of "what happened last week".

ADM, #51: There is no internal contradiction between "there are plenty of intelligent, educated conservatives who simply have a different worldview from mine" and "there are a lot of ignorant, gullible people out there who are easy prey for the fear-mongers". It was John Stuart Mill who said, "Conservatives are not necessarily stupid, but most stupid people are conservatives."

We face here the same problem that we have when discussing Christianity -- how to distinguish between the rational and irrational wings, so that we don't offend potential allies by seeming to tar the entire group with one brush. So what we need is a political equivalent to "Avengical Christianists," something which will make it clear that we're not talking about *all* conservatives but only the barking-mad variety. Suggestions welcomed.

Carrie, #64: Google "Manichean heresy" and you get lots of results, of which **this** seemed fairly comprehensive.

The short form, as I understand it, is that Satan is God's equal (this is what makes it a heresy) and there is an eternal struggle between the forces of Good and Evil, to which individuals contribute by their actions. It's an extremely pagan worldview at root, and it's the basis of the entire Avengical Christianist movement.

albatross, #79: Good point. We need to remember that people this nuts are well out beyond the third standard distribution and can't really affect the bell curve.

Graydon, #87: I love the phrase "terror of error," not least because it reminds me of one of my favorite choral pieces, a set of (I believe) Dorothy Parker cynical ruminations on love. One part goes:

Bill was ill.

In his delirium, he talked about Miriam.

This was an error, as his wife was a terror

Known as Joan.

#100 ::: **Chris Quinones** :: (view all by) :: **October 28, 2008, 01:54 PM:**

Xopher, 76: I was gonna bring up Ronald Wilson Reagan; I remember as a teenager deriving the number of the beast from George H.W. Bush, but I forget how.

Also, by the same argument, all Presbyterians are fans of Britney Spears.

#101 ::: **Chris Quinones** :: (view all by) :: **October 28, 2008, 01:58 PM:**

dlbowman, 92: Too true. Dunna-nunna-nunna-nunna-nunna-nunna-nunna-nunna-RAT-BAT!!!!

#102 ::: **dlbowman76** :: (view all by) :: **October 28, 2008, 01:59 PM:**

(Slightly Embarrassed Now.) Is **"There, I've run rings around you logically!"** actually that obscure of a reference? In other words, if you think that there's some profound hermetic truth to be found in numerology, then, my friends I have a Sudoku to sell you that contains the secret name of G_d.

#103 ::: Julie L. ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 02:01 PM:

I kinda wish I knew more about Planescape so I could riff more fluently about Our Lady of Palin, Her Dread Majesty of the city of Wasigilla. However, perhaps this still requires **another makeover**.

#104 ::: Chris Quinones ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 02:03 PM:

dlbowman, 102: Wait, you mean there are Presbyterians out there who *aren't* into Britney? That completely nullifies my view of the world! But it raises my opinion of Presbyterians!

#105 ::: Mez ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 02:08 PM:

John (#90), yes, I took it on faith that your comment **there** was a punning stunt, but didn't feel able to follow up. It's a shame if your belief in us was disappointed. (Note my lack of inserting wordplay about entanglement, loose ends, knotty problems, usw. Blame it on the virus/eye energy dip for now.)

#106 ::: Constance ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 02:25 PM:

Obama did visit his father's relatives in Kenya, back in '80s. His half sister, Auma Obama, writes an account of the visit in this weekend's UK Observer, part of a group of essays by people who knew Obama when he was very young, including his buddy in Jakarta. It includes great photos too. His half-sister came to see Obama first in Chicago, while he was community organizing. He went to visit her, afterwards, at the U of Heidelberg, Germany, where she was studying medicine. Then, when she was working at the U of Nairobi, he came to Kenya. Since she was with him the whole time I tend to believe her account of that visit and who the family is, rather than the dingdongdorks'.

The whole collection is fascinating reading, and you can find it here.

As for magic becoming a strong component of U.S. fundamental Christianity I saw it happen in my own family. First there came this belief in "Guardian Angels." Now, in the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, to believe in such a thing as a Guardian Angel would bring down the wrath of the pastor, at the very least, and a long, grave, severe doctrinal talking to. At the very best this could only be interpreted as Catholicism, and at worst, well there was no end to the evils of paganism.

Then came the endless drought of the '80s. Pastors from these very same churches led their congregations to the parched fields, carrying a silver basin of water. They prayed, they all threw drops of water into the air and upon the ground, begging for rain. It was chant and ritual, unlike anything I was ever brought up with. I happened to be home visiting and I was there at one of these services.

Partly I attribute to what happened in the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod is a falling off of interest in becoming a minister among those of the generation before and then my own. Among other things, the strongholds for this brand of protestant churches were these very small rural community churches, and as the younger generations left home, they had to close. They couldn't even find a pastor to call or serve. So those who enrolled in the seminaries were not of the highest intellectual capacities. And often, from what I saw on visits home and experiences, they were also emotionally disturbed with various personality disorders, if only borderline. The last pastor that my home congregation was able to call had to be sent away to a mental institution. He was only a couple years older than I was.

Anyway, I throw this out, just as part of the grist.

Love, C.

#107 ::: ajay ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 02:25 PM:

Another punwar looms. I hope we can salvage the thread before it unravels completely.

Wouldn't do to lose all those purls of wisdom.

But, yes, we definitely need a flag of some sort. How else are you all going to recognise which armed jet-powered zeppelin is ours?

...I've said too much.

#108 ::: Jack Kincaid ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 02:30 PM:

What I like the best about the surge of crazy noise like this is its fabulous ability to make me feel sane. What I like the least is everything else about it.

#109 ::: ajay ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 02:35 PM:

109: you've carefully not stated whether that remark refers to a) the lunatics described in the original post or b) the lunatics making puns in the comments.

#110 ::: Xopher ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 02:43 PM:

This comment self-referential like ajay's; also, it no verb in it.

#111 ::: alsafi ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 02:43 PM:

ajay @ 107--I'm pretty sure it's not the pink one.

#112 ::: martyn ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 02:46 PM:

Lee @ 99 - King Hussein of the Hashemite kingdom of Jordan died in 1999 (long before last week)

Meanwhile, his son and heir, Abdullah, is losing even more of his hair as his father's ally goes killabout in Syria.

#113 ::: Jack Kincaid ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 02:50 PM:

That would be (a).

I have no grievances with (b).

Pun away.

#114 ::: Neil Willcox ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 02:57 PM:

This is surely near the terminus of the line Barking is merely one station upon?

Barking tube station is at the end of the Hammersmith and City line*, but if you're on the District line you can keep going to Upminster.

If you're on the train, you can go all the way out to Shoeburyness. [Wikipedia page](#) on the London, Tilbury and Southend Railway notes that a siding there links to the Ministry of Defence site at Pig's Bay.

"The religious right, gone pig's bay mad"

That sounds pretty crazy alright.

* Which has driven me mad

#115 ::: sara ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 02:59 PM:

It's too bad that either Obama or McCain might forbid extraordinary rendition, because we need to extradite some people to the Middle Ages or the seventeenth century.

#116 ::: dlbowman76 ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 03:05 PM:

My goodness. We've moved from puns, to puns about knitting, and we're approaching [Mornington Crescent](#).

The singularity may be nigh...

#117 ::: Epacris ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 03:08 PM:

Sympathy/Scolding for Mez: Lookit the time, girl! If'n you're not well, you should be tucked up asleep, takin' care of yersel.

Giggles, tho' for Debra @41 saying "*Anglicans don't count as "Christian" for people like that, either . . . all those bells-and-incense liturgical denominations look alike to them.*" Great image of the reaction of the 'Jensenist' [Sydney Anglicans](#) to that description.

#118 ::: Bruce Cohen (SpeakerToManagers) ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 03:42 PM:

You'd think that the fruitbats would have realized that they're just making a really good argument for electing Obama: if his magic is that powerful, we need it to fend off our enemies. Instead of anathemizing him, they ought to trying to recruit him. *giggle* Can't you just see that?

#119 ::: Teresa Nielsen Hayden ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 03:46 PM:

Innocentsmith (62), all elections have their crazy moments, but of all the elections that I personally remember, this one is the craziest overall.

Mind you, I wasn't around for the 1852-1856-1860 sequence, which got way too colorful. The [Whigs fell apart](#) in 1852, beginning the process of [redistributing themselves](#) to other parties, including the American (a.k.a. Native American a.k.a. Know Nothing) party, the Constitutional Union party, and the nascent Republican party. Biggest loss: the Whigs' emblematic animal, the raccoon, which would have enlivened all those subsequent elephant-and-donkey cartoons.

The [1856 election](#) was a heated affair. The Republicans campaigned against "the slave power" in advance of the market. The Know-Nothings insisted that immigration, not slavery, was the biggest threat to America. The Democrats declined to re-nominate their sitting president, Franklin Pierce, and went with James Buchanan instead. Buchanan [artfully dodged the tougher questions](#), denounced the Republicans as dangerous radicals, and won. Epic fail: Buchanan was a disastrously ineffectual president when secession threatened. Hey, cool: Buchanan was the closest we've ever had to an [out-of-the-closet president](#). No loss: the Know-Nothings' party color: bright orange.

Onward, then, to [the 1860 election](#), which was the real [circus act](#). South Carolina had just seceded. The Democrats split into the Democratic and the Southern Democratic parties. The Constitutional Union party had amalgamated itself out of the more conservative ex-Whigs, plus the remnants of the Know-Nothings. Meanwhile, the Republicans had been thriftily incorporating a lot of other small parties and factions. It was a four-way race, with strongly regionalized voting. No one got a majority of the popular vote. The Republicans won a clear majority of the electoral vote. Stephen Douglas, candidate of the (Northern) Democratic party, came in second on popular votes and a nearly invisible fourth on electoral votes.

Here's a useful [map of voting patterns in 1860](#). If you hover over the names of the parties, you'll see how they did on a [state-by-state basis](#). Upshot: the Republicans had a solid grasp of the difference between popular votes and electoral votes, and had realized they didn't need the South to win.

My favorite cartoon of the candidates: ["THE POLITICAL QUADRILLE. Music by Dred Scott."](#) (An [alternate version of the same image](#).) The fiddler, Dred Scott, was the subject of the SCOTUS decision that the government couldn't prohibit slavery in the territories.

Going clockwise, starting at upper left, is John C. Breckinridge of the Southern Democratic party. He's dancing with James Buchanan, who's drawn as a goat because his nickname was "Buck". Buchanan had openly assisted Breckinridge's run for the presidency.

At upper right is Abraham Lincoln, Republican nominee, dancing with a negress. It's a reference to the Republicans' abolitionist platform. It may also be a reference to Lincoln's remark that the fact that he didn't want to own a black woman as a slave didn't mean he wanted to take one as his wife.

At lower right is John Bell of the Constitutional Union party, dancing with an Indian brave. It's an allusion to the Native American party roots of the Constitutional Unionists. (After they finished filming the cartoon, the Indian went back to his regular day job working as a figurehead for Stephen Douglas's supporters' political machine.)

At lower left is Stephen Douglas, (Northern) Democratic candidate, dancing with a rough-looking Irish immigrant who's wearing a cross around his neck. It identifies Douglas with his supposed constituency of scary urban nonwhite immigrants who practice an alien religion (i.e., the Irish). During the campaign, rumors circulated that Douglas had dangerous Catholic sympathies.

Some good reasons to not be freaked out by the weirdness of this election: (1.) Our society has collectively developed a fair degree of immunity to the [ghost-written campaign biography](#). (2.) We no longer have [Wide Awakes](#), nor any other official paramilitary organizations affiliated with parties and election campaigns. (3.) These days, [William Henry Harrison's campaign organizers](#) would never get away with the stuff they pulled in 1840. That campaign was a landmark for dumbed-down tactics: sloganeering ("Tippecanoe and Tyler too"), gimmicks like [keeping the ball rolling](#), and the famous [log cabin and hard cider](#) campaign that sold a Virginia Patrician as a [working-class American farmer](#). Naturally, they were also at pains to depict the incumbent Martin Van Buren, a genuinely self-made man, as an effete hothouse bloom who'd been at pains to deck out the White House in such expensive trifles as "artificial French silk flowers" (a phrase I've always found excessively memorable). Nixon's Checkers speech has nothing on Charles Ogle's [Gold Spoon Oration](#) [\[see also\]](#) [\[and\]](#). Van Buren was as a deer in the headlights. (4.) Smart people are faster at figuring out what you can do with the internet.

#120 ::: [Carrie S.](#) ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 03:46 PM:

I wonder if [the hex-sign book has] a Homeland Security tag to be filed in the terrorist weapons guide folder.

I don't know; the hex sign thing is Amish, no? You'd think the fundies would cautiously approve of the Amish.

#121 ::: [ajay](#) ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 04:02 PM:

111: *I'm pretty sure it's not the pink one.*

Oh, no. Because a pink armed jet-powered zeppelin would just be ridiculous.

#122 ::: [Dave Robinson](#) ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 04:18 PM:

Wow

That's all I can say. The thing that scares me most about this election is that through Palin we're beginning to see a greater validation and acceptance of the extreme religious right. I'm not so worried about a McCain victory this election as I am about a Palin for president campaign on the next one.

#123 ::: [John Houghton](#) ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 04:20 PM:

Damn those artificial Frenchies and their silk flowers! Or is it the silk that's artificial?

I see why it sticks in your head.

#124 ::: [mjfgates](#) ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 04:44 PM:

There's an artificial France? Where do they *keep* it?... Anyway, I do thank our hostess for the entertaining yarn.

#125 ::: [Bruce Cohen \(SpeakerToManagers\)](#) ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 05:10 PM:

Ah, I understand now. The key insight is hexapodia.

#126 ::: [Serge](#) ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 05:12 PM:

Teresa @ 119... *Van Buren was as a deer in the headlights*

Sylvia Van Buren?

#127 ::: Wakboth ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 05:13 PM:

If nothing else, this US election has tons and tons of wacky stuff to mine for RPG purposes. Sarah Palin vs. Vladimir Putin's head (Putinggalang!), and now this...

#128 ::: Madeleine Robins ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 05:19 PM:

I'm suddenly feeling an overwhelming impulse to re-read *It Can't Happen Here*. Nothing Sinclair Lewis suggests eclipses the crazy of this election.

#129 ::: Serge ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 05:19 PM:

ajay @ 121... *a pink armed jet-powered zeppelin would just be ridiculous*

A pink armed propeller-powered zeppelin, on the other hand...

#130 ::: Constance ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 05:26 PM:

Buchanan was far worse than merely ineffectual. He was aiding and abetting the Confederacy organize and sent them the U.S. military's supplies, and sent the navy to South America, all during his regime. The secession and the Confederacy didn't start the day Lincoln won the election. The oligarchy was organizing long before. IOW, Buchanan was a traitor to the U.S., actively aiding disunion, according to many. He died in disgrace.

He was deeply in love with at least, if not two, scions of the southern slaveholding oligarchy.

Love, C.

#131 ::: Lizzy L ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 05:26 PM:

I'm trying to figure out how I can get me one of those specially blessed wooden stakes without going anywhere *near* Bree Keyton, her beliefs, her business, her website, her followers, her friends, etc.

I just want one, 'kay? Never mind why.

#132 ::: abi ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 05:36 PM:

Lizzy L @131:

Does it have to be a Bree stake? Can't you, you know, get a stake and bring it to a priest?

In the unlikely event that you can't track down one who would do it for you, I can ping my Bay Area priest network and see if anyone knows anyone of the right temperament...

#133 ::: Lizzy L ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 05:41 PM:

abi, you're a luv. If I brought Father Jimmy (my own pastor) a stake to bless he'd think I'd lost my mind.

No no, it has to be one of Bree's specially blessed ones. I'm pretty sure there's a vampire nest in the vacant house (a recent foreclosure, like so many in my neighborhood) down the street.

#134 ::: Serge ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 05:42 PM:

abi @ 132... *ping my Bay Area priest network*

"Pinging Father Howard, Father Fine, Father Howard!"

#135 ::: Ginger ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 05:44 PM:

Neil @ 114: And yet, on the way to Barking is a chronologically appropriate station, for this time of year calls for a stop at *Gravesend*, does it not? I leave the question of Tooting Broadway to others.

dlbowman76@116: It's far too early to reference Mornington Crescent!

#136 ::: Tim Hall ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 05:52 PM:

Ginger #135

Barking to Gravesend isn't a valid move unless you've accumulated enough Knid to bring Southeast Trains into play.

Have you ever *been* to Gravesend? Brings back awful memories of the toilet roll factory, that does...

#137 ::: Lizzy L ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 05:52 PM:

This is totally off topic and I apologize, but since this thread appears to be where the action is:

To my fellow Californians: Dianne Feinstein has just made a powerful ad supporting No on 8. It will be on TV tonight. Please go to your phone and call her local office with words of praise and thanks. The folks who want 8 to pass are going to bombard her with negative calls; we need to let her know she did the right thing.

Sorry, sorry. Back to barking madwomen...

#138 ::: abi ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 05:53 PM:

Well, my personal contact with the stranger side of the Bay Area Roman Catholic priesthood is fifteen years stale*, but my parents know a few people who know a few people.

Among other things, we used to attend the Newman Center in Berkeley in the late 80's and early 90's. You'd have to have done a heck of a lot more than bring in a stake for blessing to get some of the guys there to even blink. (I gather they've had a bit of a shake-up since then.)

* This is how my firmly atheist husband and I managed a Catholic wedding...Father Pat, bless him, let us do some rewriting of the vows so we each only promised what we believed.

#139 ::: Tim Walters ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 05:57 PM:

Little Flecks Of Foam Around Barking by the Chrysanthemums is one of my favorite records, and a bit mad, albeit in an English-eccentric rather than religious-right way.

#140 ::: Nicole TWN ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 06:06 PM:

Xopher@80: You have a THEREMIN? *envy envy envy* Can you play the "Doctor Who" theme on it? Will you put it on YouTube? Pretty please? :)

Constance@106: Interesting, isn't it, that NONE of the writings mention the years and years that B. Hussein spent at the madrassa, being indoctrinated into terror. This can only mean one thing: they're all conspiring with Obama to cover it up! Damn liberal media is even more powerful than we thought.

#141 ::: Serge ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 06:09 PM:

Nicole TWN @ 140... **This** is Xopher's theremin, with elise next to it.

#142 ::: Nicole TWN ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 06:12 PM:

Serge@141: That's so cool. I'm trying to learn the concertina, that my Morris side might have more musos, but damn if this doesn't make me want to pack it in and see if Morris tunes can't be played on the theremin.

#143 ::: Xopher ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 06:23 PM:

I can play screeches and wows on the theremin, but nothing resembling a scale, let alone a melody. Patrick can make music come out of it, but since you have to stand perfectly still to play it, I'm not sure I'll ever be able to do anything with it. If I've ever in my life stood perfectly still, I'm going to have to sue some surgeons, who really shouldn't have propped me up when I was under general anesthesia.

#144 ::: Neil Willcox ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 06:23 PM:

*Have you ever *been* to Gravesend?*

Why yes, I have. On Thursday nights it's a bit of a ghost town.

#145 ::: Raphael ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 06:34 PM:

Steve Taylor @16:

And the Bilderbergers - though I can forgive anyone who decides they're a mysterious world controlling cabal, because what else would you call them?

A Worldcon, except for people involved in running the world instead of people involved in SF.

#146 ::: dlbowman76 ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 06:45 PM:

Neil Willcox (144) - Gravesend, as in *Kent*? That's a bit of a haul, innit? Are there people mad enough to commute from Kent to London? (I know, that's a stupid question. Virtually everything further than Walthamstow is enough less expensive to make the commute worthwhile. Economically at least.)

#147 ::: Sam Kelly ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 07:03 PM:

A week and a half ago, I was on a Bakerloo Line train that was going "all the way to Kensal Green". Needless to say, I left at the next stop and found another

Briefly crossing tracks (which I believe is a Robertson Shift, since it's a Tuesday and it's snowing) one of the most entertaining comedy hate preachers I've seen in ages was riding the Number 257 bus to Stratford and declaring, in his best Sonorous Tones(OMT) that "if you follow Abraham you are following Satan. If you follow Islam you are following Satan. If you follow the Pope you are following Satan." In an area with this many signs in Polish and Urdu, the poor fellow was on a hiding to nothing, but I suspect he believed that the act of preaching was magic in itself, regardless of any effect it might have.

#148 ::: abi ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 07:15 PM:

Sam, you can't do a Robertson Shift after dark, not even on a Tuesday*.

Try a Morrison Transfer instead; it'll get you to the same place, albeit facing the wrong way and tuppence out of pocket.

* Actually, since we put the clocks back within the last fortnight, *especially* not on a Tuesday.

#149 ::: Fragano Ledgister ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 07:18 PM:

dlbowman76 #92: I still treasure the explanation I overheard a white Jamaican to a visiting Englishwoman at church one Sunday: 'that's a rat-bat, a flying rat'. It seems, somehow, apposite for some of the more idiotic religious figures; they're volant and ratlike.

#150 ::: dlbowman76 ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 07:23 PM:

God, Sam, a Robertson shift...tasteless. Utterly tasteless - haven't you considered union action and the Wenger Shift, rerouting all the way to St. Pancras in honour of European unity? (At the very least, once you'd passed Kilburn, you must have known that trouble was in store!)

#151 ::: Tim Hall ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 07:29 PM:

dlbowman76 #146

Many people commute from much further out than Gravesend - there are probably a few people who commute into London from northern *France* now the high speed rail line is open. They're buying a fleet of Japanese bullet trains for Kent commuters that will use the high-speed rail line.

A lot of long-distance commuters tend to do paperwork or write reports on their laptops on the train, so the commute forms part of the working day.

#152 ::: Fragano Ledgister ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 07:29 PM:

Ginger #135: I'd get off at Tooting Broadway if I wanted to visit my sister's grave.

#153 ::: dlbowman76 ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 07:33 PM:

Good heavens, my reference to St. Pancras was apposite then. I was planning to fly into London for a long weekend in December, but now I wonder if I should take the train (We've an express from Frankfurt to Paris, then from Gare du Nord on to London.)

#154 ::: Sam Kelly ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 07:34 PM:

Whoops, yes, you're all right! (Though I should note that St Pancras is out of play without a Rothko endorsement on your Oyster card, and the only place you can pick those up is at Gants Hill with a ration book.)

Where will I put my face... probably Highbury and Islington. And I've already been there twice today, having gone bookshop-winnowing.

#155 ::: Neil Willcox ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 07:37 PM:

Are there people mad enough to commute from Kent to London?

If you jump on the 1712 from Charing Cross it's standing room only to Tonbridge, all the seats full until you get to Ashford. (I live and work in East Kent, but in the past have had regular meetings in London. No matter how we timed afternoon meetings I was on a packed train to get home.)

Barking is on the wrong side of the Thames for Gravesend, but you can catch the train to Tilbury and then get the ferry.

#156 ::: Clifton Royston ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 07:43 PM:

Reflecting on Teresa's original post, I'm inclined to make some allowances for Bree, if her peculiarities do indeed come from having been shot in the head. Brain injury is a strange thing.

What truly worries me is the people without organic brain damage who take her ramblings seriously as inspired prophecy.

#157 ::: Ginger ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 07:44 PM:

Sam Kelly @ 147: Well-played, sir.

Tim Hall @ 136: I was trying to avoid bringing in Kingsbridge Road, but I fear you leave me no choice. This can only lead to tragedy as someone will undoubtedly wish to play the A Train.

#158 ::: Lois Fundis ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 07:45 PM:

I googled "time nairobi" a few minutes ago and it tells me the time there is 2:30 EAT (time to eat in East Africa Time I guess). So time for all the genie-worship is coming up in about 20 minutes! (That would be 8 p.m. for those of us in EDT.)

Seriously, though: Slate has [a real article about Obama's Kenyan relatives](#) (including Obinga who is not a near relative but is, as a fellow member of the Luo tribe, sort of a distant cousin. Religion is not really mentioned at all except that "Mama Sarah" (Obama's paternal grandmother) says, "We are leaving everything to God. We know it's been a long wait, and, God willing, we hope that everything is going to be OK."

Now, if you're a Christian or Jew or Muslim, supposedly you believe that there is only one God, which is why they're called "monotheistic" religions. But some folks apparently haven't got the message.

#159 ::: Steve Taylor ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 07:46 PM:

Raphael at #145 writes:

>> Steve Taylor @16:

And the Bilderbergers - though I can forgive anyone who decides they're a mysterious world controlling cabal, because what else would you call them?

> A Worldcon, except for people involved in running the world instead of people involved in SF.

Shades of R.A.Lafferty's _Primary Eduction of the Camiroi_, where the World Government course involves governing an actual world. Though not one of the major ones of course.

#160 ::: Serge ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 07:52 PM:

Ginger @ 157... *someone will undoubtedly wish to play the A Train*

It All Happened on the 11.20 from Hainault to Redhill via Horsham and Reigate, Calling at Carshalton Beeches, Malmesbury, Tooting Bec, and Croydon West

(An upper-class drawing room. An elderly man lies dead on the floor. Enter Jasmina and John.)

JASMINA: Anyway, John, you can catch the 11.30 from Hornchurch and be in Basingstoke by one o'clock, oh, and there's a buffet car andâ€¦ es corpse) Daddy!

JOHN: My hat! Sir Horace.

JASMINA: Has heâ€¦beenâ€¦?

JOHN: Yes, after breakfast. But that doesn't matter now; he's dead.

JASMINA: Oh poor daddy.

JOHN: Looks like I won't be catching the 11.30 now.

JASMINA: On no John you mustn't miss your train

JOHN: How could I think of catching a train when I should be here helping you?

JASMINA: Oh, John, thank you... anyway you could always catch the 9.30 tomorrow â€" it goes via Caterham and Chipstead.

JOHN: Or the 9.45's even better.

JASMINA: Oh, but you have to change at Lambs Green.

JOHN: Yes, but there's only a seven-minute wait now.

JASMINA: Oh, yes, of course, I'd forgotten it was Friday. (looks at corpse) Oh, who could have done this? (Enter Lady Partridge.)

LADY PARTRIDGE: Oh, do hurry Sir Horace, your train leaves in twenty-eight minutes, and if you miss the 10.15 you won't catch the 3.45 which meansâ€¦(sees corpse) oh!

JOHN: I'm afraid Sir Horace won't be catching the 10.15, Lady Partridge.

LADY PARTRIDGE: Has heâ€¦beenâ€¦?

JASMINA: Yes, after breakfast.

JOHN: Lady Partridge, I'm afraid you can cancel his seat reservation.

LADY PARTRIDGE: Oh, and it was back to the engine - fourth coach along so that he could see the gradient signs outside Swanborough.

JOHN: Not anymore Lady Partridge. The line's been closed.

LADY PARTRIDGE: Closed?! Not Swanborough.

JOHN: Yes, I'm afraid so.

(Enter Inspector Davis.)

INSPECTOR: All right, nobody move. I'm Inspector Davis of Scotland Yard.

JOHN: My word, you were here quickly, Inspector.

INSPECTOR: Yeah, I got the 8.55 Pullman Express from King's Cross and missed that bit around Hornchurch.

LADY PARTRIDGE: It's a very good train.

(Others agree. Tony runs in through the French windows. He wears white flannels and boater and is jolly upper-

class.)
TONY: Hello, everyone!
ALL: Tony!
TONY: Where's Daddy? (seeing him) Oh, golly! Has heâ€¦beenâ€¦?
ALL: Yes, after breakfast.
TONY: Thenâ€¦he won't be needing his reservation on the 10.15.
JOHN: Exactly.
TONY: And I suppose as his eldest son it must go to me. (he starts toward the corpse's coat pockets)
INSPECTOR: Just a minute, Tony. There's a small matter ofâ€¦murder.
TONY: Oh, but surely he simply shot himself and then hid the gun.
LADY PARTRIDGE: How could anyone shoot himself and then hide the gun without first canceling his reservation?
TONY (after a nervous laugh) Well, I must dash or I'll be late for the 10.15.
INSPECTOR: I suggest you murdered your father for his seat reservation.
TONY: I may have had the motive, inspector, but I could not have done it, for I have only just arrived from Gillingham on the 8.13 and here's my restaurant car ticket to prove it. (he produces a restaurant car ticket and presents it to the Inspector)
JASMINA: But the 8.13 from Gillingham doesn't have a restaurant car.
JOHN: It's a standing buffet only.
TONY: Ah, did I say the 8.13? I meant the 7.58 stopping train.
LADY PARTRIDGE: But the 7.58 stopping train arrived at Swindon at 8.19 owing to annual point maintenance at Wisborough Junction.
JOHN: So how did you make the connection with the 8.13, which left six minutes earlier?
TONY: Oh, er, simple! I caught the 7.16 Football Special arriving at Swindon at 8.09.
JASMINA: But the 7.16 Football Special only stops at Swindon on alternate Saturdays.
LADY PARTRIDGE: Yes. Surely you mean the holidaymaker special.
TONY (after brief pause): Damn. All right! I confess. I did it. I killed him for his reservation. (escapes Inspector's grip and heads for door) But you won't take me alive! I'm going to throw myself under the 10.12 from Reading.
JOHN: Don't be a fool, Tony. Don't do it. The 10.12 has the narrow traction bogies. You wouldn't stand a chance!
TONY: Exactly!
(Jarring chord. curtain falls as characters freeze, Tony at the door, John holding Jasmina, Lady Partridge sitting on couch, Sir Horace dead on the floor, and Inspector at the French doors stage back.)

#161 ::: Lee ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 09:09 PM:

Teresa, #119: Re "presenting a... patrician as a working-class American farmer", isn't that pretty much what GWB's campaign did, if you substitute "hard-bitten cowboy"? It's certainly a tactic that's worked for Lamar Alexander in TN for 25 years or more, and (I note from something Fragano said) is apparently continuing to do so.

Dave, #122: Palin as the 2012 candidate? Oh please, don't throw me in that briar patch! That would be the Republican equivalent of Hillary Clinton on the ticket -- the candidate with so much baggage as to be completely unelectable.

Frankly, I do expect her to try... and I also expect her to tank *hard* within the first few primaries, probably before Super Tuesday. And that will be the end of her national political career, although she'll doubtless move on to make a very good living on the lecture circuit.

Raphael, #145: *snork*

Sam, abi, *et al*: I think this is the strangest game of online Fizzbin I've ever had the pleasure to witness.

#162 ::: Dragoness Eclectic ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 09:44 PM:

Ratbat makes me think of **Megatron's accountant**, but I have weird fandoms.

There's actually a live person with a name attached to this bit of hysteria? I'm used to seeing that kind of crap as Nth-generation e-mail forwards originated by God-only-knows somewhere on the Internet. You (and Snopes.com) never seem to be able to pin down the people mentioned in the tale--or if they do, said people don't ever remember saying any such thing.

So what does Snopes say about this one?

#163 ::: Chris ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 09:53 PM:

@135: When I was in London a couple of years ago, I took a photo of a Tube advertisement: "A boiler breakdown could leave you with a WAPPING bill and a cold home so it CHORLEYWOOD make sense to take out [name of insurance policy].... you'd get MORDEN you'd think. And all our engineers are so highly trained, you'll want to CLAPHAM. Don't take a CHANCERY LANE, take out [policy] for your boiler. At 12 pounds a month, it won't break the BANK. You'd be BARKING not to."

Apparently this sort of thing is a favorite pastime... ;)

My own favorite BARKING is the church once known as "All Hallows Barking." I get wonderful mental pictures of a vast crowd of saints, all barking.....

#164 ::: Paula Lieberman ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 11:11 PM:

I had not read through the thread. I have barely stopped making the appalled noises emerged out of my throat and vocal cords and mouth reading the initial paragraphs...

It's the stuff of really, really, really, really, really bad fantasy that ought to have never made it *into* a slush pile, much less....

Ack. Gack. Eek. Groan. Whine. Wimper. Wheeze. Etc.

Please, *somebody* fix phase space and rotate them BACK into the purely imaginary plane, PLEASE!!!!

#165 ::: Paula Lieberman ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 11:15 PM:

The itsy bitsy fruitbats
Went into rightwing minds,
Splat went the neurons
On which the fruitbats dined
Out came the crock'ry
Vacuum 'tween the ears
And the itsy bitsy fruitbats
Are out in hordes this year!

#166 ::: Magenta Griffith ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 11:29 PM:

Yes, Paula, I want to go back to my own space-time, where Gore was inaugurated, 9-11 never happened, and the stock market is merely in a periodic downturn. Even better, back to the one where Carter was re-elected, and overpopulation, global warming, and the energy crisis are merely subjects of bad fiction.

#167 ::: Barbara Gordon ::: (view all by) ::: October 28, 2008, 11:30 PM:

I am utterly charmed to learn (while googling to find out whether it shouldn't be Fen Ditton) that the Railway Timetables sketch is quoted on the Swindon [website](#) as one of the Notable Things About Swindon.
-Barbara

#168 ::: Lee ::: (view all by) ::: October 29, 2008, 12:45 AM:

The phrase "barking mad" always reminds me of my ex-cow-orker B the Space Alien.* B and I were hired at about the same time, in the late summer, and she seemed fairly normal until shortly after the school season started, when one Monday morning she ran thru the entire downstairs at the office barking like a dog. Yes, she was indeed a Georgia Bulldogs fan; apparently this kind of behavior is what passes for normal in the Atlanta area. The rest of us looked at her as if she had two heads. Anyone else would have figured it out the first time; it took her *three repetitions* before it sank in that Things Were Different Here. She never did get used to being among people who didn't think that Atlanta was the greatest city in America and everything else was backwoods, and I think she eventually moved back there.

* She got that tag among my circle of friends after someone showed me a Weekly World News article describing "20 signs that someone you know may be a SPACE ALIEN in disguise!" and *she fit over half of them*.

#169 ::: Clifton Royston ::: (view all by) ::: October 29, 2008, 01:05 AM:

Lee: ... *a Weekly World News article describing "20 signs that someone you know may be a SPACE ALIEN in disguise!"*

Hey, I vaguely remember that article! I seem to recall that I fit a lot of them myself at the time. I was pleased.

#170 ::: Bruce Cohen (SpeakerToManagers) ::: (view all by) ::: October 29, 2008, 01:13 AM:

Paula Lieberman @ 164

Please, somebody fix phase space and rotate them BACK into the purely imaginary plane, PLEASE!!!!

Just put a quaternion and ask for Operator J.

#171 ::: Bruce Cohen (SpeakerToManagers) ::: (view all by) ::: October 29, 2008, 01:34 AM:

But seriously, folks. ISTM that the reason some of these fruitbats are denying the tenets of their own religion to espouse black magic and "spiritual warfare" is the same reason that they think torture is an appropriate response to terrorism: if your opponents are beating the crap out of you, start using their own techniques to fight back. Of course, this assumes that the terrorists (or Obama) are beating you, and that the techniques you've decided to use are in fact being used against you, both arguable propositions at best (and perhaps grounds for thinking you barking mad, at worst).

As Spiderman's uncle probably wouldn't have said, "With great fear comes great paranoia." And it's pretty obvious that even 7 years after 9/11 many people in the US (and the UK, too, I expect, given some of the security initiatives that the voters are *not* objecting to) are still terrified of the terrorists coming to their homes and killing them. When you're that afraid, sometimes any expedient, no matter how unsavory or outlandish, may seem acceptable if you can tell yourself that it will work against the enemy. And this is so perfect an example: it's actually magical thinking!

But snarking, as much fun as it is, may not be the best response to these people. They are sick, sick with fear, and they need professional help instead of sleazy authoritarians who pander to their fear as a means of getting and holding power. And for all that there are not many of them, and that they really are fruitbats who aren't capable of doing much themselves, they help maintain the air of fear, uncertainty, and doubt in which we find ourselves this century.

I can only hope that Obama becomes President and by his example and his actions defuses some of the fear, so that these people can go back to less dangerous fears, like the Knights Templar, or the Illuminati.

#172 ::: Terry Karney ::: (view all by) ::: October 29, 2008, 01:50 AM:

I suspect Palin will appoint herself to Steven's seat, and self-immolate in the Senate.

#173 ::: Randolph ::: (view all by) ::: October 29, 2008, 02:44 AM:

Lee, #161: "Palin as the 2012 candidate? Oh please, don't throw me in that briar patch! That would be the Republican equivalent of Hillary Clinton on the ticket -- the candidate with so much baggage as to be completely unelectable."

What I think she's going to become is the leader of the wingnut faction, and is likely to make life interesting for some years to come. Hard to say how long she'll last. She's not stupid or weak--malicious and fanatical, yes, but malicious fanatics sometimes do well in US politics.

#174 ::: geekosaur ::: (view all by) ::: October 29, 2008, 04:07 AM:

dlbowman76 @92:

It brings to mind that bats are essentially flying rats.

mjfgates @124:

There's an artificial France? Where do they keep it?

Quebec?

(Unrelated to any of the above: I thought nested `` toggled between italic and roman. Doesn't seem to work here; not sure if that's the blog software or Safari that's doing it wrong.)

#175 ::: Alex ::: (view all by) ::: October 29, 2008, 05:54 AM:

I used to commute in from Egham (18 miles from Hyde Park Corner, about 40 minutes to Waterloo); the train would usually be fairly full when I got off, and I believe it stayed that way all the way to Reading (just over the hour by that route).

If you catch the right train, it's been possible for a while to get from London to Leeds or vice versa, 200 miles, in under 2 hours; you just know there were some crazy bastards doing that.

#176 ::: Earl Cooley III ::: (view all by) ::: October 29, 2008, 06:54 AM:

Magenta Griffith #166: *I want to go back to my own space-time, where Gore was inaugurated, 9-11 never happened, and the stock market is merely in a periodic downturn. Even better, back to the one where Carter was re-elected, and overpopulation, global warming, and the energy crisis are merely subjects of bad fiction.*

President Bartlet's timeline is one of the better ones, and it's pretty well documented, too.

#177 ::: Serge ::: (view all by) ::: October 29, 2008, 07:30 AM:

geekosaur @ 174... Québec, an artificial France? Humph.

#178 ::: Serge ::: (view all by) ::: October 29, 2008, 07:55 AM:

geekosaur @ 174... Wait. You mean that artificial France is hiding inside Quebec, not that Quebec *is* artificial France. It is true hat, last time I went there, I went to Chicoutimi and visited **this lady** who, while she was born in Vietnam, grew up in France.

#179 ::: David Harmon ::: (view all by) ::: October 29, 2008, 08:27 AM:

geekosaur @ #174:

(Unrelated to any of the above: I thought nested `toggled between italic and roman`. Doesn't seem to work here; not sure if that's the blog software or Safari that's doing it wrong.)

Um, I'm not sure there **are** any formal "toggles" in HTML. IIRC, the display of *any* such tags, especially in combination (which is what you seem to be talking about) is basically an implementation decision for the renderer. This despite the emergence of "usual conventions" (and "usual assumptions" based on the tag names) -- but consider the plight of a character-mode browser such as lynx.

#180 ::: R. M. Koske ::: (view all by) ::: October 29, 2008, 09:42 AM:

#168, Lee -

No, that does not remotely pass for normal in Atlanta. It might pass for normal among groups of Bulldog fans*, but not in an office. She was grossly overrating Atlanta's status, but we do have more dignity than that.

*I've seen them bark, but never in an inappropriate venue. And hey, what's a football game for if you can't make a fool of yourself?

#181 ::: Ginger ::: (view all by) ::: October 29, 2008, 09:55 AM:

Lee @ 161: That's because this is a game of Mornington Crescent.

geekosaur @ 174: Given their general size, I've always thought of bats as flying mice. Of course, thinking of rats and bats leads me inevitably to **this book**.

#182 ::: Serge ::: (view all by) ::: October 29, 2008, 10:12 AM:

RM Koske @ 180... *She was grossly overrating Atlanta's status, but we do have more dignity than that*

To quote Gene Kelly in *Singin' in the Rain*...

"Dignity. Always dignity."

#183 ::: albatross ::: (view all by) ::: October 29, 2008, 10:13 AM:

Ginger #181:

This whole conversation makes me think of PJ O'Rourke's line (I forget which book this was in) that the Jamaican fruit bat looked like a colonel in the rat air force.

Steve #16:

Bildeburgers? But I've never even heard of the-
Damn, those guys are *good*.

#184 ::: ajay ::: (view all by) ::: October 29, 2008, 10:19 AM:

And hey, what's a football game for if you can't make a fool of yourself?

As the Scotland squad always say... (sigh)

#185 ::: albatross ::: (view all by) ::: October 29, 2008, 10:37 AM:

Lee #99:

I think they can't affect much in the normal additive things like participation in markets or voting. They can in single-person-high-impact stuff like assassination and terrorism--my sense is that nearly all terrorism and assassinations and mass-shootings and such are events where a single way-out-on-the-tails person has a huge impact. So are new inventions, starting world-improving businesses, writing books, life-changing volunteering sorts of activities (say, going off to build schools in Kenya for a couple years), etc. I don't think this is skewed toward bad effects, though probably people soaked in crazy evil ideas are more likely to do evil than good. But many a person with very odd ideas cranks out excellent software or does beautiful math or feeds a lot of hungry people in the soup kitchen he runs. Those things let a small number of extreme outliers have a big impact, in ways that voting or purchasing decisions mostly don't.

Of course, coming to political power is another way that a way-out-on-the-tails person affects the world. Everyone who comes anywhere close to national level political power is a serious outlier. In fact, I suspect that this is more true as we've become more of a meritocratic society--folks like W or Al Gore or Teddy Kennedy are probably less unusual people in some sense than folks like Bill Clinton or Barack Obama or Sarah Palin, because it's much harder to come to national prominence from nothing than from a wealthy, well-connected family. (Though Palin was more selected from a moderately high-profile position, so it will be interesting to see whether she can maintain a place in national politics over time.)

#186 ::: Bruce Cohen (SpeakerToManagers) ::: (view all by) ::: October 29, 2008, 11:24 AM:

Serge @ 178

Wow, I didn't know Vonarburg was from Vietnam. Hmm ... I'm reading *Dreams of the Sea* right now, and that puts an new light on some things in the book.

Which brings up an interesting and totally OT question: when did author's bios on the back cover or the inside back sleeve stop having a first sentence of the form, "Taddeo Jarusek O'Neill was born in a bus while crossing the border between East Assyristan and West Assyristan."?

#187 ::: Calton Bolick ::: (view all by) ::: October 29, 2008, 11:57 AM:

Also, Dick Morris of Fox News was sent to Kenya to help Odinga run his campaign! I find that unbelievable.

I find it unbelievable too.

Without in any way, shape, or form endorsing the overall fruitbattery, I should point out that that statement, at its heart, well, is kinda true.

US strategist to help Kenya presidential challenger

"NAIROBI (Reuters) - Kenya's top presidential challenger has brought in an American political strategist, tarred by a prostitution scandal, to help defeat President Mwai Kibaki in a December 27 poll, his campaign said on Wednesday.

"As opposition candidates kicked off their official campaigns, Raila Odinga, who has a narrow lead in opinion polls, said American pollster Dick Morris had joined his team.

"He is working as a consultant, but he is doing it pro bono. He is not charging Mr. Odinga," said Odinga spokeswoman Rose Lukalo."

There's even video. Dick Morris really gets around.

#188 :: Calton Bolick :: (view all by) :: October 29, 2008, 12:02 PM:

Well, as long as I had that YouTube page open, I plugged in the name "Bree Keyton" to see what would come up.

I got **this**.

WTF?

#189 :: Serge :: (view all by) :: October 29, 2008, 12:05 PM:

Bruce Cohen @ 186... Elisabeth's dad was a high-ranking officer in the French military who was there when Japan occupied the area and a bit longer after the war. As far as I know, Elisabeth wasn't born in a bus.

#190 :: Epacris :: (view all by) :: October 29, 2008, 12:44 PM:

Serge @189, ... tho' the **Internet Speculative Fiction Database**, **her SFWA entry**, and **Wikipedia** all list her birthplace as Paris, France. Hmm.

#191 :: Serge :: (view all by) :: October 29, 2008, 01:02 PM:

Epacris @ 190... They do? That's strange. I'll write and ask her.

#192 :: Lee :: (view all by) :: October 29, 2008, 02:09 PM:

Ginger, #181: So do the Germans, hence *Der Fledermaus*.

#193 :: dlbowman76 :: (view all by) :: October 29, 2008, 02:15 PM:

Ugh, this is horribly pedantic, but it's **Die Fledermaus**. Profuse apologies for Operatic and Teutonic pedantry!

#194 :: lorax :: (view all by) :: October 29, 2008, 02:59 PM:

Terry @172, the *most* Palin could do under Alaska state law would be to appoint herself as interim senator until a special election could be called, which would have to be within 90 days of the vacancy -- more likely, she'd run in the special election, if Stevens wins and then resigns or is forced out.

#195 :: Lizzie :: (view all by) :: October 29, 2008, 04:05 PM:

I love this kind of shit. Thank you, thank you.

#196 :: Serge :: (view all by) :: October 29, 2008, 04:21 PM:

Ginger @ 181... Meanwhile, the French word for 'bat' is 'chauve-souris' or 'bald mouse'.

#197 :: Tracie :: (view all by) :: October 29, 2008, 04:25 PM:

Lee #168 and R. M. Koske #180:

It's not normal for most Atlanta offices, even during football season. Now here in Athens, however ...

In the spirit of the upcoming Georgia-Florida game, the even-popular "pack of dogs maul gator" **photo**.

#198 :: Faren Miller :: (view all by) :: October 29, 2008, 04:59 PM:

(This kind of thread is "Making Light" the way I love it -- though for now I try to avoid laughing so hard my stitches hurt.)

Re the Railway Timetable Sketch: Swindon *and* a Partridge? Shades of my favorite post-Sixties rock trio, XTC!

As for the batshit religious fanatics, the NYT online has a book review about America in the pre-war decades of the 19th century -- the Andrew Jackson years, more or less -- and religious wingnuts were rife. Mesmerism!

Phrenology! And the early days of Mormonism. (Apologies to any offended current believers in all this; the olden times were more primitive.)

The Politics issue of the *New Yorker*, earlier in October, had a frightening/funny article on how dangerous it could be to vote in America back in those days. I recommend it.

#199 ::: Doctor Science ::: (view all by) ::: October 29, 2008, 05:40 PM:

Faren @198: do you mean [this review of WAKING GIANT: America in the Age of Jackson?](#) sounds interesting.

Coming from a very strong background in mainstream (Catholic & Lutheran) Christian education, one of the most striking things to me about Mormonism is how very far from the Christian mainstream it went within a single generation.

It's as though the differences between Catholicism and Lutheranism, or Lutheranism and Calvinism, are step-wise Darwinian mutations; but the change from Protestantism to Mormonism is an X-Men mutation, a total transforming leap.

#200 ::: Clifton Royston ::: (view all by) ::: October 29, 2008, 06:04 PM:

Doctor Science: ... *one of the most striking things to me about Mormonism is how very far from the Christian mainstream it went within a single generation.*

Cycling back to my original comment up-thread, I believe Joseph Smith's early career and the very earliest stages of Mormonism likely fits more closely into that same American folk-magic tradition which includes scrying for visions, invoking angels, weird apocrypha, etc. A number of anti-Mormon writers said so at the time.

This is probably why the church Elders were so ready to accept the infamous [Salamander letter](#) forgery as authentic.

Much of that American folk magic seems to be garbled and translated versions of German magical traditions, which in turn were garbled debasements of various Renaissance books on ritual magic and occult theory. (It's a multi-generation game of Telephone!)

- Clifton, babbling as usual

#201 ::: Chris ::: (view all by) ::: October 29, 2008, 06:47 PM:

For a while there, the mixing of a subthread of people discussing how to actually get somewhere on the London rails with a subthread playing Mornington Crescent created something even more mindbending and bizarrely beautiful than Mornington Crescent usually is. (IMO, at least.)

I used to think that the demise of the threaded newsreaders in the fall of USENET was wholly a bad thing, but perhaps not.

#202 ::: Lee ::: (view all by) ::: October 29, 2008, 08:06 PM:

dlbowman76, #193: No apology necessary, and thanks for the correction; German isn't my strong point, and I was too lazy to go look it up. But I do know that it means "The Bat", and that a literal translation would be "the flying mouse".

#203 ::: Doctor Science ::: (view all by) ::: October 29, 2008, 08:18 PM:

Clifton @200:

very earliest stages of Mormonism likely fits more closely into that same American folk-magic tradition which includes scrying for visions, invoking angels, weird apocrypha

Yes indeed. It's striking how little of conventional Christian theology was in the mix, given that the first generation of Mormons were all converts from Christianity, and lived in an area (the "Burnt-Over District") rife with Christian preaching.

To me, Mormon theology & storytelling is about as closely (or distantly) related to Christian theology as Muslim stories & theology are to the Jewish & Christian beliefs Muhammed acknowledged as forerunners. But Muhammed knew about Judaism and Christianity second-hand, he wasn't raised in a Jewish/Christian milieu. Joseph Smith *was* raised in an ostensibly Christian culture, but he diverged much further than the various preachers of the Protestant Reformation or even most of the early Christian "heresies".

Much of that American folk magic seems to be garbled and translated versions of German magical traditions

German rather than English or Scottish? Do you know of a good book on the topic?

#204 ::: Vicki ::: (view all by) ::: October 29, 2008, 09:35 PM:

It's not clear whether Palin could appoint herself--or anyone--to Stevens's seat on an interim basis (assuming he is reelected next week and then turfed out by the Senate). In the aftermath of then-Senator Frank Murkowski running for governor, winning, and appointing his daughter to his senate seat, Alaska wound up with two different laws saying that nobody else could do that: one by referendum and one passed by the legislature. Both say that there must be a special election if an Alaska senate seat becomes vacant; one of them has the governor appoint someone on an interim basis, and the other leaves the seat vacant until after the special election.

All that is from a story in *Newsday* this morning. The US Senate page on how vacancies hasn't been updated since 2003, and isn't useful here.

#205 :: Clifton Royston :: (view all by) :: October 29, 2008, 10:22 PM:

Doctor Science:

I can't remember where I read that particular tidbit. I'll try to dredge my memory for where I found it. Of course the stronghold of Powwow magic and hexerei was the Pennsylvania Dutch area, long-settled by German-Americans, so it made sense to me when I read it - but as I say, I'm not sure where or when.

#206 :: Magenta Griffith :: (view all by) :: October 29, 2008, 10:59 PM:

Doctor Science @203, and anyone else interested.

Recently, we found this site - sacred-texts.com

It includes a book I'd heard about but never found, *Pow-Wows, or The Long Lost Friend, a collection of mysterious and invaluable Arts and Remedies*. It is a collection of Pennsylvania Dutch (i.e. German) folk magic from the 1820's. It's superficially Christian. The link to this book is <http://www.sacred-texts.com/ame/pow/index.htm>

People have been performing magic in the name of Jesus for a long time. This does not make it part of Christianity.

#207 :: Ambar :: (view all by) :: October 30, 2008, 12:09 AM:

Xopher@76: I am fond of Victor Anderson's remark on the subject: "White magic is poetry. Black magic is anything that works."

#208 :: Tom Barclay :: (view all by) :: October 30, 2008, 12:21 AM:

You know how the Fruit Battery gets so twisted about Obama's middle name?

How do you suppose they feel about the hundreds of thousands of their Lord and Master's namesakes around the Latin world?

#209 :: Bruce Cohen (SpeakerToManagers) :: (view all by) :: October 30, 2008, 02:06 AM:

Clifton @ 200

IIRC there's some influence from even further back: medieval stories based on misunderstandings of classical events and people. For instance the fascinating idea that Virgil was a Christian magician*.

* Avram Davidson based a couple of good books on this idea.

#210 :: Clifton Royston :: (view all by) :: October 30, 2008, 02:41 AM:

Yep, both of them great books, classic Avram Davidson.

Naming your magic books as authored by legendary figures has an ancient and ignoble tradition.

For instance, the Fourth Book of Moses from the same hexerei tradition, or the Lemegeton of King Solomon (I'm not sure when it actually dates to, but probably late Renaissance) which contains of course absolutely nothing relevant to anything believed at the time of Solomon. Going back to late classic times, there were various Greek hermetic manuscripts which purported to be authored by the Egyptian god Thoth, a.k.a Hermes Trismegistus, but which probably were mostly written in the first few centuries A.D.

I don't know who the Sumerians found to misattribute their books of magic to.

#211 :: Earl Cooley III :: (view all by) :: October 30, 2008, 04:19 AM:

Clifton Royston #210: *I don't know who the Sumerians found to misattribute their books of magic to.*

My guess would be the Mother Goddess of Ætatal HÃ¼yÃ¼k.

#212 :: John L :: (view all by) :: October 30, 2008, 04:26 AM:

The religious hate is getting strong down here in NC. Senator Elizabeth Dole has begun running ads calling her opponent, Kay Hagan, a person who does not believe in God because she accepted donations from a group of atheists. The ad goes on and on about how Hagan believes "there is no God" and even has someone who sort of sounds like Hagan saying that at the end.

A local TV station interviewed Dole on this ad yesterday, and she defended every word of it. When they spoke with Hagan, she said she was "livid" over it and intended to have an attorney file an injunction to try and get it from being aired. Oh btw, Hagan's an elder in her church and teaches Sunday school classes.

The ad ran immediately after that portion of the news program, ironically enough.

#213 ::: A.R.Yngve ::: (view all by) ::: October 30, 2008, 05:41 AM:

When a candidate acts like she was endorsed by God, then I expect an OFFICIAL endorsement:

Chorus of angels, parting of the heavens, giant hand descending and pointing directly at Elizabeth Dole, thundering voice declaring "THOU ART ENDORSED BY THE LORD THY GOD."

#214 ::: Fragano Ledgister ::: (view all by) ::: October 30, 2008, 06:36 AM:

A.R. Yngve #213:

I am reminded of J.C. Squire's epigram regarding the beginning of the Great War:

God heard the embattled nations sing and shout:

Gott strafe Engeland! God save the King!

God this, God that, and God the other thing.

"My God!" said God, "I've got my work cut out."

#215 ::: ajay ::: (view all by) ::: October 30, 2008, 07:00 AM:

When a candidate acts like she was endorsed by God, then I expect an OFFICIAL endorsement:

Chorus of angels, parting of the heavens, giant hand descending and pointing directly at Elizabeth Dole, thundering voice declaring "THOU ART ENDORSED BY THE LORD THY GOD."

NOW WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

-- I'm averting my eyes, O Lord.

WELL, KNOCK IT OFF!

-- Yes, Lord.

#216 ::: Epacris ::: (view all by) ::: October 30, 2008, 07:30 AM:

This thread at Pharyngula (short on the trolls, flaming & heavy religious controversy which spoil much of it, sadly) may remind you of somewhere closer.

If you haven't seen **Pharyngula** (â€œEvolution, development, and random biological ejaculations from a godless liberalâ€) at ScienceBlogs, or like me been mostly driven away by the conflict, this might be a nice place to try. There's also a mention of the Dole/Hagan contretemps.

#217 ::: chris y ::: (view all by) ::: October 30, 2008, 07:34 AM:

Clifton @210: Forgive my ignorance, I thought the Fourth Book of Moses was Numbers, which is nothing if not canonical. What have I been missing?

#218 ::: Rob Rusick ::: (view all by) ::: October 30, 2008, 08:26 AM:

Epacris @216: *This thread at Pharyngula [...] may remind you of somewhere closer.*

The punning subthread looks familiar...

I browse subjects at Pharyngula (*I admit my eyes will glaze over when it goes into detail on fruit fly biology — though I wouldn't dismiss the value of same*), but rarely read comment threads through to the end.

Here, I feel compelled to at least browse all active comment threads. It helps* that there is UI on the front page to help track current comments.

* *Maybe 'enables' is the proper word, considering the facilitation of the compulsion.*

#219 ::: fidelio ::: (view all by) ::: October 30, 2008, 10:46 AM:

Everything I see in a quick look for the Fourth Book of Moses refers back to Numbers; I think the occult books are supposed to be the 6th and 7th (which were such a hit in the 19th Century when they were "revealed" that 8th and 9th Books soon followed.) Besides all of the things at **Sacredtexts.com**, here's another site with the text of

the Sixth and Seventh Books of Moses, which supposedly records the spells he and Aaron used against Pharoah's magicians. The Sacredtexts.com folks have a large section on Pennsylvania Dutch folk magic, but I don't see anything on Ozark practices, which were covered by Vance Randolph; I think his books are available as Dover reprints.

#220 ::: Clifton Royston ::: (view all by) ::: October 30, 2008, 12:11 PM:

Sorry, brain-blip. Yes, I meant Sixth and Seventh Books of Moses; just bump the number up far enough to get something not included in the Torah.

#221 ::: Faren Miller ::: (view all by) ::: October 30, 2008, 01:15 PM:

Doctor Science (#199): Yes, that's the review I meant. Thanks for providing a link. (The things they *don't* teach sensitive young minds in US History classes....)

#222 ::: Rosa ::: (view all by) ::: October 30, 2008, 01:48 PM:

I just came over here to note another Pharyngula thread, the one about self-labeled Christians praying over the golden bull of Wall Street.

http://scienceblogs.com/pharyngula/2008/10/wheres_charlton_heston_when_yo.php

#223 ::: albatross ::: (view all by) ::: October 30, 2008, 02:27 PM:

tom #208:

Of course, all right thinking people know that if a couple named *MarÃa* and *JosÃ©* with a baby named *JesÃs* are sleeping in someone's garage, they need to be deported, *pronto*. What other lesson could possibly be taken from the New Testament?

#224 ::: Rikibeth ::: (view all by) ::: October 30, 2008, 02:35 PM:

albatross @223:

Go Move Shift (The Moving On Song)

by Ewan McCall

Born in the middle of the afternoon,
In a horsedrawn carriage on the old A5
The big twelve wheeler shook my bed,
You can't stay here the policeman said,

You'd better get born in some place else,
Move along, get along, move along, get along,
Go, Move, Shift.

Born on the common by a building site,
Where the ground was rutted by the trail of wheels,
The local Christian said to me,
You'll lower the price of property,
You'd....

Born at potato picking time,
In an old grown tent by a tatie field,
The farmer said the work's all done,
It's time that you was moving on,
You'd...

Born at the back of a Hawthorne hedge,
Where the Blackheath frost lay on the ground,
No eastern kings came bearing gifts,
Instead the order came to shift,
You'd...

The eastern sky was full of stars,
But one shone brighter than the rest,
The wise men came so stern and strict,
And brought the order to evict.
You'd...

Wagon, tent, or trailer born,
Last month, last year or in far off days,
Born here or a thousand miles away,
There's always men nearby who'll say,
You'd...

#225 ::: sherrold ::: (view all by) ::: October 30, 2008, 02:49 PM:

It's good for me to remember that there are secular nuts out there, too. If you haven't checked out Ezra Klein's takedown of the Obama's Dad was Malcom X fruitbattery, [check it out](#) -- and make sure to follow the comments for the other "X's" he could be related to.

#226 ::: Serge ::: (view all by) ::: October 30, 2008, 03:38 PM:

albatross @ 123... *if a couple named MarÃa and JosÃ© with a baby named JesÃs are sleeping in someone's garage, they need to be deported*

Ever seen Don's Siegel 1945 film **Star in the Night**?

On Christmas Eve somewhere in the US southwest, three cowboys are riding through the desert night with items they purchased at a general store. They see a bright light just above the horizon and decide to find out where the it is coming from. The light turns out to be a newly installed light, in the shape of a large star, at the Star Auto Court. The auto court's owner, Nick, doesn't believe there is much good left in the world. He complains that people wish each other 'Merry Christmas,' then look out only for themselves the rest of the year. His customers get the brunt of his rudeness, but have no other choice of lodging nearby. A young couple,

Jose and Maria Santos, arrives hoping to get lodging. There are no cabins available, so they must settle for a small shed to sleep in. When the lodgers find out about Maria's medical condition, Nick learns that there is still goodness in the world.

#227 ::: Raphael ::: (view all by) ::: October 30, 2008, 03:41 PM:

sherrold @225: But remember, Randians are the only truly rational people in the world, and anyone who disagrees with the on anything is irrational! (Yes, I know that there are Randians who are saner than Ms. "Her Youtube Vids Are Oddly Fascinating If You Watch Them With The Sound Off". But many of them, apparently including Rand herself, apparently think/thought that their opinions on *anything*, not just politics or philosophy, are the only possible logical conclusion from the basic truths of the Universe, so that, for instance, if you like other entertainment than them, it shows your irrational self-denying anti-life masochism or something.)

#228 ::: Serge ::: (view all by) ::: October 30, 2008, 03:49 PM:

Clifton Royston @ 220... *Books of Moses*

William R Moses?
Moses Gunn?

Moses supposes his toes are roses,
But Moses supposes erroneously,
Moses he knowes his toeses aren't roses
As Moses supposes his toeses to be.

#229 ::: abi ::: (view all by) ::: October 30, 2008, 04:11 PM:

Serge @228:

Gunn & Moses?

Welcome to the desert
Now that you are free
Now that you have walked away
And parted the Red Sea.
You saved the tribes of Israel
And raised your sheperd's staff
They follow you, but watch out, boy
They'll make a golden calf.

In the desert
Welcome to the desert
Watch it bring you to your
sha na na na na na na
knees, knees
I wanna watch you pray
(etc)

#230 ::: Clifton Royston ::: (view all by) ::: October 30, 2008, 04:13 PM:

Rosa @ 222:

Boggle! I can only repeat one of the early comments in the thread - "Biblical Fail!" I mean, I'm neither a Christian nor a Jew, but I know the Bible better than those "Christians" apparently do.

#231 ::: Cowboy Diva ::: (view all by) ::: October 30, 2008, 04:20 PM:

Silly! You don't have to "know" the bible, obviously. The in-crowd "believes" it, without even knowing what it says. This is why they get to go to heaven, and you can go to hell.

MOAR Mornington Crescent and/or fabric puns PLZ. kthx.

#232 ::: Sam Kelly ::: (view all by) ::: October 30, 2008, 05:10 PM:

We're not here for the amusement of others' warped minds; making puns is a far more rewarding activity when you put a few in the Bank yourself. Possibly in verse; weaving in poetic forms, always encouraged.

#233 ::: Emma ::: (view all by) ::: October 30, 2008, 05:15 PM:

Rosa @222: I thought it was a joke, I really thought it was... it wasn't. Holy... cow.

#234 ::: Doctor Science ::: (view all by) ::: October 30, 2008, 05:25 PM:

Clifton:

I don't really think the German folk magic/religion can have much to do with early Mormonism, because the Burned-Over District was most settled by immigrants from New England and, I'm guessing, from the "borders"

region of the British Isles. In **Albion's Seed** (always the first stop for analyzing American culture) there's some discussion of the magical practices of the Border culture, but not IIRC about the "roll your own" quality, the degree to which movements like Mormonism could be detached from Christian tradition.

It's also surprising to me how divergent Mormonism (etc) could be from the teaching of the First Great Awakening, especially given how many immigrants to the region were from New England. I happen to have read a lot of Jonathan Edwards, and he's solidly inside Christian tradition in a way Joseph Smith et al. were not.

#235 ::: Christopher Davis ::: (view all by) ::: October 30, 2008, 05:30 PM:

Cowboy Diva (#231): As Jean-Luc Picard said while putting together London Underground seat cushions: "**Moquette** sew!"

#236 ::: Lee ::: (view all by) ::: October 30, 2008, 05:49 PM:

Emma, #233: Don't you mean "holy bull"?

#237 ::: Cowboy Diva ::: (view all by) ::: October 30, 2008, 07:12 PM:

please permit me an attempt at **conflation**.

#238 ::: Adrian ::: (view all by) ::: October 30, 2008, 07:48 PM:

Clifton (210, 220), I actually thought you were referring to book 5. Look at this scroll we found in one of those old storerooms behind the Temple! Handy hints to holiness from Moses himself, who has been dead for hundreds of years! It looks like he wrote this just before he died, and told us exactly what we should be doing here and now in Jerusalem. Isn't that convenient?

#239 ::: Paula Lieberman ::: (view all by) ::: October 30, 2008, 10:00 PM:

207 Ambar

Does that make me a full spectrum grayscale magician, between poetry here on Making Light, and black magic involved with software testing on stuff that the customers like enough to keep buying more of?!

#210 Clifton

The invoking of Solomon goes back further than the Renaissance, to pre-Islamic traditions picked up by Muslims, and also strains of such things in esoteric Judaism.

#240 ::: Bruce Cohen (SpeakerToManagers) ::: (view all by) ::: October 31, 2008, 12:59 AM:

Paula @ 239

That software stuff is way beyond black magic, even farther than ultraviolet or soft x-ray magic. And testing is even farther out. I mean really, sticking pins in data structures?

#241 ::: Marilee ::: (view all by) ::: October 31, 2008, 02:22 AM:

albatross, #223, ever read Connie Willis' *Inn*? She writes so well I can not only read her Christian Christmas stories, I appreciate them (most of the Christmas stories are not specifically Christian). This is a modern-day pre-Christmas church choir practice with a little bit of time travel shelter.

#242 ::: Mary Frances ::: (view all by) ::: October 31, 2008, 02:37 AM:

Actually, this all reminds me of one of Mike Royko's Christmas columns, "Mary and Joe Chicago-Style." I found a link on googlebooks--don't know if it will copy, but I'll try: **Mary and Joe Chicago-Style**

#243 ::: Serge ::: (view all by) ::: October 31, 2008, 06:18 AM:

Bruce Cohen @ 186... **Epacris** @ 190... My memory had skipped a few cogs about **Elisabeth Vonarburg**. She was, as Epacris pointed out, born in Paris. Her *mother* grew up in Hanoi until she was in her mid-twenties, but she was born in Cambodia.

#244 ::: Matt ::: (view all by) ::: October 31, 2008, 12:16 PM:

You may have seen this already, but this story had my jaw hitting the floor:

<http://wonkette.com/403979/more-photos-videos-from-yesterdays-sacrilege-wall-street-bull-prayer>

Synopsis: The 700 Club organized a day of prayer for the economy, and decided to pray before the Wall St. bull statue, complete with laying on hands. I'm pretty sure the Bible has some pretty specific things to say about praying to metallic cow effigies...

#245 ::: **Emma** :: ([view all by](#)) :: **October 31, 2008, 12:55 PM:**

Lee @236: that would be... not a good thing, according to the Bible.

#246 ::: **John L** :: ([view all by](#)) :: **October 31, 2008, 03:59 PM:**

So is anyone getting an industrial strength metal grinder out to add a little iron (or bronze) to these worshippers' diet?

#247 ::: **Debra Doyle** :: ([view all by](#)) :: **October 31, 2008, 06:14 PM:**

Doctor Science@2343: For a book on the origins of Mormonism, try John L. Brooke's **The Refiner's Fire: The Making of Mormon Cosmololgy, 1644-1844.**

#248 ::: **Debra Doyle** :: ([view all by](#)) :: **October 31, 2008, 06:18 PM:**

Argh! *Cosmology*.

I swear I can spell. I just can't type.

#249 ::: **Debra Doyle** :: ([view all by](#)) :: **October 31, 2008, 06:20 PM:**

And I typoed the post number, too. This is not my day. (And this is an unfamiliar keyboard, which doesn't help either.)

#250 ::: **ajay** :: ([view all by](#)) :: **October 31, 2008, 08:02 PM:**

248: no, "cosmoLOLgy" sounds fine.

O HAI
I UPGRADED UR GEOCENTRIC MODEL

INVIZIBLE PRIMUM MOBILE!!!!

#251 ::: **Ginger** :: ([view all by](#)) :: **October 31, 2008, 09:20 PM:**

250:

How about

IN UR COSMOS
EATIN YR GALAXIES

?

#252 ::: **Fragano Ledgister** :: ([view all by](#)) :: **October 31, 2008, 09:30 PM:**

Ginger #251: I had not hitherto been aware of the existence of LOLCTHULHU.

#253 ::: **P J Evans** :: ([view all by](#)) :: **October 31, 2008, 09:32 PM:**

#250/251

Here's the picture for it. The one on the left went through the one on the right, leaving a Really Big Hole.

#254 ::: **Ginger** :: ([view all by](#)) :: **October 31, 2008, 09:47 PM:**

Fragano @ 252: Beware the squamous rugose star. I have said too much.

#255 ::: **Fragano Ledgister** :: ([view all by](#)) :: **October 31, 2008, 09:50 PM:**

Ginger #253: Some stars are just too horrible to behold.

#256 ::: **Caroline** :: ([view all by](#)) :: **October 31, 2008, 10:47 PM:**

252: Oh no?

Behold LOLTHULHU.

#257 ::: [Fragano Ledgister](#) ::: ([view all by](#)) ::: **October 31, 2008, 10:51 PM:**

Caroline #256:

MY DREAMZ IZ POIZND. OH NOES.

#258 ::: [Bruce Cohen \(SpeakerToManagers\)](#) ::: ([view all by](#)) ::: **November 01, 2008, 02:02 AM:**

CAN HAS INFLATIONARY BIG BANG?

#259 ::: [Peter Erwin](#) ::: ([view all by](#)) ::: **November 01, 2008, 06:25 AM:**

Debra Doyle @ 248:

Not to worry; professional cosmologists occasionally make the same mistake. E.g., the abstract of [this 1995 paper](#):

"... and singularities in spatially inhomogeneous cosmologies are discussed."

#260 ::: [Michael I](#) ::: ([view all by](#)) ::: **November 01, 2008, 08:18 AM:**

Debra Doyle@249

It wasn't a typo, it was a prophecy...

#261 ::: [Joel Polowin](#) ::: ([view all by](#)) ::: **November 01, 2008, 09:27 AM:**

Was a time, some years ago, when some idiot was selling or otherwise sharing a junk-mail address list which included "Neil Joel Polwin" -- Neil being my brother's name.

#262 ::: [scyllacat](#) ::: ([view all by](#)) ::: **November 20, 2008, 09:25 PM:**

This reminds me of witch drama: Oh, no, I'm being spiritually attacked! they say.

No, you can't be sick, you can't have messed up your life, it can't be because you cheated, stole, or slacked off at work....

I reckon real Christians think these folks are nuts like real Wicca think those who claim to be "under spiritual attack" are nuts.