LETTERS

Got God?

Jordan's People

by Jordan van den Hoonaard

Within the little bubble that is campus, we the students represent, in some respects, the learned population. Ergo, it makes sense that certain conversation topics are capable of being quite controversial, given the intelligent nature of the student population.

One thing that does not take much intelligence, however, is to see just how much of a Pandora's Box is being opened when the topic of God is brought up. Of all the views that people have, their thoughts on God, his existence, possible existence, or complete lack of existence is usually the thing they feel most strongly about.

In my three-or-so years in university, I have realized that more and more people between the ages of 18 and 25 are claiming they do not believe in God's existence, or even the possibility of existence. After a while, I began to feel as though this was a belief held by so many people that perhaps atheism had become almost trendy. This downward outlook on life, and on whatever might be out there after death, seems so prevalent amongst university students.

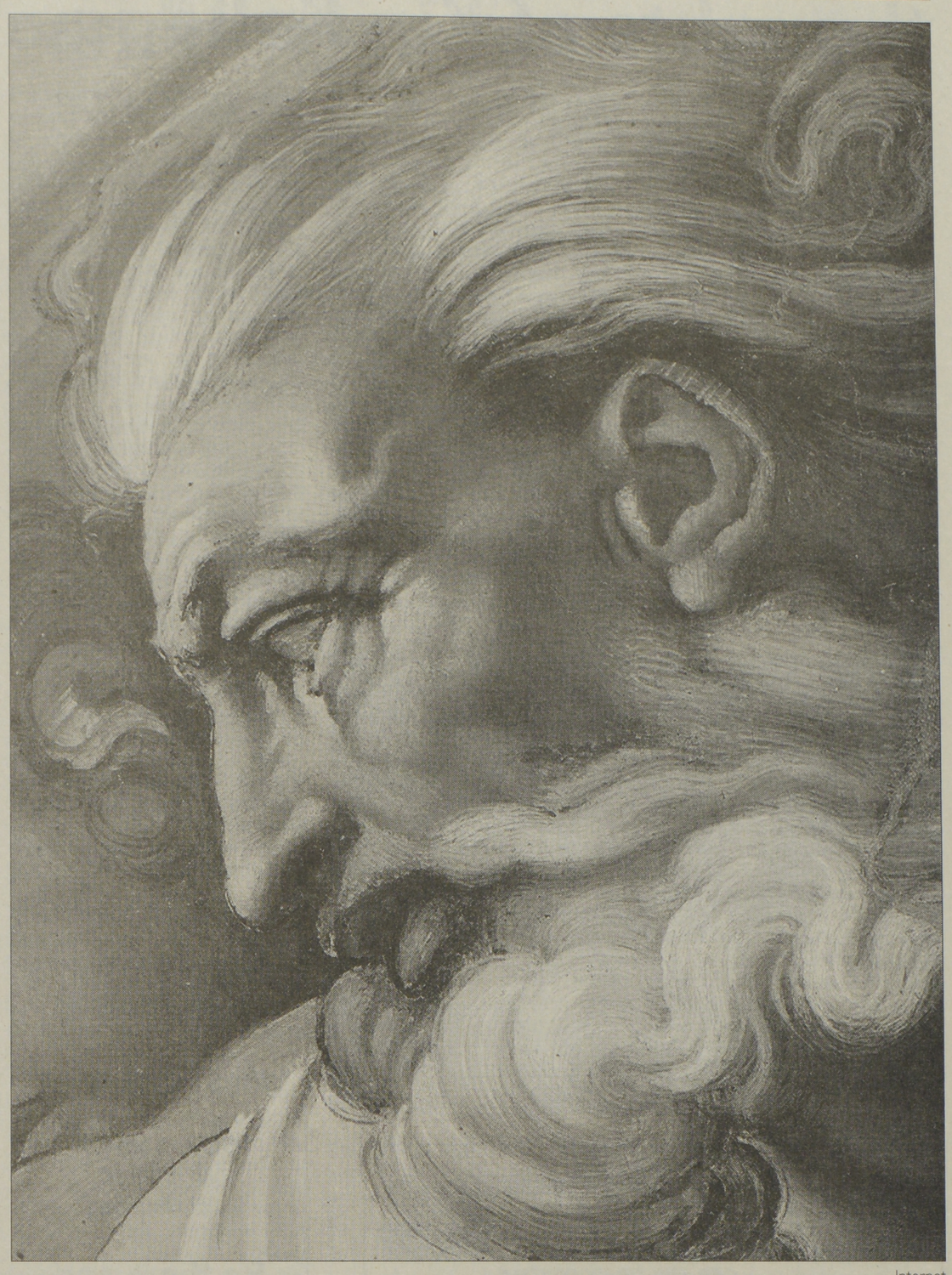
So, I decided to have a talk with fourth year religious studies honour student, Nicholas Graveline. He claims that atheistic views are the ones that are least grounded, and they lack a foundation. "If it weren't for religion already existing, then atheism couldn't exist; because it [atheism] is a direct reaction to theistic belief," states Graveline. When I asked him what he thought about the ever-increasing number of atheists on campus, he replied, "That's really just man's arrogance." He then proceded to explain to me that, according to his views, people see believing in God as too much work, so-to-speak, and atheism is an easy way out. Many people become atheists once other people have heavily influenced their thoughts. "No one decides to be an atheist when they're 10," concluded Graveline.

Then I decided to take a walk around campus and ask random people if they were atheists, to which I got answers like "Sure." and "I guess so." In the event that someone answered with a yes, I then would ask them "Tell me about the God that you do not believe in." This was the interesting part because most people did not know what to say in response. I figured if someone makes such a concrete decision as to not believe in something, then they must have pondered, at length, on the thing they choose not to believe in. I was wrong. About 86 per cent of the 150 people I asked were not only atheists, but they were not able to give any real reason as to why they do not believe in God.

After being disappointed several times, I finally ran into a student who knew what they were talking about. Fourth year student Andrew Vaughn, who is not an atheist, explained to me that many atheists have good reasons for being atheist, but that is just because it is the ideology that best fits what they're looking for. In a very sarcastic voice he exclaimed, "A lot of bad things have happened to me, I hate somebody for it. And I'm cool and artsie, so I'm an atheist." Although this is a very crude and mocking statement to make, there is some truth to it.

Are all of these signs that justify Neitchze saying God is dead, and we killed him? Even that presupposes that God was, at one point, alive. Everything is a trend these days. All it takes is one person to decide to think a certain way, and for other people to follow suit. So where is the root in this particular fad? It is a cross between justified atheists who know what they are talking about and have thought for ages about the nature of an alleged God, and, to localize things a little, philosophy students. Mind you, I am not talking about all philosophy students. I feel that with the growing popularity of philosophers like Jean-Paul Sartre and Freidrich Neitchze, people begin to take a more negative outlook on life. When these thinkers become trendy, so do their philosophies, which are usually highly misunderstood.

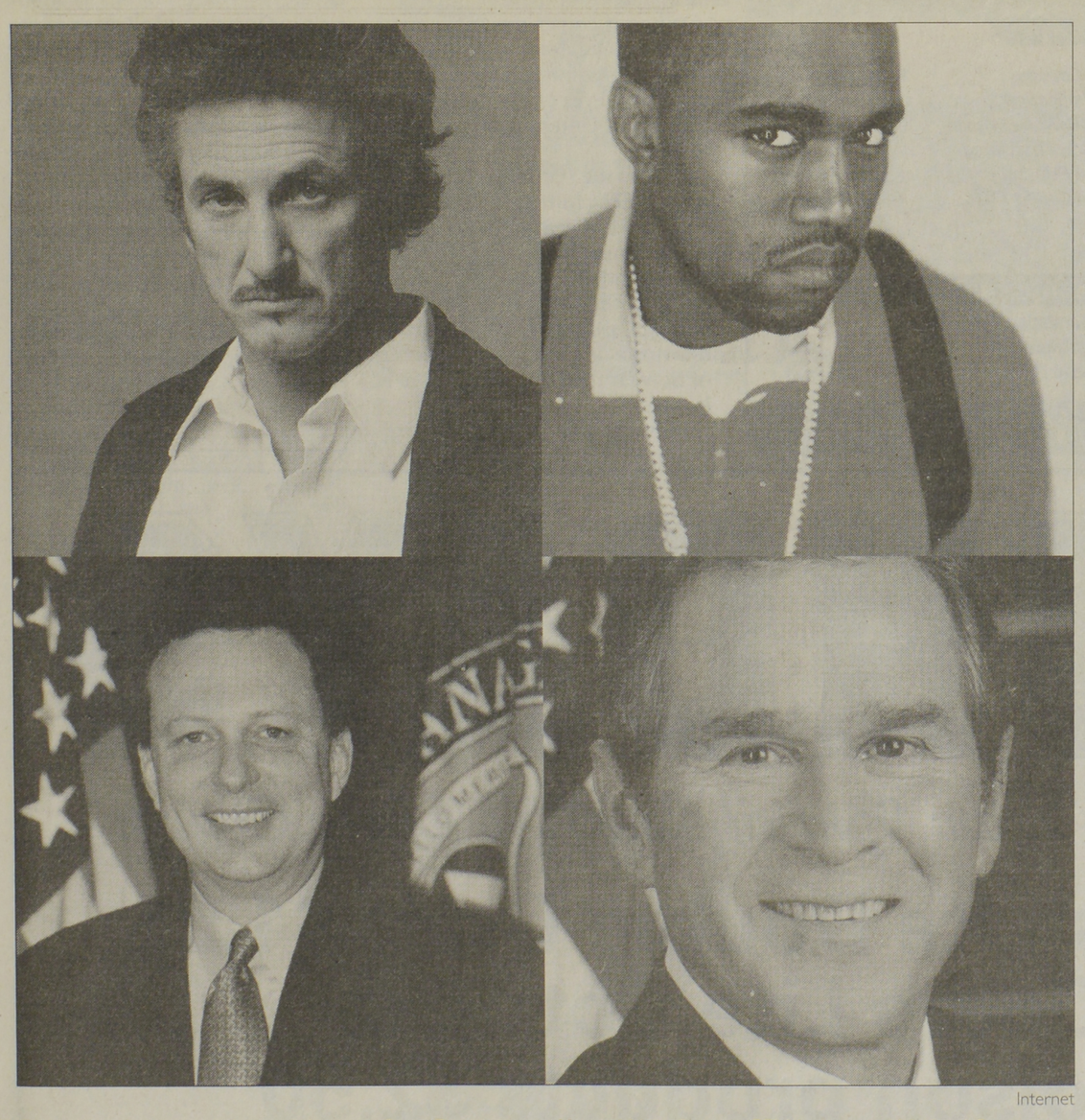
Nothing is absolute. Not all atheists are unjustified, and not all atheists are trend-followers. Many of those students who do not believe in God have thought on the subject for hours on end, and decided to believe that there is no higher power. Many atheists say they do not believe in God because there is no emperical evidence or proof of His existence. For those who do believe in God, evidence is not the reason they say God exists. God's existence is not about proof or evidence. That is why we ask, "Do you believe in God," and not, "Do you have proof of God." If one believes in God, they do so knowing there is no empirical data to prove He is there, they have a belief that, whether true or not, helps them lead their life in a way that makes them happy. Then again, the same could be said about atheists.



Internet

The almighty himself. Or just a painting of a guy with a flowing beard. You decide.

Katrina, Kanye, Bush, Penn & the GOP



Internet

Clockwise from top left: Actor/activist Sean Penn, rapper Kanye West, former FEMA director Michael Brown, and President George W. Bush. Each had his own special roll to play in the aftermath of Hurrican Katrina.

by Tracey Lindeman-Jarvis
The Link (Concordia)

MONTREAL (CUP) -- He said what everyone was thinking, but didn't have the nerve to actually say, and now recording artist Kanye West is feeling the heat for speaking up.

"George Bush doesn't care about black people," West said on an ABC Hurricane Katrina special last week, choking back emotion and tears. His comments were later edited out of the tape, but it was too late.

"I hate the way they portray us [black people] in the media. You see a black family, it says 'They're looting.' You see a white family, it says 'They're looking for food.' And you know, it's been five days [they've been waiting for federal help], because most of the people are black," West continued, before he was cut off by corporate bigwigs at the American Broadcasting Corporation.

His statements are now being dissected by the media on all sides of the political spectrum. Turns out the US is not the bastion of democracy and free speech it enjoys trumpeting itself as. You would think the media would have better things to discuss, like how the world can help victims of Hurricane Katrina.

Nevertheless, West spoke the truth. The US is still a racially divided country, no matter how many people immigrate each year, no matter how much of the population is not white.

The largest national disaster in the history of the United States has completely destroyed one of the most historical cities in the world, and George W. Bush can hardly make his way from his Texas vacation ranch. After all, Bush has hardly lifted a finger to help the country's black population — why should he start now?

It's unrealistic to think racism doesn't still exist in the Western world. There is just as much racism as there was 50 years ago — it's just less visible than it was then.

Racism has been ingrained in our institutions, our mass media, our transit systems, our city blocks, and our work force. It may be more subtle than half a century ago, but it has become even more institutionalized in the process.

Yet it seems many Americans have taken offense to charges of racism in the context of Hurricane Katrina. West's statement is controversial because it lifted the taboo on creating forums for frank discussion about the institutionalized racial discrimination present in the US.

Yesterday afternoon, I finally listened to what the mayor of New Orleans Ray Nagin had to say on Air America Radio. I could feel his anger and sadness through the Internet as he described the situation in his city.

He said that the evacuation of the people who stayed behind is taking too long, that the crews being sent to New Orleans are hardly enough. He said help is being sent from surrounding states, but that the city needs help on a national scale.

"They're thinking small, and this is a major, major, major deal," Nagin said. "Don't tell me 40,000 people are coming here. They're not here. It's too doggone late."

He estimated that 20,000 people were residing in the city's convention centre, before being evacuated over the weekend, surviving on the bare minimum of food and supplies. The sewage system is in shambles, people are becoming ill, and frustrated evacuees were becoming violent.

The damage done to New Orleans is much more than physical damage. The hurricane and the floods have ignited a complete societal breakdown. There is no law in the streets.

"They're showing all these reports of people looting and...they are doing that, but people are desperate and they're trying to find food and water — the majority of them," Nagin continued. "You got some knuckleheads out there and they are taking advantage of this lawless situation...but that's a small majority of the people."

As the interview went on, Nagin became more and more frustrated. "We authorized $8 billion to go to Iraq," he snapped. "You mean to tell me that a place where you probably have thousands of people that have died and thousands more who are dying every day, that we can't figure out a way to authorize the resources we need?"

The race card is an easy one to pick, and rightfully so. When there is such a clear divide in the class and race of people who have been successfully evacuated and those who remain behind, it's hard not to notice the difference between black and white, rich and poor.

Toward the end of the broadcast, the hosts of the show and the mayor of New Orleans could hardly keep it together.

"People are dying," Nagin said, his voice breaking. The hosts began to sob into their microphones. "They don't have homes. They don't have jobs. The city of New Orleans will never be the same. And it's time..." Unable to continue, Nagin abruptly hung up the phone and the broadcast ended.

This broadcast is available at www.airamericaradio.com

searching for its next President.

But wait! In the venerable tradition of George W. Bush and every other freedom-loving Republican, I'd like to bring up September 11th. Not the event, per se, but how it was handled and who wore the gloves. (Former) Mayor Rudolph Giuliani took charge of New York, a city with over 6 million people, at a time of unbelievable crisis. Apart from President Bush's own 9/11 experience, the GOP prospects with large-scale disaster experience are thin. But with the proper spin, photo-ops, and speeches, Giuliani could have a real shot at the Oval Office in 2008. The Republicans will have another four years - if they can stay out of the sights of their most deadly foe: celebrities.

Kanye West's comment that "George Bush doesn't care about black people" is just the latest in a string of celebrity blowback for another mishandled situation. Sean Penn, Oprah, John Travolta, and Chris Rock all recently made appearances in New Orleans and other decimated areas of Louisiana. Bush has fought them off before and he'll do it again. But because the dead bodies are Americans he won't be able to lie and cover for the people who did nothing to stop it.

From the Editor

by Brendan Doyle

I realize that it may be a bit late to comment on the ultimate failure represented by the US Government's response to Hurricane Katrina, so I'll twist it and instead discuss the potential impact on President Bush and the Republican Party.

Almost half of Americans (well, those who voted) and a large number of Canadians would like nothing more than to see the downfall of George W. Bush. From Cindy Sheehan - who camped out at Bush's Crawford, Texas ranch to protest the death of her son in Iraq - to the thousands of demonstrations held protesting the lack of WMDs, George Bush has always been able to shake off bad press - despite his frequent linguistic malfunctions. What he might not shake off is something like, say, an incredibly destructive natural disaster that hit a heavily populated area in a short amount of time.

But this natural disaster is not the same as a crying woman on TV or even the rated M for Mature coverage of the War in Iraq. It is more like the Tsunami. See, I don't even need to explain what "the Tsunami" is. It even gets capitalized. Why? Because when people see dead bodies, they start paying attention. And since the victims in Indonesia, Sri Lanka and the rest of southern Asia were largely non-American, I'm surprised the response at home to thousands of Americans dying hasn't resulted in more widespread outrage.

So where does this leave George Bush and the Republican Party? George is sitting pretty until the end of his term - we're stuck with him. But without a strong prospect for the 2008 election - Cheney has promised he won't run, Arnold isn't legal yet, and Jeb Bush still says no - the GOP could be SOL. Though the Democrats have nothing but Hilary (Condi isn't ready to take her on), the GOP is still

Bruns Staff Meetings:

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