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Published on Thursday, September 30, 2004 by [Arianna Huffington](#)

Bush's Toxic Campaign Mix: God, Country and Perpetual Fear

by Arianna Huffington

Leave no sucker punch unthrown. That seems to be the scorched earth mantra of the GOP campaign as it heads into the final rounds. But if you're thinking these guys can't go any lower, guess again. George Bush doesn't just have his head buried in the sand — he's let his integrity sink below sea level, as well.

The latest dirty blows are a contemptible one-two combination with which Team Bush has portrayed John Kerry as both the enemy of God and, if not exactly the ally of al-Qaida, then at least the terrorists' candidate of choice. To hear them tell it, a vote for Kerry is a vote against God and Country. Talk about hitting way, way below the belt.

Let's start with God.

It was revealed last week that the Republican Party has sent out an incendiary mass mailing warning that, if elected, "liberals" (and I'll give you one guess which presidential candidate that includes) will try to — I kid you not — ban the Bible.

The full-color flyer features a picture of the Bible with the word "Banned" stamped across it, and a photo of a man, on bended knee, placing a wedding band on the hand of another man, accompanied by the word "Allowed."

Clearly, Bush and the GOP have taken their Bible-thumping ways to a whole new level: Now they're using the Good Book to try to bash in the skulls of their opponents.

This "God is on our side" attack is all the more outrageous because it's not coming from some shadowy 527 committee that Bush can publicly — albeit disingenuously — distance himself from but, rather, from deep in the heart of the Bush-run Republican National Committee. The president's team has undoubtedly "approved this message."

They've also used the official [Georgewbush.com](#) campaign website to attack Kerry, a Catholic, as being "Wrong for Catholics", while an RNC website, [KerryWrongForCatholics.com](#), slams him for not being loyal enough to the Pope. We've certainly come a long way since another JFK had to assure voters in 1960 that he wouldn't take orders from the Vatican.

The idea that Kerry and the Democrats are anti-Bible and that Bush has a hot line to The Man Upstairs is both offensive and patently absurd. One look at the latest statistics showing the rise in the number of Americans living in poverty proves that Republicans — who, contrary to their claims, do not hold a copyright on the Bible — have grotesquely perverted its core teachings.

As Rev. Jim Wallis, the editor of *Sojourners* magazine, told me: "It's a bitter irony: these people accuse Democrats of wanting to ban the Bible, then proceed to utterly ignore the vast majority of its contents when it comes to questions of social justice, war and peace, and protecting the environment."

Perhaps the holy rollers in the Bush camp should crack open a Bible and see what it has to say about caring for the poor (Matthew 25:40), caring for the Earth (Genesis 2:15), and caring for human rights (Genesis 1:27). I've got a hunch Jesus wouldn't be too thrilled with Bush's first term.

And while they're acquainting themselves with the Book they purport to defend, the Bushies might also want to have a look at John 8:32 to see what it has to say about the moral imperative of telling the truth. Instead, they are doing everything in their power to convince nervous voters that a vote for John Kerry is a vote for another 9/11. It's the latest vile twist in the Bush-Cheney "all fear, all the time" campaign strategy, and the last desperate gasp of an administration utterly clueless about how to actually win the war on terror.

The fear-mongering has been relentless and revolting — bottoming out with a sewer-level attack ad put together by a 527 largely financed by a pair of longtime Bush-backers. The TV spot shows pictures of Osama bin Laden, 9/11 hijacker Mohammed Atta, the Chechen school murderers, and the Madrid train bombings and asks: "These people want to kill us. Would you trust Kerry up against these fanatic killers?"

Somewhere — and I don't think it's heaven — Lee Atwater is smiling.

And lest you think this line of attack doesn't have the Karl Rove seal of approval, just look at the long line of Bush surrogates lining up to parrot the "al-Qaida wants Kerry to win" talking point — including Sen. Orrin Hatch, the increasingly embarrassing House Speaker Dennis Hastert, Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage, and the hatchet-man-in-chief, Dick Cheney. They've all been echoing Hatch's claim that terrorists "are going to throw everything they can between now and the election to try and elect Kerry."

What's next, a photo of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi sporting a Kerry-Edwards campaign button?

This "terrorists for Kerry" routine is as laughable as it is loathsome. Why in the world would the terrorists want to get rid of George Bush? He is their dream president, after all: a man who has alienated our allies, isolated us and united the Muslim world against us.

The president's preemptive invasion of Iraq has been such a boon to al-Qaida that the British ambassador to Italy called him the terrorist organization's "best recruiting sergeant." Even Bush's good buddy, Pakistani President Musharraf (a guy who can't afford to share W's delusions when it comes to matters of security), said last week that the war in Iraq has made the world "more dangerous" and "further complicated" the war on terror.

Of course, the spinmeisters in the Bush camp would rather you never hear any of this, which is why they've been so quick to smear as unpatriotic anyone painting a less than rosy picture of Iraq — going so far as to imply that Kerry, by merely questioning the president's policies, has given aid and comfort to our enemies.

What a load of gutless garbage. As Thomas Jefferson made clear, "Dissent is the highest form of patriotism." But Bush can't seem to grasp that this country is too strong to be endangered by the truth — and that, indeed, hiding the truth, the hallmark of his administration, is what is making us weaker and less secure.

I know the president hates to read, but with the debates looming, maybe he should dust off his library card and brush up on his American history. And on the Bible.

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