

## ARE "BRIGHTS" REALLY BRIGHT?

(Author's note: I began this article three years ago then set it aside and ultimately forgot about it. Recently, I found the article and wondered if the movement was still alive. It most certainly is. Their website has been redesigned and greatly expanded. A chapter in Missouri is very active. Membership has grown. I suspect the organization, while getting a slower start than they had hoped, will continue to grow and will one day in the not too distant future be a force to be reckoned with as they seek to push their agenda against faith based religions.)

Political and social movements come and go. Some have had far reaching effects for centuries, if not millennia. Others can be known only from reading history books. Some such as Christianity are good, while others such as Rationalism are bad. Unfortunately, a new bad movement has been born. Due to the social climate in the world, and in the United States in particular, I fear this movement will not die prematurely. This movement calls itself *Brights*.

In many respects the movement is not philosophically new. Indeed, many tenets of the eighteenth century philosophy of Rationalism are present. Much of Secular Humanism is integral to the beliefs of this movement, as are the beliefs of Atheism and Agnosticism. Herein lays the problem. The movement is intended to be an umbrella movement. The stated purpose of *Brights* is for these separate, albeit allied, groups to coalesce under this one name, with the goal of gaining a broad base of acceptance in society. They even seek a special status with regards to civil rights for social and political gain, as will be discussed more below. We should take note of these people because their gain will be at our expense.

*Brights* have a website ([www.the-brights.net](http://www.the-brights.net)) where one can read their beliefs, goals and purpose. On the home page of their site, as published in 2003, one can read how they define a "Bright":

**A Bright's worldview is free of supernatural and mystical elements.**

**The ethics and actions of a Bright are based on a naturalistic worldview.**

On the same page the reason for their movement is given:

**Currently the naturalistic worldview is insufficiently expressed within most cultures.**

**The purpose of this movement is to form an umbrella Internet constituency of Brights having social and political recognition and power.**

**The simple noun *Bright* gathers under the same umbrella a great diversity of persons who have a naturalistic worldview. Under this broad umbrella these people, as *Brights*, can gain social and political influence in a society infused with supernaturalism.**

The redesigned website, that you can access today, says many of the same things but its rhetoric is toned down and requires more hyper-linking to find the same information.

The movement was founded in 2003 by a Sacramento, California couple, Paul Geisert and his wife Mynga Futrell. How this movement began is telling as to its real purpose that is clearly different from its above stated purpose.

Geisert in a *Sacramento Bee* newspaper interview published July 23, 2003, spoke of the march on Washington D.C., by Atheists, in November 2002. They named their march "Godless Americans March on Washington." Geisert said the name of the march was "The worst name I've heard." He added, "I hated the name so much that I didn't want to go." He went anyway, but became motivated to come up with a better term for non-religious people. He sought a term that did not carry the stigma of "godless" and "atheist." Geisert came up with the term "bright."

The Atheist Alliance International held a convention in Tampa, Florida in April 2003. According to an interview with Geisert published by the *St. Petersburg Times* newspaper, July 20, 2003, he used this venue to go public with both the term "*Brights*" and his movement. His presentation was well received. Notice the statement made about the presentation, by a convention attendee who when interviewed said "The word 'bright' is new. It worked for the gay community to call themselves gay instead of homosexual. It worked for them, maybe it'll work for us."

This is the particular part of the movement that is so insidious. It is not their beliefs. No, they have existed for centuries. It is the organizing of these beliefs under a common name that is vague at best and misleading at worst. This is a stated purpose of the "*Brights*."

On their 2003 website in "The Movement" section they write about using this word as a noun to change its conventional usage. They write.

**What we have learned from the term "gay"—which took on new meaning in the vernacular within less than two decades—is that society can indeed learn to give a different connotation to an existing term.**

This information has been removed from their redesigned site.

You will repeatedly read in their literature that they use the word *Bright* as a noun. Nevertheless the adjectival usage of the term is implied (i.e. that they are bright people while believers in God are something less). An article in the British online newspaper

*The Guardian Unlimited*, dated June 21, 2003, prints a portion of a conversation between the author, a British atheist, Richard Dawkins who now adopts the moniker *Bright*, and Geisert and Futrell. The three are discussing the term *Bright*. As Geisert and Futrell define the term, Dawkins questions them.

"You mean a bright is an atheist?"

"Well some brights are happy to call themselves atheists. Some brights call themselves agnostics. Some call themselves humanists, some free thinkers. But all brights have a world view that is free of supernaturalism and mysticism."

"Oh, I get it. It's a bit like 'gay'. So, what's the opposite of a bright? What would you call a religious person?"

"What would you suggest?"

Note the clear meaning implied in their use of the term *Bright*. This explanation of their use of the word does not appear in any of their official online literature. Consider their definition of the term in their redesigned site, "...This new and different "bright" is a term for a person or persons; thus, a noun in and of itself. The defining attribute of the person (a Bright) is *not* the former adjectival meanings. Rather it is this: *possessing a worldview that is naturalistic...We hope that the newly coined "bright" will serve the purpose of indicating a person or persons whose worldview is naturalistic, no more, no less.*

This revised definition is an attempt to obscure their real purpose in choosing the term. Note what they state in their revised site's Reason and Purpose, "**Under the broad umbrella of the naturalistic worldview, the constituency of Brights can undertake social and civic actions designed to influence a society otherwise permeated with supernaturalism.**"

The fact is that while they want to be treated just as the other religions, they claim that they are not a religion and just want to be given respect. Yet their own site states that they seek civic and social change. In effect, just like the "gays" they copied when coining the term for their movement, they will move from seeking social acceptance to becoming a special interest group seeking social and political power at the expense of faith based religion and Christianity in particular.

They proudly state that humanists are included and accepted as *Brights*. I invite you to visit the website of the American Humanist Organization, [www.americanhumanist.org/humanism](http://www.americanhumanist.org/humanism). There you will find three Humanist Manifestos, the first printed in 1933, the second in 1973 and the third, while listing no print date, does list a 2003 copyright. In the latter part of Section 13 of the first manifesto you will find, **Certainly religious institutions, their ritualistic forms, ecclesiastical methods, and communal activities must be reconstituted as rapidly as experience allows, in order to function effectively in the modern**

world. The following statement is found in the second manifesto, *Salvationism*, based on mere affirmation, still appears as harmful, diverting people with false hopes of heaven hereafter.

The website of the *Brights* claim as members ...*Jews, Catholics, Quakers, Episcopalians...even one ex-Benedictine monk*. This last point is not to malign these specific groups, in particular, rather to emphasize the ability of this organization to co-opt people, who by their admitted particular religious affiliation, claim to believe in the very God their other *Bright* colleagues deny.

The *Brights* movement is not some innocuous effort by atheists and agnostics to be accepted by a majority faith based society in America. They want to neuter if not eliminate religion from this country. Such people are foretold in the Bible, "*But these, as creatures without reason, born mere animals to be taken and destroyed, railing in matters whereof they are ignorant, shall in their destroying surely be destroyed,*" 2 Peter 2:12.

While *Brights* are a serious organization not to be taken lightly, an overriding question remains. Are these *Brights* really all that bright? Should the adjective give way to the noun? "*The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God . They are corrupt, they have done abominable works; there is none that doeth good.*" Psalm 14:1. You decide.