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June 21, 2009: "Netroots Nation Dives into Inanity."

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Title: "Netroots Nation Dives into Inanity."

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6/21/2009--The above quote is from science blogger PZ Myers describing the panel I will be participating in at the August convention in Pittsburgh: A New Progressive Vision for Church and State: How I Learned to Accept "Under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance and Stop Losing Elections. When Fred Clarkson, the well-known journalist and author announced that he was participating, the proposal for the subject got attention. Fred, who was candid with me in indicating he was participating primarily to voice objections (other participants are as well), has posted some of the controversy on the Daily Kos:

<http://www.dailykos.com/storyonly/2009/6/19/744453/-PrePie-fighting-Netroots-NationNone>

of this comes as any surprise to me. I just hope people will remember two things. First, the words "under God" are in the Pledge of Allegiance. I did not put them there. No court will take them out. No national politician will support taking the words out. If you think gun control is a losing issue, or legalization of marijuana, or gay marriage, try drumming up support for taking on God. I am proposing a reinterpretation of religious language in which "God" stands as a symbol for a quite naturalistic understanding of reality and the Ten Commandments stands as the promise of universal human rights. The issue for me is relativism and nihilism, which I oppose, but which many secularists also oppose. To put this another way, why isn't the Declaration of Independence unconstitutional? Answer, because grounding human rights in a Creator is a political assertion about rights, not a theological assertion about a Creator-God. Second, for all the controversy, secularists have to be able to live actual lives. This means thinking about the very same things that religious believers think about. I tried to capture that in my book, *Hallowed Secularism*. Reverence is a human term, not a religious one.