



THE SECULAR CIRCULAR

Newsletter of the Humanist Society of Santa Barbara

www.SBHumanists.org

MAY 2012

May Program

Why the Term "Academic Freedom" is a Fraud (It's a Disguise for "Creationism")

Professor Barbara Forrest

Barbara Forrest's testimony was called "among the most compelling, dramatic and thorough" in the 2005 *Kitzmiller v. Dover* [Pennsylvania] *School District* trial, the first challenge in federal courts against a school district that mandated the teaching of intelligent design. Her opponents continually fought to keep her from testifying, using "unusually personal and vituperative terms".

Professor Forrest has taught Philosophy at Southeastern Louisiana University since 1988. She serves on the board of directors of the National Center for Science Education (NCSE), on the board of trustees of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, and is a member of the New Orleans Secular Humanist Association.

She co-authored *Creationism's Trojan Horse: The Wedge of Intelligent Design*, about the origins of intelligent design and the Discovery Institute's *Wedge Design*, a strategy to replace naturalism and evolution with a science "consonant with Christian convictions."



Barbara Forrest's appearance at HSSB is sponsored by **Ken Tucker**, **Judy Fontana**, and **Philip Holland**.

When: Saturday, May 19th, 2012. Coffee/tea at 2:30 pm, program begins at 3:00 pm.

Where: Fe Bland Auditorium, Santa Barbara City College

Fee: Optional donation: \$2 for members, \$5 for non-members

Dining: **Endless Summer** at the harbor, a hop, skip and a jump down the hill from City College. Buffet with herbed chicken or enchiladas, beans, rice, salad and bread for \$22, tax and gratuity included. Drinks extra. Please email your reservations to: Activities@santabarbarahumanists.org.

For more information: 769-HSSB (769-4772)

Welcome New Members!

David Echols, Santa Barbara
David & Judy Flattery, Santa Barbara
Jacky Lopez, Santa Barbara
Bob Molinari, Santa Barbara

HSSB Book Club Marty Shapiro

First, I want to report that last month's Book Club selection, Robert Edsel's *The Monuments Men - Allied Heroes, Nazi Thieves, and the Greatest Treasure Hunt in History* lived up to its sweeping title. World War II came vividly to life, from Normandy to Berlin. The book named names, including both the actual "monuments men" (e.g. New York City cultural icon Lincoln Kerstein) and the evil-hearted Nazi cohorts (too many and too well-known to merit mention here). Probably the most striking aspect of the story, which all our group commented on, was the extreme disparity between the artistic exquisiteness of the "monuments" they were rescuing for posterity, and the lowly "boot camp" living conditions that many of the monuments men had to suffer. An unforgettable, monumental read.

Now for next month's selection. Question: When is Fukuyama not the name of a Japanese writer - or politician - or city? Answer: When it's Francis Fukuyama, the acclaimed American political theory scholar with several best-sellers to his name. His latest book, *The Origins of Political Order*, has received rave reviews. The book appears to tell the amazing tale of how men (and women) have hung together from pre- pre-historic times through the ages, and over the widespread face of the earth.

When: Wednesday, May 16, 1:30 p.m.
 Where: at my home, Casa Shapiro, 249 Savona Ave., Goleta. It's remote, beyond Costco and DP High School, but the streets are all paved. Give me a call (968-0478) if you need directions.

Humanist Support Group Claudia Solé

As the new (and first Humanist) "Spiritual Care Volunteer" at Cottage Hospital, I now have a photo ID badge, a parking sticker and a list of patients to visit. I attended a lunch meeting with others in that category and was surprised to find there are more than twenty not including the ordained ministers. Still, mostly religious and they are still looking for more so anyone from our Society is welcome to apply.

After attending an initial Volunteer Introductory Meeting which they hold periodically, and filling out certain forms, I went straight into apprenticeship which consisted of "shadowing" a minister who is also a volunteer. Little by little I put in my occasional two cents and was reported to be good to go. My last meeting was with the head of the department, Pam Washburn, who asked me (final test) what I would do if a patient asked me to pray with them and I answered to her satisfaction. Often, a patient is not there or is sleeping so the length of the list is misleading and should not scare one. It all went smoothly and I'm feeling comfortable and satisfied with the work.

I spent some time last month with **Micky Stern**. She was no longer conscious but I laid my hand on her and spoke to her with my thoughts and reassurance. Hearing is the last sense to leave us and her breathing changed a little as if to acknowledge my presence. She was at peace and I know will stay in our minds.

Upcoming Club Activities Judy Fontana

Katherine Stewart of Good News Club fame has agreed to come talk to us in July, date and time to be arranged.

Book Exchange. Webmaster **Wayne Bechman** is working on a web page, probably a Facebook page for people to list books they are willing to exchange. Next opportunity for book

sale/exchange will be at the Summer Solstice barbeque.

First salon meeting will be on May 7 at **Allen Zimmer's**, 421 E. Figueroa St., at 7pm. Anyone interested in attending please contact me at Activities@santabarbarahumanists.org.

A reminder that the June meeting is a barbeque at Stowe Park. Cheers!

A Humanist Responds to the “War on Women” Marian Shapiro, MSW

As Humanists, I assume most of us believe in a strict separation of Church and State. For a significant number of colonists who came here in the late 16th and 17th century, this separation was very important, because most European countries then had state religions. Germany was Lutheran, France was Catholic, England was Anglican, etc. The First Amendment's establishment clause reflects the founders' desires not to have government in the states linked to a religion or enforcing religious doctrine.

Women only gained the right to vote in 1920, but today we are having to fight the religious right for our right to birth control and abortion. AGAIN! Oral contraceptives went on the market in 1960, the year I graduated from high school. Two Supreme Court decisions (*Griswold vs. Connecticut*, 1965; *Eisenstadt vs. Baird* 1972) stated that states could not prohibit the use of birth control due to a right to privacy.

When The Affordable Health Care Act, also known as Obamacare, called for contraception to be covered by health insurance policies with no copay,

every Republican Presidential candidate opposed it. Even though 98% of Catholic women use oral contraceptives, the Catholic Bishops strongly objected to Catholic employers having to provide contraception. Candidate Rick Santorum said contraception was wrong because people should only be having sex when they want children!!!

A double standard is nothing new to women. Viagra went on the market in 1998 and was quickly the best selling drug of all time. It was always covered by health insurance, whereas women are still fighting to have birth control covered. An AP story on 3/17/2012 discussed a Republican-proposed Arizona bill “which would allow all employers with religious and moral objections to birth control to

refuse to provide coverage for that purpose through their health plans.” The bill has already been approved by the Arizona House and a Senate committee and is supported by Catholic Bishops. In the national arena, the **Blunt Amendment** similarly allows employers to refuse coverage of any health care service based on “undefined religious beliefs or moral objections.” **Virginia's forced trans-vaginal ultrasound bill** (later amended to forced trans-abdominal) dictates that a woman undergo this medically unnecessary procedure at least 24 hours before having an abortion. This is one more tactic used by anti-choice politicians to punish women



Marian Shapiro

requesting abortion. Legislatures in several Republican-controlled states (TX, WI, IN, KS, NC) have defunded Planned Parenthood, which provides basic medical care for low-income women. I was shocked to hear Sen. Jon Kyle (R. AZ) say that 90% of what Planned Parenthood does is abortion. Having worked for Planned Parenthood for 20 years, I know that abortion services account for only 3% of PP services. Kyle's office had to back down from his statement, saying that the Senator's comment "was not intended to be a factual statement." WTF!

When law student Sandra Fluke testified that contraceptive coverage is important to college students, conservative talk show host Rush Limbaugh called her a “slut,” claiming she wants to have “so much sex” that she’s asking taxpayers to pay for it. Limbaugh is not only insulting to women, he is showing his ignorance about the pill. A 28-day pack of pills costs the same whether you have sex once a month or once a day. He’s thinking of Oxycontin. I say, Thank you Ms Fluke for testifying about students’ needs, and thanks to all who use contraception, for taking responsibility and not having unwanted pregnancies. Those cost a lot more than condoms and pills.

As a humanist, I think this War on Women is alarming. Whether you are a Republican, Democrat or Independent, please let candidates know that you care about how they treat women. Candidates who support women’s rights need our help in this election. Call me if you want to volunteer, (968-0478).

In closing, I was happy to see the editor of *Humanists Network News* say: "We've already decided on the big issues—church and state should be separate, women should have full reproductive access, gay marriage should be recognized in all 50 states—and your American Humanist Association continues to work tirelessly to achieve these goals."

HSSB Elections

Ballots for the HSSB 2012 election have been mailed out to all members. Next year’s Board will be made up of a President, Secretary, Treasurer and eight at-large members. The nominees are: **Dick Cousineau**, President, **Diane Krohn**, Secretary, **Richard Martin**, Treasurer, and **Wayne Beckman, Judy Fontana, Helen Gordon, Jean Olsen, Roger Schlueter, Claudia Solé, Nancy Wahl**, and **Mary Wilk**, members at-large.

The ballot provides space for up to three write-in votes, but do not vote for more than eleven members. Your ballot must be received by May 31.

Richard Dawkins in Santa Barbara

Many HSSB members were in attendance April 4 to hear Richard Dawkins speak to a large audience from UCSB and the community that filled Campbell Hall (capacity 860). The lecture, organized by the UCSB Center for Evolutionary Psychology and titled "Darwin’s Five Bridges", outlined the incremental development of the theory of evolution during the 19th century by Darwin and his contemporaries. A report on the lecture can be found at <http://www.independent.com/news/2012/apr/06/biologist-and-atheist-richard-dawkins-charles-darw/>

HSSB member **Michelle Rhea** reports here on the private reception held at her home following the lecture:

I was honored to host the fundraising reception for Richard Dawkins after his UCSB lecture, "Darwin’s Five Bridges". My friend Anita Barbara was here from Texas to help get things ready and share hosting duties. Sean Faircloth also attended along with about 15 guests. After an hour or so of mingling, dining on vegan appetizers, and partaking of wine, beer, and sparkling water, we all gathered in the living room to listen to Sean and Richard speak to the group about the Richard Dawkins Foundation for Reason and Science, followed by much scintillating discussion which lasted until people began to disperse around 11 pm. Contrary to what some say about Dawkins, I found him to be warm, charming, and endearing, as well as, of course, brilliant.

Great Christina: Angry Atheist Jim Balter

Greta Christina, blogger, author, and mostly happy atheist who has written a book called *Why Are You Atheists So Angry? 99 Things That Piss Off the Godless*, delighted our humanist audience with her wit, intellect, careful reasoning, and explanation of what makes her angry about religion.

In the last few years the atheist movement has moved into overdrive; atheists are more vocal, organized, and far less apologetic, and many non-atheists find atheists to be angry and seem baffled by that anger. Greta addressed whether the perception of "new atheists" as an angry movement is valid, why many atheists are angry, whether the anger is valid, and whether it helps or hinders the movement.

Atheists are seen as angry, bigoted, and forcing their beliefs on people simply for expressing their views or even just for existing. For instance, bus ads in Pennsylvania that merely had the word "Atheists" and a URL were rejected as being too controversial, as were the HSSB's own ads saying "You can be good without God". While some atheists are angry some of the time, the perception of them as being in a constant state of rage is like thinking that "Roger Ebert spends all of his time at the movies."

People asking why atheists are angry often come up with dime store psychology answers—you're morally rebellious, or feel mistreated by God. But actually atheists have many legitimate reasons to be angry about religion. Greta could write an entire book; in fact she did, and that still barely scratches the surface. As she enumerated some of the things that make her angry, the room largely hushed, with occasional gasps at the horrors, and chuckles at the absurdity of religion posing as a moral force. Reasons such as institutionalized discrimination against atheists; attacks on the teaching of evolution and other science; the trial of Galileo; opposition to the use of condoms resulting in AIDS deaths; terrorizing of children with the threat of

eternal torture; 9/11; female genital mutilation and numerous other attacks on women and gays and sexuality and children; the hateful comments she receives on her blog when she writes about atheists and anger; and on and on, a litany of the cruelty and dishonesty from the religious. Most of all, Greta gets angry when believers ask atheists why they're so angry.



Greta Christina

Photo: Robert Bernstein

Atheists are diverse in many ways, especially in their attitudes toward religion. Some would be happy to coexist with religion if religion would coexist with them, while others believe that the very nature of religion makes coexistence difficult or even impossible and that religion is, by its nature, responsible for, or at least is a major factor in, the harm done in its name.

Greta is in the latter camp and she offers an explanation of what is unique about religion, beyond other sources of human harm: religion is a belief in supernatural forces and entities—things that are undetectable by any natural means ... and as such, it has no reality check; it is uniquely armored against criticism and self-correction. Political ideologies must eventually pony up, but with religion the proof is not in the pudding but in invisible beings and inaudible voices.

Greta discussed the pros and cons of anger for the atheist movement. Anger can polarize and it can even lead to violence, but it is also how we know that things are not OK. Anger has driven the LGBT, environmental, civil rights, and every other major social change movement in history. Greta ended her talk with telling quotes from Martin Luther King Jr. and Gandhi about anger as "a transforming force" that, "controlled can be transmitted into a power that can move the world".

You can hear Greta's entire talk at <http://santabarbarahumanists.org/Calendar/calendar.html>, and read many more of her thoughts on her blog at <http://freethoughtblogs.com/greta/>.

**Famous Humanists: Clarence
Darrow (1857-1938)
Dick Cousineau**

"I don't believe in God for the same reason I don't believe in Mother Goose", echoes down the decades of this man's creed, in and out of the courtroom. From 1887, when he was 30, until his death at 81, Clarence Darrow was a symbol of fearless rebellion against injustice and oppression of the mind.

Many of us know of his fight for John Scopes in Dayton, Tennessee in 1925 for "the crime of teaching the truth". When the local judge refused Darrow's request to bring science into the trial, he changed tactics and put the prosecuting attorney, William Jennings Bryan, on the stand to defend his biblical expertise. Just as our speaker this month, Barbara Forrest, did 80 years later in Judge John E. Jones III courtroom in *Kitzmilller vs. Dover Area School District*, Darrow destroyed the fundamentalist biblical theory of ignorance and superstition and seated science in the chair of honesty and intelligence.

Long before he took on Bryan he had defended Eugene Debs and other union strikers in the Haymarket Riots, had the death penalty for Loeb and Leopold reduced to Life, and changed the laws in Detroit that kept blacks from owning property. Like his father, Amirus Darrow (a Unitarian Minister), Clarence was a Humanist who disbelieved in spirituality, gods, devils, heavens, hells and made it his life's work to confront religious fanaticism wherever found. He was a man with infinite pity and mercy for the poor, the oppressed, and the weak of all races, colors and creeds; in other words: all humankind.

Some of his most famous quotes;

-I am an agnostic because I trust my reason, not because it is the greatest that ever lived but because it is the best I have.

-Can anyone with intelligence really believe a snake spoke to Eve? To believe such nonsense is not god-worship but is ignorance-worship.

-The purpose of a man is like the purpose of a Pollywog: to wiggle along as long as he can without dying, and to hang on to life until death takes him.

-The origin of the absurd idea of immortal life is easy to discover; it is kept alive by hope and fear, by childish faith, and by cowardice.

-The constant cries and pleadings of the ages have brought back no answering sound to prove that death is anything but death.

-Every man knows when his life began.....If I did not exist in the past why should I, exist in the future?

**Americans Want Less Religion in
Politics
Reprinted from *Church & State*, Atheists
United for Separation of Church and State
May, 2012**

A new survey has found that a record number of Americans think there is too much religion in politics.

According to the Pew Forum On Religion & Public Life, 38% of poll respondents said politicians have spent too much time expressing their religious faith and praying. That's up from 2010, when 29% of Americans took that viewpoint.

"The number saying there has been too much religious talk from political leaders," the research agency said, "now stands at its highest point since the Pew Research Center began asking the question more than a decade ago."

The survey, which was released March 21, even found that there has been an increase in this sentiment across party lines. The biggest spike came from people who identify as Democrats, 46% of whom said politicians talk too much about faith (up from 32% in 2010). Dissatisfaction is also

growing among people who identify as Republicans, 24% of whom said candidates spend too much time on religion. In 2001, only 8% of Republicans had the same concern.

Among those who identify as Independent, a coveted demographic for both political parties, 42% said politicians talk too much about religion, a 6% increase from 2010. (In 2001, only 14% of Independents thought there was too much emphasis on religion.)

The Religious Right's role in the Republican Party remains highly controversial. Fifty-one percent of poll respondents said religious conservatives have too much control over the GOP. Fifty-seven percent of Independents and 62% of Democrats take that perspective; 34% of Republicans agree.

"Candidates should be discussing the myriad problems facing this country, not how often they pray," said Atheists United Communications Associate Simon Brown, in a "Wall of Separation" blog post. "What people really want is a stable economy, more jobs and a better life for themselves and their families. Politicians who spend most of their time talking about how often they pray aren't doing much to deliver any of those things."

[The entire Pew Research report can be found at <http://www.pewforum.org/>.]

FFRF Advertises in New York Times

In February, Annie Laurie Gaylor, co-President and co-Founder of Freedom From Religion Foundation published an open letter to 'liberal' and 'nominal' Roman Catholics entitled "It's time to quit the Catholic Church". Members of FFRF suggested it be printed as a full-page ad in the New York Times. So a campaign was carried out to raise the funds needed and within one week \$52,000 was pledged, and the ad (see page 12) appeared on Friday, March 9th.

Of course, there was immediate reaction to the ad. Here are some of the comments, in brief:

The Catholic League

<http://www.catholicleague.org/frontal-assault-on-catholicism/>

"Frontal Assault on Catholicism

"Never has there been a more vicious anti-Catholic advertisement in a prominent American newspaper than the one in today's New York Times by Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF). The demonization of Catholicism is palpable."

America, the National Catholic Weekly

http://www.americamagazine.org/blog/entry.cfm?entry_id=4981

"Whatever one thinks of this ad, it seems to mark a particular moment in the unfolding history of the Catholic Church in the United States. That a full-page ad in one of the most influential newspapers in the country would ask members of a major religious group to walk away from that group is an extraordinary occurrence."

Enlightened Catholicism

<http://enlightenedcatholicism-colkoch.blogspot.com/2012/03/its-more-complicated-than-freedom-from.html>

"You make some valid points, but the real problem globally is lack of education for women. Give women enough education and even the big bad meanies in the Catholic Church can not sway a woman's decision to make her own choices about her reproductive life. The big bad meanies just haven't accepted the fact that once women reach a certain understanding there is no going back to their thought control."

OBSERVING SUCCULENTS

It is their weight that pulls them to the ground
 From the flower box,
 And makes an explosion of desert flower for me
 In the storm.
 I don't doubt succulents respond to water,
 Their green turns pink.
 The agnostic in me appreciates uncommon
 Strength,
 A single plant pushing out and regenerating

As fast as fungus.
 Blue tinges in the green leaf hold thick juice
 Like a woman ready for orgasm.
 If you ask me I'll tell you I believe in nothing,
 The opposite of not believing in something.
 I can smell freesias without explaining
 Their unnatural sweetness,
 Taste avocados' subtle ecstasy without needing
 Salt or onion,
 Take in the blue-green of a man's eyes
 Without opening my legs to him.
 Imagine the black mirror of a dolphin's back
 Never stroked in her alien bed.
 I want no preconceived notions to soften my early
 regret,
 No reason to wash away the mud
 On my bare toes as I stand in the rain
 Observing succulents.
 I rarely look at the half-turned
 Daytime moon.
 For me, pockets of fog caught in the low
 mountains
 Are as far from the earth as I go.
 There is so much to touch here.

~ by ellen

Ellen teaches creative writing for Emeritus College, a division of Santa Monica College. She has been published in *The Los Angeles Times*, *Slant*, *Mudfish*, *Slipstream*, *ACM*, *Coe Review* and others. Her poetry book, *The Gynecic Papers*, deals primarily with women's issues. Ellen is also an artist; she was profiled in the *LA Times* as a poet and artist. "Observing Succulents" was published in *Above Us Only Sky*, *Atheist Poetry, Volume Two*, Incarnate Muse Press, 2008.

Can God and Science Co-Exist?

Ray Stone

The Washington Post runs a forum on Religion and Politics entitled "On Faith". Last May 16, the following item was posted.

"Famed physicist Stephen Hawking said in an interview with the UK Guardian published Monday that he rejects the idea of heaven,

calling it a 'fairy story' for people afraid to die. Hawking also wrote in his 2010 book *The Grand Design* that he believes God was not 'necessary' for the creation of the universe and that 'spontaneous creation,' instead explains existence. Hawking seems confident in his conclusion about God, but then again so do believers. Who is right? Can God and science co-exist?"

Within a few days over 250 responses were received at which time the discussion was closed. Here are a few brief excerpts of the dialogue, from "experts" on both sides of the question. To read the entire dialogue, [click here](#).

Nicholas T. Wright Anglican Bishop of Durham, England

It's depressing to see Stephen Hawking, one of the most brilliant minds in his field, trying to speak as an expert on things he sadly seems to know rather less about than many averagely intelligent Christians. Of course there are people who think of 'heaven' as a kind of pie-in-the-sky dream of an afterlife to make the thought of dying less awful. No doubt that's a problem as old as the human race. But in the Bible 'heaven' isn't 'the place where people go when they die.' In the Bible heaven is God's space while earth (or, if you like, 'the cosmos' or 'creation') is our space. And the Bible makes it clear that the two overlap and interlock. For the ancient Jews, the place where this happened was the temple; for the Christians, the place where this happened was Jesus himself, and then, astonishingly, the persons of Christians because they, too, were 'temples' of God's own spirit.....

Muqtedar Khan Professor, University of Delaware, Muslim Intellectual

.....Over 800 years ago, the great Islamic philosopher and jurist, Ibn Rushd, known in the West as Averroes, not only argued that science and religion were compatible but insisted that the Islamic Shariah mandated the scientific study of the

universe as part of the divine law. In an exceptional monograph, *Fasl Al Maqaal* (the decisive Treatise), Ibn Rushd went even further, he argued that the methods of logical reasoning that Islamic jurists employed in understanding the Shariah, the divine law, were the same as those employed by philosophers to understand the creation and through this get a glimpse of the Creator.....

.....Science and shariah are surely compatible, but unfortunately at present the believer and science find it hard to co-exist.

Chris Stedman
Interfaith and Community Service Fellow for the Humanist Chaplaincy at Harvard

..... Like Hawking, I suspect there probably is no life following this one. But I don't really care – life in the here and now demands too much of my attention to give it much thought.....

Ronald Rychlak
Professor, Univ. of Mississippi School of Law

Faith and reason work together.

The foundation of the Catholic faith lies in the revealed truths that it teaches about God, man, and the world. There is another order of truths, however, known not by divine revelation but by observation and reason. Truly educated Catholics are able to integrate these different kinds of knowledge and keep them in proper balance and perspective. In other words, they see that there is a role for both faith and reason.

Pope Benedict XVI has often spoken of the importance of faith combined with reason and the inadequacy of either of them alone. This idea of the complementary nature of faith and reason conflicts with the thoughts of many Western intellectuals who feel the need to jettison any reference to God, revelation, or final causality. In doing this, they frequently trivialize faith and offer solutions that are no more satisfying than those they reject.....

Clayton Christensen
Architect, professor, LDS church leader

Stephen Hawking has joined with some other interesting people such as Richard Dawkins, who assert that the concepts of God and Heaven are “fairy stories” or worse. Hawking concludes that because he hasn't seen something that is physical; hasn't experienced a force; or hasn't been able to model it mathematically, that it must not be real.....

It is disappointing that a scientist of Hawking's repute would take a position that because he hasn't personally seen or experienced God, that God is not necessary or does not exist.....

Father Frank Pavone
Catholic priest, activist

Not only can God and science co-exist, but neither can be properly understood if they are seen as mutually exclusive. God is the source of all reason, all truth. Science is based on the observation of the very things God has created – not only the material things, but the laws and dynamics by which they operate.

Barry Lynn
Minister, lawyer, Executive Director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State.

Can God and science co-exist? The answer is yes! But first, both sides have to realize something: Religion and science need not be enemies. Both are ways of understanding the world – but from different perspectives. Science seeks to tell us how we got here. Religion (and philosophy) offer possible answers for why we're here.

John Shelby Spong
Former Bishop, Episcopal Diocese of Newark

Hawking seems confident in his conclusion about God, but then again so do believers. Who is right? Can God and science co-exist? Who is right? Neither.

Of course there is no heaven and no hell, if one thinks of these as places and both Professor Hawking and the fundamentalists both do so. Professor Hawking is rejecting a fundamentalist definition that is a fairy tale. I reject it too.

God is also not necessary for the creation of the world, if God is thought of as a supernatural being who lives above the sky. All this debate reveals is the incredible, ill-informed and childlike quality of public theological debate.

David Wolpe
Rabbi of Sinai Temple in Los Angeles

.....Can science and religion coexist? Of course they can if each side is willing to practice a little epistemological humility. Science is a tool for discovering truths about physical reality. As our most powerful tool, it is a natural—though mistaken—leap of logic to suppose that the things to which this tool applies are the only things that really exist. Since science cannot investigate an afterlife, there must not be one. Since Yuri Gagarin returning from his orbit around the earth proudly announced that he did not see God, there must not be one. The self-evident silliness of this premise does not seem to shake it loose in the minds of the true non-believers.....

.....Stephen Hawking is an estimable scientist and no doubt an admirable man but he has no more competence to pronounce on heaven than any other thoughtful adult.

Tom Flynn
Executive Director, Council for Secular Humanism

“Can God and science co-exist?” Sadly, no. You see, gentle readers, God does not exist, but science does.

Let me qualify that. I do not assert that God does not exist with dogmatic certainty; as someone who’s lost faith in faith, I don’t feel entitled to that kind of epistemic sureness about anything. But the God hypothesis is so absurd, so unsupported by

the evidence, and so utterly the sort of thing wishful human beings would make up for their own comfort whether it were true or not, that there’s precious little justification for taking it seriously. I regard it as so nearly certain that the God hypothesis is false that I can’t justify investing energy in the proposition that it might be true. So, of course, do millions of other modern humans.....

Letters to Editors

To Editor, Secular Circular:

I am offended by the choice of the poem in the April Circular. This is exactly the kind of thing that, I think, is hurting the whole Humanist effort.

Hugh Smart

To Editor, Secular Circular:

Please cancel my membership immediately. I was appalled at the stupid and pointless bad taste in your latest newsletter reproducing a "joke" by Lawrence Schimel about Mary and Jesus. I honestly thought I was joining a better organization.

Please remove any traces of my association with this organization. I am embarrassed to have ever joined. Happy Easter!

[Name Withheld]

Non-HSSB Events of Interest

Diane Krohn

Upcoming Events in California:

- May 5: Parenting Beyond Belief Workshop, presented by Dale McGowan, PhD., author and lecturer, *Parenting Beyond Belief and Raising Freethinkers*. Center for Inquiry West, Los Angeles.
<http://www.cfiwest.org/PBB-LA.htm>

- May 6: Dale McGowan: *In Praise of Dissent*. Center for Inquiry West, Los Angeles. <http://www.cfwest.org/calendar/FeedYourBrain.htm>
- May 13: Dr. Cristof Koch: *Consciousness: Confessions of a Romantic Reductionist*. Skeptics Society, Cal Tech, Pasadena. <http://www.skeptic.com/upcoming-lectures/>
- May 20: Hector Avalos: *Religion and Violence: A New Theory for an Old Problem*. Center for Inquiry West, Los Angeles and Costa Mesa. <http://www.cfwest.org/calendar/FeedYourBrain.htm#klein>
- May 11: Dr. John Suarez: *Will the Wall Come Tumbling Down? An Updated Look at Church and State in America*. Newbury Park. Note: Dr. Suarez will also be presenting this talk on May 12 in Studio City. <http://au-losangeles.blogspot.com/>
- May 19-20: Orange County Freethought Alliance Annual Conference. University of California, Irvine. Speakers include Dave Silverman, Michael Shermer, Phil Zuckerman, Dan Barker, Barbara Forrest, Mr. Deity, and Richard Carrier. <http://freethoughtalliance.org/fta/annual-conference/>
- June 3: Marty Klein: *America's War on Sex: The Religious Right's Attack on Secular*

Democracy. Center for Inquiry West, Los Angeles. <http://www.cfwest.org/calendar/FeedYourBrain.htm#klein>

- June 10: Dr. Art Benjamin: *The Secrets to Mental Math: The Magician's Guide to Lightning Calculation and Amazing Math Tricks*. Skeptics Society, Cal Tech, Pasadena. <http://www.skeptic.com/upcoming-lectures/>

Upcoming Events Outside of California:

- May 18-20: Imagine No Religion 2, presented by CFI Canada and Atheist Alliance International. Speakers include Lawrence Krauss, PZ Myers, Seth Andrews, Desiree Schell, and others. Kamloops, British Columbia, Canada. <http://imaginenoreligion2.com/imaginenoreligionkamloops/Home.html>
- June 7-10: American Humanist Association 71st Annual Conference. Speakers include Gloria Steinem, Ira Flatow, James Randi, Rob Boston, Sean Faircloth, and of course many others. New Orleans, LA. <http://conference.americanhumanist.org/>
- July 12-15: The Amazing Meeting. Speakers include James Randi, Penn & Teller, Lawrence Krauss, Sean Faircloth, Harriet Hall, Jennifer Hecht, many others, plus many evening events that aren't just lectures. Las Vegas, NV. <http://www.amazingmeeting.com/TAM2012/>



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IT'S TIME TO CONSIDER QUITTING THE CATHOLIC CHURCH



It's time to quit the Roman Catholic Church. Will it be reproductive freedom, or back to the Dark Ages? Do you choose women and their rights, or Bishops and their wrongs? Whose side are you on? In light of the U.S. Catholic Conference of Bishops' war against women's right to contraception...

- Why are you aiding and abetting a church that has repeatedly engaged in a crusade to ban contraception, abortion and sterilization, to deny the right of all women everywhere, Catholic or not, to decide whether and when to become mothers?
- Think of the acute misery, poverty, needless suffering, unwanted pregnancies, overpopulation, social evils and deaths that can be laid directly at the door of your church's pernicious doctrine that birth control is a sin and must be outlawed.
- If you think you can change the church from within - get it to lighten up on birth control, gay rights, marriage equality, embryonic stem-cell research - you're deluding yourself. By remaining a "good Catholic," you are doing "bad" to women's rights. You are an enabler. And it's got to stop.
- It's a disgrace that U.S. health care reform is being held hostage to your church's irrational opposition to medically prescribed contraception. No political candidate should have to genuflect before the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. President Obama has compromised, but the Church never budgees. Instead it is launching a ruthless political Inquisition in your name.
- Your church hysterically claims that secular medical policy is "an assault against religious liberty." The louder the Church cries "offense against religious liberty" the harder it works to take away women's liberty. Now your church has introduced into Congress a double-speak bill, the "Respect for Rights of Conscience Act," to allow dogma to trump the civil rights and private consciences of employees.
- The Church that hasn't persuaded you to shun contraception now wants to use the force of secular law to deny birth control to non-Catholics.
- You're better than your church, so why stay? Why put up with an institution that discriminates against half of humanity? Why send your children to parochial schools to be indoctrinated into the next generation of obedient donors and voters? Can't you see how misplaced your loyalty is after two decades of sex scandals involving preying priests, church complicity, collusion and coverup going all the way to the top? Apparently, you're like the battered woman who, after being beaten down every Sunday, feels she has no place else to go.

There is a more welcoming home for you.

Join those of us who put humanity above dogma. As Thomas Paine observed: "My own mind is my own church." We invite you to free yourself from incense-fogged ritual, from ideas uttered long ago by ignorant men, from blind obedience to an illusory religious authority.

As a member of the "flock" of an avowedly antidemocratic Old Boys Club, isn't it time you vote with your feet?

PLEASE, EXIT EN MASS.

Annie Laurie Gaylor and Dan Barker, co-Presidents, Freedom From Religion Foundation

Underwriters include many FFRF members, and major donors: Dan Barker, Fairfield M. Caudle, James G. Coors, Robert & Jo Chanaud, Jeff & Jill Dean, Mr. & Mrs. Timothy Gallivan, Annie Laurie Gaylor, Laila Reddy, M.D., Nicholas Sargeantson, Jane & Stefan Shoop, Claudette St.Pierre, Fred Tharlin, R. Jeffrey Wenk, John Whiteside.

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Deadline for submissions to the Secular Circular is Midnight, the last day of each month.

HSSB meetings are held on the 3rd Saturday of each month at 2:30 pm, usually in the Patio Room of Vista del Monte, 3775 Modoc Rd., Santa Barbara. More information is available at our web site: www.SantaBarbaraHumanists.org or by contacting any board member. At meetings, a donation of \$2 from members and \$5 from non-members is appreciated. First-time visitors are welcome on a complimentary basis.

To send a copy of this newsletter to someone interested in our Society, please send their contact information to: PO Box 30232, Santa Barbara, CA 93130, or contact Mary Wilk at 967-3045, or mwilk@cox.net. Newsletters are also available at the above web address.

Annual HSSB membership dues are \$36 for a single person, \$60 for a couple, and \$100 (or more) to become a sponsor. One may subscribe to our newsletter only for an annual fee of \$20.

Link to HSSB Photos:
<http://picasaweb.google.com/Humanist.Society.of.Santa.Barbara>

HSSB Phone: 769-HSSB



When I was a boy I was told that anybody could become President. I'm beginning to believe it. ~ Clarence Darrow



HSSB Calendar

Monday, May 7. First Salon Meeting. 421 E. Figueroa St., 7pm. Contact Judy Fontana at <mailto:Activities@santabarbarahumanists.org> beforehand.

Wednesday, May 16. Book Club. 1:30PM, Casa Shapiro, 249 Savona Ave. Goleta. *The Origins of Political Order*.

Saturday, May 19. Monthly meeting. Barbara Forrest. Fe Bland auditorium at SBCC. Socializing at 2:30, program begins at 3pm.

Sunday, May 27. (and the last Sunday of every month), 10am, **Secular Sunday Brunch** for humanists, atheists, agnostics, skeptics, freethinkers, singles, couples and families without religion. No cover charge; membership not required. Pay only for your food, drink and tips. Cody's Cafe, 4898 Hollister Ave. in the Turnpike Center, Goleta in the room to the right as you enter the restaurant. For information phone Board member, Mary Wilk at 805-967-3045.

Saturday, June 16. Summer Solstice Picnic

Saturday, July 21. Meeting of Minds II. In person: **Plato, Voltaire, Martin Luther, Florence Nightingale, Steve Allen.** In Santa Barbara for this one afternoon only! Don't miss it!



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