



THE SECULAR CIRCULAR

Newsletter of the Humanist Society of Santa Barbara

October, 2008

<http://www.sbhumanists.org>

Media Ownership: Research and Regulation, and Why You Should Care

A Presentation by UCSB Communications Professor
Ronald E. Rice

By Andrew Hankin

Recently, trends and developments in social values, political ideologies, media policies, economic conditions, globalization, media technologies, and telecommunications networks have all interacted to generate significant changes in the nature of media industries. These changes affect media production, content, distribution, exhibition, and use.

Professor Rice will discuss these important concepts and you are encouraged to bring your questions about, for example, routine exclusion of humanist/atheist viewpoints from corporate media.

Dr. Rice received his B.A. in Literature from Columbia University, and his M.A. and Ph.D. in Communication Research from Stanford University. He is the Arthur N. Rupe Chair in the Social Effects of Mass Communication in the Department of Communication, and Co-Director of the Carsey-Wolf Center for Film, Television, and New Media, both at UCSB. He also took a Fulbright Award to Finland; is Professor of the School of Communication and Information at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore; and was a Department Chair at Rutgers University, New Jersey.



Professor Ronald Rice

Media Ownership: Research and Regulation, and Why You Should Care

Saturday, October 18th, 3-5 p.m.

In the Patio Room at Vista del Monte
3775 Modoc Road, Santa Barbara

Join us for socializing at 2:30 p.m.

Meeting starts promptly at 3 p.m.

Contact Information

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New Board Member! Unfortunately, Bea Novobilski had to resign from the Board. Wayne Beckman has agreed to serve as a Board member.

Membership Notes

By Mary Wilk

Humanist Society meetings are usually held on the 3rd Saturday of each month at 3 pm in the Patio Room of Vista del Monte, 3775 Modoc Road, Santa Barbara, CA. More information is available at our web site:

www.SantaBarbaraHumanists.org

or by contacting any of the board members listed in the left-hand column of this page.

If you would like a copy of this newsletter mailed to a friend or someone who might be interested in our Society, please send their contact information to: PO Box 30232, Santa Barbara, CA 93130, or call Mary Wilk. Alternatively, all of our newsletters are available at the web address shown above.

If you are not already a member, we encourage you to join our Society. Annual membership dues are \$36 for a single person, \$60 for a couple, and \$100 (or more) for a sponsor. Members receive the monthly newsletter and have the option of attending meetings, outings and special events sponsored by the Society.

Those unable to attend our monthly meetings may subscribe to our newsletter for an annual fee of \$20, but are not entitled to other membership privileges. When attending our meetings, a donation of \$2 from members and \$5 from non-members is appreciated. First or second-time visitors are welcome on a complimentary basis. For more information, please contact Mary Wilk or any member of our Society.

News About Members

By Hope Smith and Mary Wilk

We are pleased to welcome the following new member to our society:

Martin Zuck
5358 Calle Real, Apt. #1D
Santa Barbara, CA 93111
683-2959

It is with deep regret that we report the death on July 20th, 2008, of our long-time member James Karls. After obtaining a Ph.D. from the University of Southern California, James spent 59 years as a social-work practitioner with the mentally ill. He was a director of the Mental Health Training Center in Los Angeles and later a director of Mental Health Research for California in Sacramento. Upon retirement, he developed the Person in Environment System, which in book form has been translated into ten languages and has had widespread use.

Letter to the Editor: Loretta Redd, September 18th, writing to the *News-Press* as Executive director, Alzheimer's Association, to thank the paper for its coverage of the association's advocacy and fundraising event at Chase Palm Park.

On September 20th, Micki Stern attended the annual luncheon of the Democratic Women of Santa Barbara County, at which Nancy Koppelman was Mistress of Ceremonies and Carol Palladini was a Sponsoring Friend.

On September 26th, Mary Wilk hosted a lunch at Goleta beach's Breakwater Cafe for August Brunsman, Executive Director of the Secular Student Alliance, headquartered in Albany, N.Y. August was visiting California to promote interest in university groups, and spoke of how encouraging it was to see a growth in the number of campus affiliates,

now over 114 in 12 different countries. Also present were Sydney and Hope Smith.

The *Goleta Valley Voice* of September 26th had a photo of Mark Hamilton and other board members of the Fund for Santa Barbara at its 15th Annual "Bread & Roses" event to support social justice and environmental projects in Santa Barbara County. The same issue had an article by Robert Bernstein, writing as Environmental Justice Chair for the Sierra Club in Santa Barbara, on "Public transit: What are our goals?"

On October 1st, Judy Egenolf, Vice President of Amherst Exchange Corp., was slated to take part in a seminar on Tax Deferred Real Estate Exchanges.

HSSB Book Club

By Marty Shapiro

Lovers of anthologies, your time has come. For October, the Book Club will be tackling Christopher Hitchens' monumental *The Portable Atheist*, subtitled *Essential Readings for the Nonbeliever*. Hitchens, author of the bestseller *God is Not Great*, is one of the "stars" of the New Atheism movement (aggressively out of the closet). The anthology runs chronologically, from the Roman philosopher Lucretius and the Persian poet Omar Khayyam, to Sam Harris and Ayaan Hirsi Ali, of *Infidel* fame. Also included are Karl Marx, Charles Darwin, Albert Einstein, and Salman Rushdie. The anthology includes an impressive 47 items, enough material for several meetings. So for our October meeting we'll just be focusing on the first 1-22 readings - the rest of the selections will have to wait their turn!

When: Wednesday, October 15th, 1:30 p.m.

Where: Art and Elaine Brody's house
1125 Camino del Rio (off Cathedral Oaks,
between Tucker's Grove and Highway 154)
692-8898

brodybiz@cox.net

Election Commentary – Continued

By Roger Schlueter

When I wrote my September column, the Vice-Presidential candidates were not known. Now that we know both the Democratic and Republican tickets, I'd like to continue my commentary on the Presidential election by looking more closely at each candidate from the perspective of a Humanist who is keen on maintaining church/state separation.

Joe Biden is the easiest to analyze. While he has emphasized his Catholic roots on the campaign trail, I consider that to be nothing more than the requisite political pandering. Biden, as far as I can tell, has no interest in infusing religion into the federal government and could be counted on to advocate for strong separation of church and state.

Interestingly, I think John McCain generally falls into the same category save for one major exception. Although he has shamelessly pandered to the religious right, I consider that to be the necessary political acknowledgment of who constitutes his political base. He cannot win without Dobson, *et al.*, so it is not surprising that he has embraced the "values voter" but I don't see any evidence that he will make their agenda his own should he become president. The major exception is that I do believe McCain when he says he would appoint judges to the Supreme Court who are in the mold of Antonin Scalia. And Scalia has explicitly stated that constitutional law is subsumed under "god's law," whatever that phrase means. So while I think a McCain Administration would not pursue a legislative agenda antithetical to church/state separation, his judicial agenda would be devastating to church/state separation ideals. This judicial agenda is extremely important since the next President will likely make two

or three appointments to the Supreme Court to say nothing of numerous other federal bench appointments.

Obama is in some respects just the opposite. I have every confidence that any Obama judicial appointments would be jurists who rule on a sound constitutional law basis, including a fundamental adherence to First Amendment principles. After all, as I pointed out last month, Obama *taught* Constitutional law - he surely understands the First Amendment!

Sadly, I have little confidence that an Obama Administration will observe church/state separation principles at the administrative or legislative levels. He has already stated that he'll expand Bush's faith-based initiatives. This is not surprising given his community organizing work in south Chicago, but is disappointing nonetheless from a Humanist perspective.

Finally, I find Sarah Palin the most difficult to analyze because her personal religious beliefs and her political views and actions seem completely divorced in some cases and indistinguishable in others. An assessment of Palin's church/state separation views is complicated by the uncertainty regarding what role, if any, a Vice-President Palin would play in a McCain Administration or how she would govern if elevated to the office of President.

There are two examples of concern to Humanists. First, Palin apparently was interested in controlling what books the Wasilla library should carry based directly on her religious views. No serious Humanist supports the suppression of ideas. Second, she has characterized our involvement in Iraq as a mission from god. That is simply frightening.

(See *Schlueter*, page 5)

Social Scene

By Anne Rojas

We have 2 exciting events coming up this month! The first is our Dining Out at our old favorite, Ming Dynasty, adjacent to the K-Mart shopping center. I need reservations for this event. Separate checks are given and guests are welcome.

Our second event is the Meet and Greet for our Secular Coalition Representative in Washington, D.C. (and HSSB member), Lori Lipman Brown. We are having a cocktail party on October 25th from 4-6 p.m. at Vista del Monte. It will be \$10, payable at the door with an e-mail reservation to me. Honor system that you will show up if you have reserved. We probably can't accommodate all who might like to come. There are still a few places remaining. A very good value with the quality of their food and drinks!

Our dinner at Vista del Monte in the Patio Room, where we have our programs, drew 35 persons! I received very good reviews on the food quality and the value of the dinner. We are planning on a repeat dinner in January. Reservations will be necessary and I will begin taking them in early December.

I still would like to know if anyone is interested in a theatre night and dinner. Please suggest an upcoming production with about 6 weeks lead time. Also, is there any interest in the Chumash Casino? Buffet or otherwise?

Your suggestions for activities are welcome. I can always use your help as well.

Upcoming Events

By Dick Cousineau

For our meeting on November 15th, Dr. Craig Stanford, Professor of Anthropology and Biological Sciences at USC, will discuss the parallels between great apes and dolphins. Dr. Stanford, who is also the Director of the Jane Goodall Research Center at USC, is an expert on human evolution and primate and human behavior. His research has taken him to Africa, Asia and South America. Together with Dr. Maddalena Bearzi of UCLA, Dr. Stanford has authored the book titled, *Beautiful Minds*. This book will be available for sale after our program. Our November meeting will be held at Fe Bland Auditorium on the beautiful campus of Santa Barbara Community College (SBCC). We deeply appreciate the cooperation between our Society and Dr. Jen Maudin of the Biological Sciences Department of SBCC to make this event a reality.

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(*Schlueter*, continued from page 4)

On the other hand, I can find no examples of Palin's religious views directly affecting her governance of the state of Alaska. Is it possible that she can, in fact, divorce her religious nature from her political governance? I don't think so.

The bottom line is the same as stated in my August column, "...after the election, no matter who wins, we must keep up our advocacy for the First Amendment."

In a rational society we would want our presidents to be teachers. In our actual society we insist they be cheerleaders.

-Steve Allen, American Comic and Writer

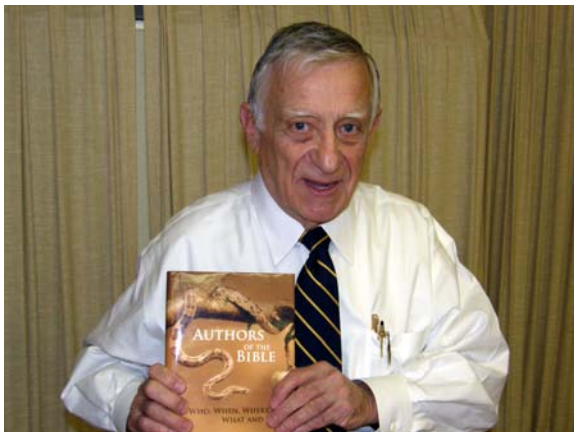
September Meeting: Fred Glynn on Who Wrote the Bible

By Robert Bernstein

Fred Glynn told us that he had written *Authors of the Bible* to help both atheists and believers understand the Bible as a book written by real people.

In his view, much of the Bible was never meant to be taken literally, but was meant as allegory. A lot of the Bible has fairly mundane purposes, such as establishing property rights or the income of priests.

Glynn's research started with him writing an angry letter to Senator Lieberman in October 2000, responding to Lieberman's statement that the Constitution does not guarantee us "freedom **from** religion." This statement got him to go out and buy every book he could find on King David. Glynn thinks that King David and Jesus probably existed but were not like the figures portrayed in the Bible.



*Fred Glynn at our September meeting, with his book, *Authors of the Bible*. Photo by Robert Bernstein.*

So, who did write the Bible? Glynn believes about two dozen different authors. Only a few signed what they had written. But researchers have been able to pick out parts as having a common author based on

common style or language or the needs of the writers' clients such as David, Solomon, Rehoboam, etc.

Historical references help to determine the sequence of when parts were written. References both to events and to technological developments helped with this. For example, coins did not exist until 700 BCE, so material containing references to coins had to be written or edited later.

The sequence of the writing does not correspond to the order of the current Bible. For example, the writing did not begin with Genesis. It began instead with David's writing of the long-lost Book of Jashar that was cannibalized during the writing of the Book of Samuel by Solomon's Court Historian. This was followed by the writing of the Book of Genesis during the reign of Solomon's son, Rehoboam, by the author known as "J."

For the past 350 years Bible scholars have worked to establish who the different authors of the Bible were.

One clue is the use of two different names for the Hebrew god. One is Elohim. The other is Yahweh. This has led to parts being attributed to authors E and J, respectively. Letters indicating other authors are D (for Deuteronomist, circa 621 BCE), P (for Priestly Source, at various dates from the 8th to 5th centuries BCE), and R (for a 5th century Redactor). But only a few Bible scholars share Glynn's view that E and J were the same person, who was thereby giving the perspective of God from different parts of the kingdom.

(See *Bernstein*, page 7)

(Bernstein, continued from page 6)

Which parts should not be taken as literally true? Consider the claim that Jesus walked on water. Well, it is claimed that the Buddha walked on water, too. This may be a clue that this claim was invented.

Jefferson in fact made his own version of the Bible by cutting and pasting two copies of the standard Bible. Jefferson removed all of the miracles, claiming that none of those should be taken as true.

Glynn shared some personal stories with us. One story he relayed that when he was in the military, it was mandatory to attend religious services, and that the only choices were Protestant, Catholic or Jewish. Finding the Baptist Protestant services intolerable, he chose Jewish, which was inscribed on his dog tags. He found it not only gave him a free pass to go into town on Friday nights so that he could “go to temple,” but it also was an entry into a new world of study for him.

At the end of the talk, we may not have had any clear answers. In fact, more questions may have been raised than answered. But we did come away with some fresh knowledge about the Bible and interesting stories.

Propositions 4 and 8

By Marian Shapiro

The Board of Directors of the Humanist Society of Santa Barbara opposes Propositions 4 and 8.

In accordance with the principles of Humanism, the Humanist Society of Santa Barbara opposes two propositions that will be on the November ballot. Proposition 4, if passed, will make it more difficult for a teenager under the age of 18 to obtain an abortion by requiring that her parents be notified of her intention.

This requirement to notify parents will increase the chance of delaying a procedure that is safest when done early in a pregnancy, thereby endangering teens' health. Most teens already inform their parents about their unwanted pregnancies, but some are fearful of their parents' disappointment or anger. By postponing the procedure, she is putting her health at risk by delaying critical medical care or possibly turning to self-induced or back-alley abortions.

Opposition to abortion comes mostly from churches, particularly the Catholic church. It is against Humanist principles to allow the religious views of some to be imposed by law on all, many of whom do not share those views. There are safeguards which reproductive health providers can and do practice, such as requiring the pregnant teen to have “options counseling” which goes over the options of adoption, keeping the baby and abortion. The counselor helps the young woman to think of family members or adult friends in her life whom she can trust to support her no matter which option she chooses.

Proposition 8 would overturn the recent California Supreme Court decision that gave gay couples the same right to marry as heterosexual couples. Prop 8 would amend the state constitution to eliminate the right of same-sex couples to marry in California. An important principle of Humanism is that people should not be discriminated against. Churches can refuse to marry same-sex couples, but gay couples must be given the same rights as everyone else by the state. The state is not a church. Humanists favor civil rights and equal treatment of all people and a separation of church and state

Members who wish to volunteer to defeat Props 8 and 4 can call Breanna at Planned Parenthood 963-2445 Ext. 147 for Prop 4, or David Selberg at Pacific Pride 963-3636 Ext. 125 for Prop 8.



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