

FIG LEAVES

Volume 15 Issue 4

April 2006

April FIG Meeting: Tuesday, 25 April 7:00 PM

Speaker: **Henry Blumenstein**

Yom HaShoah, the annual day of Holocaust Remembrance, is observed on April 25 this year. Since this day of commemoration lands on our meeting date, it seems fitting to have Holocaust survivor, Henry Blumenstein, present at our FIG Meeting. Henry will be sharing his personal testimony as well as discussing issues related to America's involvement in the Holocaust.

Henry Blumenstein was three years old when the Nazis took his father to the Dachau Concentration Camp. His father was released from the camp on the condition that he immediately leave the country and Henry's father found refuge in Cuba. In 1939, Henry, his mother and grandmother sailed across the ocean on the St. Louis destined for Cuba. The passengers of the St. Louis were turned away from Cuba and from the United States. Forced back to Europe, Henry's family ended up in the Netherlands. The Nazi invasion of the Netherlands in 1940 forced Henry and his mother into hiding, where Henry was successfully hidden on a farm for three years until the war ended.

Henry came to the United States and was reunited with his father after 8 years of separation. In his presentation, Henry will analyze America's role in the Holocaust, with the focus on the turning away of the St. Louis refugee ship and its effect on his family.

May FIG Meeting: Tuesday, 23 May, 7:00 pm

Defending the Wall of Separation against the Battering Rams of Fundangelicalism

Speaker: Edwin Kagin

Edwin will provide some background on the legal basis for litigation of Church / State separation issues and review some of the history of this type of legal activity in Kentucky, Ohio, and nationally. He will also discuss some actual ongoing cases in which he is currently involved, including a possible lawsuit for defamation against Atheists in Pennsylvania, a Federal lawsuit on behalf of the Smalkowski family in Oklahoma related to their daughter's expulsion from public school for refusing to join in a hand holding prayer circle, on the gym floor before a basketball game, where the Lord's Prayer was recited by the team, and an action he has filed in Federal Court in Covington, Kentucky against Boone County, Kentucky for giving tax exemptions to ordained ministers. Edwin will also discuss the current climate in the United States regarding what Thomas Jefferson called the "Wall of Separation between Church and State."

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Events

(Watch the dates!)

April Meeting

Tuesday, 25 April 2006
7:00 PM at the Vernon Manor
400 Oak Street, Cincinnati, Ohio

May Potluck

Tuesday, 09 May 2006
6:30 PM at the home of

May Meeting

Tuesday, 23 May 2006
7:00 PM at the Vernon Manor
400 Oak Street, Cincinnati, Ohio

June Potluck

2nd or 3rd Sunday Afternoon
Date and Time - TBD
at the home of





March Meeting...

Expanding and Defending the Secular Universe

Conrad F. Goeringer, contributing correspondent, *American Atheist Newsletter*



Conrad started his talk by defining the substance of his talk like this: It's about how we live, because there are vast differences between societies that are saturated with religious ideology, and those which are not. And it is a compelling topic for me on a personal level. Like many of you, I came to Atheism or some form of non-belief by thinking about philosophical questions and the existential claims made by religion. I have always been fascinated by the intersection of religion, politics and culture. Consider places like Iran or Saudi Arabia or Afghanistan, where an interpretation of Islam sets the tone for the legal system, and for the cultural

mores, economics, and here's the rub, even private life. Compare pre-Enlightenment Europe where so much political, economic and cultural power was concentrated in the hands of Christian religious establishments. Contrast colonial America; from the moment settlers arrived from Europe they began imposing religious laws regulating just about every area of human conduct.

Leonard Levy has written a book called *Treason Against God, a History of the Offense of Blasphemy* (1981), in which he discusses just this one small practice, outlawing blasphemy or slander against God or the church. An early example is the trial of Socrates for insulting the gods of Athens. No sooner had the Christian church become a state-sponsored institution than blasphemy was made a punishable offense. As youngsters we are instructed in the fiction that Europeans fled their despotic political and ecclesiastic homelands for the New World in a passionate quest for liberty of conscience; but that is not really true. Fact is; most of the original colonies had official, established churches. You had to belong if you wanted to exercise even the most basic rights. And, nothing would help if you blasphemed! Every colony in early America had a statute against blasphemy- the Delaware statute of 1741 provided for public whipping and branding with the letter B. Connecticut prescribed the death penalty. Even after the Revolution blasphemy lingered on the books. State courts upheld blasphemy convictions well into the 19th century. It wasn't until 1952, that the Supreme Court held it is not the business of government to suppress real or imagined attacks upon a particular religious doctrine.

This hasn't stopped efforts to use force against blasphemy. From Rudy Giuliani's efforts to close the Brooklyn Museum of Art for an exhibit of a painting of the Virgin smeared with elephant dung, through an attempt to ban Martin Scorsese's film, *The Last Temptation of Christ*, down to and including those angry Islamists taking to the streets from Tehran to New York to protest, sometimes violently, the cartoons that appeared in a Danish newspaper supposedly defaming the prophet Mohammed. Now here is the ultimate irony for you — as mobs turned violent and buildings caught fire, the cartoons were denounced as *unfairly portraying Islam as a violent faith!* ➔



FIG Leaves - Thoughtful articles, letters, reviews, reports, anecdotes, and cartoons are very welcome. Submit in Electronic format via the internet to:

figleaves@fuse.net;

or on disk or typewritten via mail to Editor, FIG Leaves, P.O. Box 19034, Cincinnati, OH 45219. Contributions received before the first Friday of the month will be considered for publication that month.

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Demands for the prohibition of blasphemy are alive and well. There has been a debate in Great Britain over proposals to criminalize any statement that encourages “hatred” of religious groups and beliefs. Earlier this month, a Christian body in

especially for the idea of separating ecclesiastical and state power — for civil liberties and for human rights, for the primacy of the individual conscience and the status of religious institutions in the global community. The evidence is all around us, not just in the rise of Islamic violence, but in other areas of social activities. By and large, I think that we, as a secular movement, are behind the curve on this. We are doing pretty much the same thing as freethinkers did half-a-century ago. I don’t mean to diminish the significance of having debates or publishing books on Biblical criticism or the historicity of Jesus; but we have no position in the discussion of globalization and how it affects secular values, institutions and practices. We need to get up to speed on this.

Canada demanded that the University of Saskatchewan shut down the student newspaper because it published the unflattering Danish cartoons of the prophet Mohammed. And in New York just a couple of years ago, a state legislator introduced a bill to penalize any printed or verbal statement defaming the Christian religion and the divinity of Jesus. In the future, we may yet see some kind of blasphemy legislation

I want to make the point, that the emergence of fundamentalist movements — particularly of militant Christianity and Jihadist Islam — is best comprehended as a global phenomenon. It is part of a wider process we call “globalization,” and if we want to talk about defending and expanding secularism — we have to begin by understanding what political and economic and cultural globalization is all

The growing activism, belligerence, and insistent demands of religious groups are already leading to a form of censorship through the back door. Corporations in the public square, especially those involved in media, find themselves under enormous pressure to conform to certain religious demands.

In the United States and Europe a debate rages over the status of religion in civil society. When you examine what is happening across the globe — in Russia, in parts of Asia, certainly in the Middle East and Africa, and in Latin America — you see the emergence of militant religious ideologies. Secular institutions in all their forms are under attack. Religious entities are demanding special privileges. We see that here in the United States with laws like the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, which we have been fighting for years. In the new “democratic” Afghanistan the Islamic clergy insisted on provisions in the constitution acknowledging the primacy of Sharia law.

Globalization and other transformative events today are having profound consequences for a secular social agenda —

about. The emergence of a “muscular religion” isn’t occurring in a vacuum; it’s the result of forces that are changing the political and economic landscape across the entire world.

How did we get from the Cold War to the Religious War? Begin in 1948 with Churchill’s Iron Curtain speech and end with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. During this period, roughly 41 years,



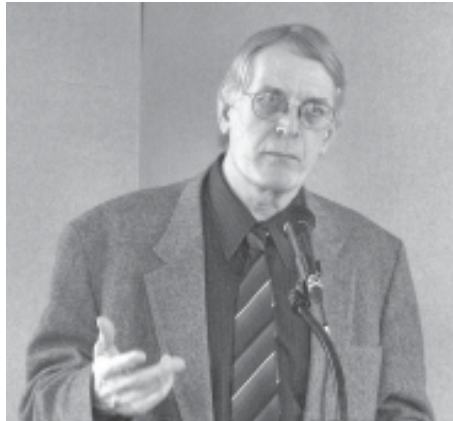
political developments were a bi-polar confrontation between East and West, between Communism and Capitalism. Yet part of this confrontation was cast in religious terms, a battle between godless, atheistic Communism and Christian institutions in the West. The religious aspect was particularly acute during the 1950’s when various laws were enacted to elevate faith, specifically Christianity, as a hand maiden to the government as well as a badge of political reliability and personal wholesomeness.

Among the confusion the U.S. embarked on a policy of arming Islamic fundamentalist movements to counter-



balance Soviet influence in the Middle East. The Muslim faith rejected the atheism of the Communists, and could be encouraged to use force and violence.

Conrad mentioned three books as a foundation for his talk. The first, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Re-making of World Order* by Samuel P. Huntington. The gist of it: with the fall of the Soviet Union there has been a systemic reconfiguration of global relations. It is not only the emergence of United States as the premier global manager, but the consolidation of blocks of states around a number of principal civilizational differences. The new world is multipolar. Instead of east and west, it is Islamic, Chinese, Hindu, and Russian-Orthodox. Cultural conflicts, not just conflicts over natural resources or perceived political interests take on a stark new reality. Conrad noted that the revitalization of religion throughout much of the world is reinforcing these cultural differences. He also noted: we are witnessing the end of the “progressive era” dominated by Western ideologies and are moving into an time when many and diverse civilizations interact, compete, coexist and accommodate each other. Violence is not excluded.



Giles Kepel, one of the world’s foremost experts on the modern Middle East, in his book *Jihad: the Trail of Political Islam* writes about *La Revanche de Dieu* (The Revenge of God); how beginning in the 1970’s, a trend to secularization and toward the accommodation of religion with secularism “went into reverse...” There has been a surge of diverse and primitive religious movements in former communist states, in nominally moderate and secular states in the Middle East, in Latin America, in countries of the Pacific Rim where the trappings of modernity have been embraced, and even in Europe.

The last of the three books is Richard Florida’s *The Rise of the Creative Class, and How It is Transforming, Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life*. He followed with *The Flight of the Creative Class*. Florida is a professor of Management at Carnegie Mellon University. What he describes is the shift from a 1950’s style manufacturing economy to a service economy, and then to one where creativity plays a dominant role ushering in a “creative age.” The creative class is made up of 38 million Americans, that is about a third of the labor force, and Florida includes in this cohort, scientists, internet technology pioneers, people on the cutting edge of experimental and new technologies and research, people engaged in just about any aspect of the arts and writers. It is also composed of people involved with the creation and construction of style and Florida claims this creative class is now the critical driving global economic force .

– Reported by George Maurer

Science Book Club - Schedule for 2006

Science book club as in past years plans on meeting at the Cincinnati Downtown Library on the 4th Sunday of each month at 2:30pm in Room 3A, except on the 3rd Sunday where conflicts with holidays occur as noted below and in May in Room 3B because of a room schedule conflict.

Apr.23 - a discussion on “Problem Solving (approaches and techniques)” from short articles

May 21 (third Sunday in Room 3B) - *Fly: The Unsung Hero of Twentieth Century Science*: Martin Brookes

June 25 - *Silent Sky: the incredible extinction of the passenger pigeon*: Allan Eckert

July 23 - *Ohio Archaeology an illustrated chronicle of Ohio’s ancient American Indian cultures*: Bradley T. Lepper

Aug 27 - *On Intelligence* Jeff Hawkins

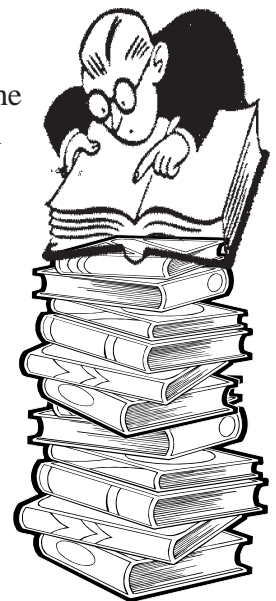
Sept 24 - *Economics in Perspective, A Critical History*: John Kenneth Galbraith

Oct 22 - *The “God” Part of the Brain*: Matthew Alper

Nov 19 (third Sunday)- *Black Holes and Time Warps: Einstein’s outrageous legacy*: Kip Thorne

Dec 17 (third Sunday) - *Science of Aliens*: Clifford Pickover

– Bryan Sellers





In Memoriam

In Memory of Stanley E. Harper Jr

FIG member Stanley Harper died on March 22. He attended FIG meetings regularly, usually accompanied by his daughters Ann and Debbie and sometime by his wife Marja. He was a quiet, gentlemanly person and I did not know him well.

When it was announced at the February meeting that I was now 80, he came up to me during the break. He said, "You're young. I'm 84!"

None of us in FIG other than his family knew that for 25 years he had served as a distinguished professor of law at the UC College of Law. We learned a lot more about him from his obituary in the Cincinnati Enquirer.

Mr. Harper attended Walnut Hills High School and graduated from the UC College of Law in 1948 and also served as a lieutenant in the Navy during World War II. He was first a law professor at the Chase College of Law from 1952 to 1961. Tall with distinctive white hair, Mr. Harper joked that he was "one of the biggest law professors in Southwest Ohio - six-foot-three," said Debbie Alexander, of Pleasant Ridge, one of Mr. Harper's three daughters....

Articles about his 1987 retirement from UC - where he taught from 1961 - included a dictionary of Mr. Harper's phrases, which were familiar to students and family and, really, anyone who knew him, said another daughter, Ann Hanson of Pleasant Ridge.

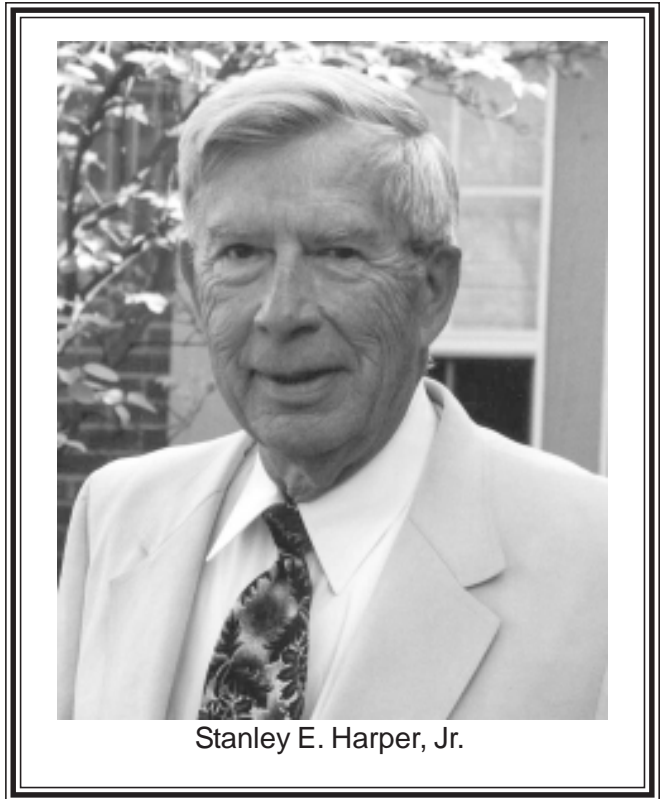
Such 'Harperisms' included "Gastronomic Jurisprudence" (a gut feeling of right and wrong); "Mao Tse-Tung Great Leap Forward" (a new and innovative legal concept); and "Cecil B. DeMille Cast of Thousands" (a lawsuit with a large number of parties involved).

But Mr. Harper was more than just funny, his daughters said. He seemed to know a bit about everything, having read an entire set of World Book encyclopedias during an extended childhood illness. He served on several Ohio Supreme Court advisory committees. He twice received the Goldman Memorial Award for excellence in teaching at UC, where he was assistant and later associate dean of the law school.

He was married three times and was widowed twice by the deaths of his first and second wives, Ruth Rutledge and Rosemary Davis, and was a devoted father who'd take his girls camping, swimming and, on Saturday nights, for ice cream and dancing at Ault Park.

"He made the worst problems seem not so bad," Hanson said.

Survivors include his wife of four years, Marja



Stanley E. Harper, Jr.

Barrett Harper; his third daughter, Karen Sweeden of West Chester; and one grandchild.

Memorials: University of Cincinnati Foundation, 51 Goodman Drive, Cincinnati, OH 45219; or Cincinnati Scholarship Foundation, 652 Main St., Cincinnati, OH 45202.

Bill O'Kain, my wife Barbara, and I learned a lot more about how well Stanley Harper was regarded when we attended a memorial service for him in the Norman Chapel at Spring Grove Cemetery. The chapel was so full that folding chairs had to be set up in the rear. Bill commented briefly at our March meeting about how impressive the ceremony was.

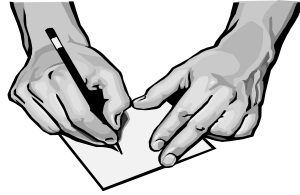
The memorial began with warm testimonials about how highly -- and warmly -- Stanley was regarded by colleagues and students. His grandson, Ryan Luken, sang and later recited a favorite sonnet. The most moving part of the ceremony was hearing what a wonderful human being he was as friend, husband, and father. His son-in-law read a Valentine Letter written by Ann and a Poem for Dad composed by Debbie. Karen read a poem that she had composed. All of these works spoke of their happy childhoods memories with their father and how as adults he continued to be a loved presence in their lives.

FIG members will miss the opportunity to get to know him better. Let's not miss the opportunity to get to know Ann, Debbie and Marja better.

-- Joe Levee



Letters To The Editor



Dear Editor,

I found Weber's letter to you last month to be quite interesting because I have had the same thoughts. To quote him – "at the end of each meeting I would like to be able to say that the group has made some progress in achieving them" (Fig Goals). I think that most of the meetings do not. Don't get me wrong, I thorough enjoy most of them. I really do!

There seems to be little effort to expand the community. The group over all is not very friendly to new comers. The talks do present ideas but limits the exchange of ideas. There have been little if any discussions on morality and ethics and their practice. How is the public being informed about secularism? What efforts are being made to defend the principles of democracy?

A review of the goals or meeting agendas merits consideration.

Just trying to be an involved member, sincerely,

-- Jerald Robertson

From: Sam Harris

Sent: Monday, March 13, 2006 5:20 AM

Subject: New York Times Book Review

Many of you were dismayed by the abuse Daniel Dennett suffered in the pages of *The New York Times* a few weeks back for his fine book, *Breaking the Spell*. The Times printed my (necessarily brief) response in today's Book Review. I've appended it below, in case you missed it.

Leon Wieseltier's review of Daniel Dennett's *Breaking the Spell* ("The God Genome," 2/19) was an impressive demonstration of the power of religious faith. In gathering the wood for this *auto-da-fe*, Wieseltier showed no facility at all for scientific thought, nor even a basic appreciation for the standards of rigor and intellectual honesty that distinguish science from religion as a human pursuit. Wieseltier writes with triumphal smugness about the "excesses of naturalism" that apparently blight Dennett's work. He might as well have pointed out the "excesses of historical accuracy" or the "excesses of logical coherence." If utter naturalism is a sin, it is one only from the point of view of religious faith; a faith that has grown ever more blinkered in reason's glare.

Sam Harris,

Author of *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason*. <http://www.samharris.org>



Reprinting the Infamous Cartoons

Campus Inquirer, April 2006

In its April-May 2005 issue *Free Inquiry* - the flagship magazine of the Council for Secular Humanism - republished four of the controversial Danish cartoons which supposedly depict the Muslim prophet Muhammad.

The cartoons were accompanied by analysis by R. Joseph Hoffmann, director of the Committee for the Scientific Examination of Religion; Ibn Warraq, Islamic apostate and scholar, author of *Why I Am Not a Muslim* and other books; and myself.

Though a few newspapers and campus publications have printed one or more of the cartoons, most U.S. publications have declined to publish them. Our decision to run four of them in *Free Inquiry* engendered great controversy, particularly when Borders Books and Music and its subsidiary Waldenbooks made the unprecedented move of stripping the issue from their shelves. The action by Borders cast an unusual media spotlight on *Free Inquiry* as print and broadcast media, online media, and bloggers by the dozens weighed in on the controversy.

Why republish the controversial cartoons? First as a defense of journalists' right of free expression - the best way to defend that right is to exercise it with vigor. Second, and more important, part of *Free Inquiry's* mission, like that of CFI, is to focus commentary and criticism on every aspect of society, especially its sacred cows. As a secular humanist publication, the editors of *Free Inquiry* feel especially strongly that religion should not be held immune from criticism. On the contrary, it's because faith is such a potent force in human affairs that it urgently needs to be subject to discussion, debate, criticism, and even satire in the marketplace of ideas.

Tom Flynn
Editor - *Free Inquiry Magazine*
Council for Secular Humanism





Stop the Religious Right in Georgia



This week, at the behest of the religious right, the Georgia State Senate passed two pieces of legislation that pose a serious threat to the separation of church and state. One would create state-funded Bible classes in Georgia public schools. The second would allow the Ten Commandments to be displayed by county governments. Both bills are now on their way to Georgia Governor

Sonny Perdue for final approval. The religious right will stop at nothing to push their theology in the public square or our public schools. And now, they want to use public dollars to do it! Take action now and demand that Governor Perdue defend the Constitution and Georgia's citizens from these attacks on our freedoms. And stay tuned to the DefCon Blog for updates on this fight.

SOURCE: DefCon - Campaign to Defend the Constitution
http://ga3.org/campaign/ga_bible/w6biksg495bwjt8

This could only happen in a Muslim country, of course:
Festival loses subsidy over 'blasphemous' show
Dale Fuchs in Madrid, 18 March 2006, *The Guardian*

An independent theater festival in Toledo lost its government subsidies this week for refusing to cancel a show that satirizes the Pope and advocates atheism. It is the latest front in a battle that has raged since February around comedian Leo Bassi's act, *Revelation*, which has angered the Catholic church in Spain, sparked violent protests by the extreme right in Madrid and fueled a nationwide debate on artistic freedom.

Mr Bassi's show, which also pokes fun at Christian evangelists in America and the Old Testament, will be performed today at a makeshift venue. Donations will help compensate for the 7,000 (\$8,400) in lost subsidies, the festival producer told the *Guardian*. But the curtain will rise amid controversy. Last Sunday the archbishop of Toledo, Antonio Cañizares, said the show was "blasphemous", "anti-Christian" and an "insult to the church". Days later, the local and regional governments of Toledo threatened to withdraw festival subsidies if the show was not canceled. "It could offend Catholic sensibilities," a spokesman said.

At the end of the show the New York born comedian, the grandson of British variety star Jimmy Wheeler, directs the audience to his website, where there is a form on which they can renounce their faith. He considers the work "reverse

evangelism."

In February about 200 members of the extreme right asked the Socialist prime minister, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, to "apologize" for "the offence to Catholic principles." In March police defused a bomb near Mr Bassi's dressing room at the Alfil Theater in Madrid. In June Mr Bassi takes his show to a venue near the Vatican in Rome. "I'm looking forward to it," he said.

What is the Anthropic Principle?

British cosmologist John Barrow has been awarded the Templeton Prize for 2006. Barrow is best known for *The Anthropic Cosmological Principle*, written with Frank Tipler in 1986. The "anthropic principle" states that the laws of nature were fine-tuned by the Great Designer to allow the existence of beings so intelligent that they could discover the anthropic principle. This is so incredibly deep that something happens to scientists who dwell on it too long. In Tipler's case, it led him in 1996 to write, *The Physics of Immortality*, in which he derives "the existence of God and the resurrection of the dead" through physics and computers. In Barrow's case it led to the 2006 Templeton Prize. Sir John Templeton had stipulated in 1972 that his prize for "Progress Toward Research or Discoveries about Spiritual Realities," now at \$1.4 million, was to always be bigger than the Nobel

— *What's New*, Robert L. Park, 17 March 2006

The Washington Post hypes miracle prayer on page one.

Today, in a major front-page story, staff writer Rob Stein tells us that "the largest, best-designed study of intercessory prayer" is being published in two weeks. What does it say? The secret is guarded as tightly as the Academy Awards. However, as I write this, the world population clock reads 6,505,424,096. Most of them pray. A bunch of them pray five times a day. They pray mostly for their health, or that of loved ones, making prayer by far the most widely practiced medical therapy. It's a wonder anyone is still sick. No one doubts that personal "petitionary" prayer benefits believers. Optimism is good medicine. To the believer, prayer is a stronger placebo than sugar pills. Stein, however, has his facts wrong. The controversy (if there ever was one among scientists) was settled in 1872 by Sir Francis Galton when he published *Statistical Inquiries into the Efficacy of Prayer*. Galton, a cousin of Charles Darwin, recognized that remote prayer by strangers would be blind to the placebo effect. Since the Order for Morning Prayer of the Church of England includes prayers for the health and long life of the monarch and the archbishop,





he compared their longevity to that of the general population and found no difference. So who is doing this new study? Herbert Benson, founder and president of the Mind-Body Institute, who touted the health benefits of prayer in his 1975 bestseller *The Relaxation Effect*. It would be a miracle if he now discovers there's nothing to it. It's in our hands now, we have two weeks to pray that the study turns out to be objective.

– *What's New*, Robert L. Park, 24 March 2006

The prayers of scientists have been answered

The long-awaited study of intercessory prayer for coronary bypass patients was released yesterday. A small increase in complications, attributed to "performance anxiety," was found in a subset of patients who were told that strangers were praying for them. Otherwise, there was nothing. Scientists are relieved of course; science is tough enough without having to worry that somebody on their knees in East Cupcake, Iowa, can override natural law. The study of 1800 patients took almost ten years and cost \$2.4M, mostly from the Templeton Foundation. Of course, there are calls for further study. Where do we start? What are the units of prayer? Do prayers of Pat Robertson count more than those of death-row inmates? What is the optimum posture of the supplicant? Where can we learn these things?

– *What's New*, Robert L. Park, 31 March 2006

Meanwhile, an Anglican Leader speaks out about creationism.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, told *The Guardian* on Tuesday that creationism devalues the Bible as "just another theory." His choice of words was ironic in view of the anti-evolution slogan

– *What's New*, Robert L. Park, 24 March 2006

Are 8 out of 10 academics spiritual?

Today's *Chronicle of Higher Education* reports on a UCLA survey of 46,670 faculty members at 421 institutions. Sixty-four percent called themselves religious, but there was only a 38% response rate to the survey. I would have summarized the results differently: 38% of faculty members are willing to respond to a survey about their spiritual beliefs. Anything else is a guess.

Federal money for prayer.

President Bush this week signed an executive order establishing a religion-based office in Homeland Security. It will pray the levees hold in another hurricane. The Bush administration gave more than \$2.1B to church operated social programs last year.

Faith based missile defense budget calls for another 10.8 billion.

North Korea did test two short-range missiles this week, however, we haven't heard a thing about their long range

missiles. Since the election we haven't seen missile defense even mentioned except in the budget. Last we heard it had failed every test.

– *What's New*, Robert L. Park, 10 March 2006

I Am a Liberal. There, I Said It!

by George Clooney

I am a liberal. And I make no apologies for it. Hell, I'm proud of it.

Too many people run away from the label. They whisper it like you'd whisper "I'm a Nazi." Like it's a dirty word. But turn away from saying "I'm a liberal" and it's like you're turning away from saying that blacks should be allowed to sit in the front of the bus, that women should be able to vote and get paid the same as a man, that McCarthy was wrong, that Vietnam was a mistake. And that Saddam Hussein had no ties to al-Qaeda and had nothing to do with 9/11.

This is an incredibly polarized time (wonder how that happened?). But I find that, more and more, people are trying to find things we can agree on. And, for me, one of the things we absolutely need to agree on is the idea that we're all allowed to question authority. We have to agree that it's not unpatriotic to hold our leaders accountable and to speak out.

That's one of the things that drew me to making a film about Murrow. When you hear Murrow say, "We mustn't confuse dissent with disloyalty" and "We can't defend freedom at home by deserting it at home," it's like he's commenting on today's headlines.

The fear of being criticized can be paralyzing. Just look at the way so many Democrats caved in the run up to the war. In 2003, a lot of us were saying, where is the link between Saddam and bin Laden? What does Iraq have to do with 9/11? We knew it was bullshit. Which is why it drives me crazy to hear all these Democrats saying, "We were misled." It makes me want to shout, "Fuck you, you weren't misled. You were afraid of being called unpatriotic."

Bottom line: it's not merely our right to question our government, it's our duty. Whatever the consequences. We can't demand freedom of speech then turn around and say, "but please don't say bad things about us." You gotta be a grown-up and take your hits.

I am a liberal. Fire away.

-- Published on Monday, 13 March 2006 by the © The Huffington Post





Prayer & Healing

The Verdict is in and the Results are Null

by Michael Shermer

In a long-awaited comprehensive scientific study on the effects of intercessory prayer on the health and recovery of 1,802 patients undergoing coronary bypass surgery in six different hospitals, prayers offered by strangers had no effect. In fact, contrary to common belief, patients who knew they were being prayed for had a higher rate of post-operative complications such as abnormal heart rhythms, possibly the result of anxiety caused by learning that they were being prayed for and thus their condition was more serious than anticipated.

The study, which cost \$2.4 million (most of which came from the John Templeton Foundation), was begun almost a decade ago and was directed by Harvard University Medical School cardiologist Dr. Herbert Benson and published in *The American Heart Journal*, was by far the most rigorous and comprehensive study on the effects of intercessory prayer on the health and recovery of patients ever conducted. In addition to the numerous methodological flaws in the previous research corrected for in the Benson study, Dr. Richard Sloan, a professor of behavioral medicine at Columbia and author of the forthcoming book, *Blind Faith: The Unholy Alliance of Religion and Medicine*, explained:

The problem with studying religion scientifically is that you do violence to the phenomenon by reducing it to basic elements that can be quantified, and that makes for bad science and bad religion.

The 1,802 patients were divided into three groups, two of which were prayed for by members of three congregations: St. Paul's Monastery in St. Paul, Minnesota; the Community of Teresian Carmelites in Worcester, Massachusetts; and Silent Unity, a Missouri prayer ministry near Kansas City. The prayers were allowed to pray in their own manner, but they were instructed to include the following phrase in their prayers: "for a successful surgery with a quick, healthy recovery and no complications." Prayers began the night before the surgery and continued daily for two weeks after. Half the prayer-recipient patients were told that they were being prayed for while the other half were told that they might or might not receive prayers. The researchers monitored the patients for 30 days after the operations.

Results showed no statistically significant differences

between the prayed-for and non-prayed-for groups. Although the following findings were not statistically significant, 59% of patients who knew that they were being prayed for suffered complications, compared with 51% of those who were uncertain whether they were being prayed for or not; and 18% in the uninformed prayer group suffered major complications such as heart attack or stroke, compared with 13% in the group that received no prayers.

This study is particularly significant because Herbert Benson has long been sympathetic to the possibility that intercessory prayer can positively influence the health of patients. His team's rigorous methodologies overcame the numerous flaws that called into question previously published studies. The most commonly cited study in support of the connection between prayer and healing is:

Randolph C. Byrd, "Positive Therapeutic Effects of Intercessory Prayer in a Coronary Care Unit Population," *Southern Medical Journal* 81 (1998): 826-829.

The two best studies on the methodological problems with prayer and healing include the following:

Richard Sloan, E. Bagiella, and T. Powell. 1999. "Religion, Spirituality, and Medicine," *The Lancet*. Feb. 20, Vol. 353: 664-667; and, John T. Chibnall, Joseph M. Jeral, Michael Cerullo. 2001. "Experiments on Distant Intercessory Prayer." *Archives of Internal Medicine*, Nov. 26, Vol. 161: 2529-2536. www.archinternmed.com

The most significant flaws in all such studies include the following:

Fraud

In 2001, the *Journal of Reproductive Medicine* published a study by three Columbia University researchers claiming that prayer for women undergoing in-vitro fertilization resulted in a pregnancy rate of 50%, double that of women who did not receive prayer. Media coverage was extensive. ABC News medical correspondent Dr. Timothy Johnson, for example, reported, "A new study on the power of prayer over pregnancy reports surprising results; but many physicians remain skeptical." One of those skeptics was a University of California Clinical Professor of Gynecology and Obstetrics named Bruce Flamm, who not only found numerous methodological errors in the experiment, but also discovered that one of the study's authors, Daniel Wirth (AKA "John Wayne Truelove"), is not an M.D., but an M.S. in parapsychology who has since been indicted on felony charges for mail fraud and theft, for which he pled guilty. The other two authors have refused comment, and after three years of inquires from Flamm the journal removed the study from its website and Columbia University launched an investigation.





Lack of Controls

Many of these studies failed to control for such intervening variables as age, sex, education, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, marital standing, degree of religiosity, and the fact that most religions have sanctions against such insalubrious behaviors as sexual promiscuity, alcohol and drug abuse, and smoking. When such variables are controlled for, the formerly significant results disappear. One study on recovery from hip surgery in elderly women failed to control for age; another study on church attendance and illness recovery did not consider that people in poorer health are less likely to attend church; a related study failed to control for levels of exercise.

Outcome Differences

In one of the most highly publicized studies of cardiac patients prayed for by born-again Christians, 29 outcome variables were measured but on only six did the prayed-for group show improvement. In related studies, different outcome measures were significant. To be meaningful, the same measures need to be significant across studies, because if enough outcomes are measured some will show significant correlations by chance.

File-Drawer Problem

In several studies on the relationship between religiosity and mortality (religious people allegedly live longer), a number of religious variables were used, but only those with significant correlations were reported. Meanwhile, other studies using the same religiosity variables found different correlations and, of course, only reported those. The rest were filed away in the drawer of non-significant findings. When all variables are factored in together, religiosity and mortality show no relationship.

Operational Definitions

When experimenting on the effects of prayer, what, precisely, is being studied? For example, what type of prayer is being employed? (Are Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Wiccan, and Shaman prayers equal?) Who or what is being prayed to? (Are God, Jesus, and a universal life force equivalent?) What is the length and frequency of the prayer? (Are two 10-minute prayers equal to one 20-minute prayer?) How many people are praying and does their status in the religion matter? (Is one priestly prayer identical to ten parishioner prayers?) Most prayer studies either lack such operational definitions, or there is no consistency across studies in such definitions.

Theological Implications

The ultimate fallacy of all such studies is theological. If God is omniscient and omnipotent, He should not need to be reminded or inveigled that someone needs healing. Scientific prayer makes God a celestial lab rat, leading to bad science and worse religion.

MORMON SONG

(May be sung to sorta a combination of "Davy Crockett" & "the Beverly Hillbillies")

Hear the story of Joseph Smith
Snake oil salesman who wrote a myth
About a book on sheets of gold
Very sacred—very old.

Written in an ancient tongue
A tale of Jesus yet unsung
The angel Moroni helped him translate
Those sacred words of racial hate.

So now we have our latter saints
And men can now have several mates
In the holy words of Brigham Young
"Just bring 'em now and bring 'em young."

Brigham found a lake of salt
Where the Mormons' march could halt
His people built a temple there
So their message they could share.

See them go out two by two
Bringing Joseph's truth to you
Join up now and you can save
All your people in the grave.

CHORUS:

Drink no coffee, drink no tea
Mormon truth can set you free
You too can Mormonism find
If you disconnect your mind.

by Edwin Kagin
July 5, 1996
Lake Hypatia, Alabama

The Cincinnati Atheists Meetup Group has an event:

What: The Cincinnati Atheists April Meetup

When: Tuesday, April 18 at 8:00PM

Where: Joseph-Beth Booksellers; 2692 Madison Rd.
Rookwood Pavillion; Cincinnati OH 45207; 513-396-8966





Brazil's Upfront Approach Against AIDS Defying U.S. ideology, the government enlists prostitutes in its prevention efforts.

Paula Duran is an outreach worker with a style of her own. That style—heavy on fishnet, tattoos and suggestive poses—is at the heart of an ideological disagreement between Brazil and the United States over the best way to fight AIDS.

Duran, 35, is a prostitute in Villa Mimosa, a red-light district in seaside Rio-de-Janeiro where an estimate 3,500 sex workers lounge in the doorways and lean out the windows of scarred, decaying buildings.

Each time she snags a customer, she fishes in her purse for a government-supplied condom. Often she repeats information on disease transmission that she learned at a state-funded workshop for prostitutes around the corner.

"I'm always telling people that they should never do anything without a condom," Duran says. "A lot of the young people who come around here don't know anything about it, so I try to teach them whatever I can."

But the U.S. government strongly disapproves of such unorthodox methods. Three weeks ago, Brazil received a letter from USAID declaring the country ineligible for a renewal of a \$48 million AIDS prevention grant. The United States requires all countries receiving AIDS funding help to formally state that prostitution is dehumanizing and degrading, and Brazil last year—alone among AIDS aid recipients—was unwilling to do that.

A working partnership with prostitutes, health officials here say, is a key reason that the country's AIDS prevention and treatment programs are considered by the

United Nations to be the most successful in the developing world. There are at least 600,000 people infected with HIV in Brazil—but that is only half the number predicted by the World Bank a decade ago.

"When we started in the 1980's, our projected AIDS rates were exactly the same as Africa's, but now it's a completely different story," says Mariangela Simao, deputy director of Brazil's national HIV-AIDS program in Brasilia.

"I'm convinced it's a result of the way the government has responded. We provide information and resources, and don't enter into moral or religious issues."

Brazil's annual Carnival, the rowdy pre-Lenten festival where clothes and inhibitions are mostly considered optional, took place late last month. At parades and block parties attended by millions throughout the country, the government's approach to AIDS and reproductive health appeared as unrestrained as the revelers themselves.

In Rio, free condoms were passed out like candy as part of a national goal to distribute 25 million of them before Carnival ended last Tuesday. At a suburban bus stop, pamphlets distributed by the Health Ministry advertised a character called "Maria Without

Shame," a cleavage-flaunting cartoon prostitute who reminds sex workers to take pride in their jobs and tells people that condoms should be used without guilt.

At celebrations in the northeastern city of Salvador, health officials also planned to pass out morning after pills, according to local newspaper reports.

— *Washington Post National Weekly*, 6-12 March 2006

Quote

... and god will protect you.

The feminization of AIDS is not just an inner-city phenomenon. HIV has also raced through the South in recent years, pushing women's infection rates into the stratosphere. Poverty and a lack of health care are clearly part of the story, but many experts suspect that traditional morality may also play a role—by discouraging assertiveness among women and openness among men. "Religious faith affects the way women perceive themselves in many communities of color," says Janet Cleveland, deputy director of the National Center for HIV, STD and TB Prevention in Atlanta. "As a woman you're raised to be trusting and submissive. But those same qualities can place you at risk." UCLA psychologist Gail Wyatt found, for example, that women raised to value what she calls "interconnectedness" over assertiveness often "allow partners to make decisions about contraceptive use and sexual behaviors," and tend to "trust partners without asking questions."

By the same token, traditional morality—and the pressures that come with it—can make it harder for men to acknowledge their sexual orientation.

— "The New Face of AIDS" *Newsweek* (6 December 2004) p. 78

Unquote



Dear Colleagues,

It is very disturbing to see the U.S. is exporting creationists rubbish to the rest of the world, and that there are a significant number of people buying it. It seems like the whole world is suffering a neural shutdown!

Best wishes, Steve Edinger

<http://education.guardian.co.uk/higher/news/story/0,,1714171,00.html>

Academics fight rise of creationism at universities

- More students believe Darwin got it wrong
- Royal Society challenges 'insidious problem'

A growing number of science students on British campuses and in sixth form colleges are challenging the theory of evolution and arguing that Darwin was wrong. Some are being failed in university exams because they quote sayings from the Bible or Qur'an as scientific fact and at one sixth form college in London most biology students are now thought to be creationists. Earlier this month Muslim medical students in London distributed leaflets that dismissed Darwin's theories as false. Evangelical Christian students are also increasingly vocal in challenging the notion of evolution.

In the United States there is growing pressure to teach creationism or "intelligent design" in science classes, despite legal rulings against it. Now similar trends in this country have prompted the Royal Society, Britain's leading scientific academy, to confront the issue head on with a talk entitled "Why Creationism is Wrong". The award-winning geneticist and author Steve Jones will deliver the lecture and challenge creationists, Christian and Islamic, to argue their case rationally at the society's event in April. "There is an insidious and growing problem," said Professor Jones, of University College London. "It's a step back from rationality. They (the creationists) don't have a problem with science, they have a problem with argument. And irrationality is a very infectious disease as we see from the United States."

Professor David Read, vice-president and biological sciences secretary of the Royal Society, said that they felt it was essential to address the issue now: "We have asked Steve Jones to deliver his lecture on creationism and evolution because there continues to be controversy over how evolution and other aspects of science are taught in some UK schools, colleges and universities. Our education system should provide access to the knowledge and understanding gained through the scientific method of experiment and observation, such as the theory of evolution through natural selection, and should withstand attempts to withhold or misrepresent this knowledge in order to promote particular beliefs, religious or otherwise."

Leaflets questioning Darwinism were circulated among students at the Guys Hospital site of King's College London this month as part of the Islam Awareness Week, organised by the college's Islamic Society. One member of staff at Guys said that he found it deeply worrying that Darwin was being dismissed by people who would soon be practising as doctors. The leaflets are produced by the Al-Nasr Trust, a Slough-based charity set up in

1992 with the aim of improving the understanding of Islam. The passage quoted from the Qur'an states: "And God has created every animal from water. Of them there are some that creep on their bellies, some that walk on two legs and some that walk on four. God creates what he wills for verily God has power over all things."

A 21-year-old medical student and member of the Islamic Society, who did not want to be named, said that the Qur'an was clear that man had been created and had not evolved as Darwin suggests. "There is no scientific evidence for it [Darwin's Origin of Species]. It's only a theory. Man is the wonder of God's creation."

He did not feel that a belief in evolution was necessary to study medicine although he added that, if writing about it was necessary for passing an exam, he would do so. "We want to become doctors and dentists, we want to pass our exams." He added that God had not created mankind literally in six days. "It's not six earth days," he said, it could refer to several thousands of years but

it had been an act of creation and not evolution. At another London campus some students have been failed because they have presented creationism as fact. They have been told by their examiners that, while they are entitled to explain both sides of the debate, they cannot present the Bible or Qur'an as scientifically factual if they want to pass exams.

David Rosevear of the Portsmouth-based Creation Science Movement, which supports the idea of creationism, said that there was an increasing interest in the subject among students. "I've got no problem with an all-powerful God producing everything in six days," he said. He said it was an early example of the six-day week. Students taking exams on the subject should not be dogmatic one way or the other. "I tell them - answer the question, it's no good saying it [creationism] is a fact any more than saying evolution is a fact." A former lecturer in organic chemistry at Portsmouth polytechnic (now university) and ICI research scientist, Dr Rosevear said he had been invited to expound his theories at many colleges and had addressed the Cafe Scientifique, a student science society, at St Andrews university, Fife. "The students clearly came expecting to have a laugh but they found there was much more to it. Our attitude is - teach evolution but mention creationism and let students decide for themselves."

Most of the next generation of medical and science students could well be creationists, according to a biology teacher at a leading London sixth-form college. "The vast majority of my students now believe in creationism," she said, "and these are thinking young people who are able and articulate and not at the dim end at all. They have extensive booklets on creationism which they put in my pigeon-hole ... it's a bit like the southern states of America." Many of them came from Muslim, Pentecostal or Baptist family backgrounds, she said, and were intending to become pharmacists, doctors, geneticists and neuro-scientists.

- Duncan Campbell in *The Guardian*, 21 February 2006



BOOK REVIEW

The Politically Incorrect Guide to Science

by Tom Bethell

(New York: Regnery, 2005)

A book review by Chris Mooney

Initially, the question of whether or not to even write this column gave me pause. In criticizing Tom Bethell--author of the conservative Regnery Press's *Politically Incorrect Guide to Science*, which misrepresents the state of scientific knowledge on issues ranging from global warming to the vulnerability of endangered species to evolution--I wondered whether I would simply wind up bestowing upon its author more attention than he ultimately deserves.

It was a serious fear, but I decided to overcome it, for two reasons. First, Bethell's book is already getting plenty of attention. It's selling well, and one prominent conservative outlet, the Heritage Foundation, has even sponsored an event to promote it. And second, precisely because of its misleading content, the publication of Bethell's book represents a highly significant development that's well worth remarking upon. *The Politically Incorrect Guide to Science* takes what is already a well-documented war on scientific knowledge from the political right in this country to a new level of intensity. In the process, it flushes out into the open the anti-science sentiments that are unfortunately nourished by all too many conservative Republicans today (although rarely by the party's moderates).

Indeed, in some sense Bethell's book provides a useful service. It offers, in one place, a nice catalogue of all the discredited arguments that are ritualistically used to undermine evolution, global warming, and much else that's well established in modern science. Rather hilariously, if you look closely at the book's cover image on Amazon.com you will see the tagline "Liberals have hijacked science for long enough. Now it's our turn." "Our turn" to "hijack science," presumably. This revealing slogan has been changed for the final paperback version of the book--which now reads, "Liberals have hijacked science for long enough. It's time to set the record straight"--but the Freudian slip remains memorialized on the Internet.

And sure enough, there's plenty of science hijacking in *The Politically Incorrect Guide to Science*. Take the chapter on global warming. The excellent science and statistics blogger Tim Lambert has proposed a game called "global warming skeptic bingo," in which all of the various discredited arguments that are repeatedly used to undermine

the consensus view of human-caused climate change are arranged in a series of squares. Well, by my count Bethell manages to fill 9 out of 16 bingo squares with claims like the following: "Environmentalists not so long ago believed the earth was cooling"; and "satellite measurements of atmospheric temperatures do not agree with...surface readings."

A closer look at the latter charge suggests that Bethell isn't really interested in what science shows, but rather in compiling scientific-sounding arguments to bolster a political conclusion. Over

the summer, several papers came out in *Science* showing that contrary to previous assertions, there does not appear to be any significant discrepancy between measurements of surface temperatures and of atmospheric temperatures--both more or less show the warming predicted by climate models. In other sections, Bethell's book covers developments at least up to September of 2005, but it makes no reference to these publications, which undercut his claim that surface and atmospheric temperature readings are at odds.

Bethell's attacks on evolution follow a similar pattern. Although I'm unaware of any online "anti-evolutionist bingo" games, if they existed many of Bethell's arguments would no doubt be included. Indeed, Bethell has been attacking evolution for nearly 30 years; in a prominent 1976 Harper's article he declared evolution to be "on the verge of collapse." *The Politically Incorrect Guide to Science* employs many of the same arguments that Bethell made back then, such as the claim that the concept of natural selection amounts to a "tautology" and simply reflects a social philosophy prevalent during the intensely competitive and capitalistic Victorian era of Darwin's time. Such arguments were ably debunked by Stephen Jay Gould in 1976, and they're no stronger now than they were then.

More generally, it is difficult to trust Bethell's factual assertions about the lack of evidence for evolution (his is a purely negative argument) because he often misrepresents his sources. For instance, Bethell quotes the famed philosopher of science Karl Popper calling the concept of natural selection "almost tautological," but does not inform readers that Popper later changed his mind about this. Similarly, he quotes a paper from *Science* to question the concept of bat evolution. In fact, the paper cited is about bat evolution, and seeks to explain how it may have occurred.

On other issues, Bethell is equally unreliable. In his discussion of the need to resume using DDT to prevent malaria in Africa, he fails to note that many mosquitoes have developed a resistance to the chemical, reducing its effectiveness (perhaps because such an admission would bolster the case for evolution). In debunking concerns about decreasing



biodiversity, meanwhile, Bethell even has the gall to suggest that human beings may not be causing species extinctions: “Even in modern times, it is not possible definitively to attribute any given extinction to human activity.” On this point, I’d rather trust the National Academy of Sciences, which stated in 1995: “Species extinctions have occurred since life has been on earth, but human activities are causing the loss of biological diversity at an accelerating rate. The current rate of extinctions is among the highest in the entire fossil record, and many scientists consider it to have reached crisis proportions.”

Some of Bethell’s more general science policy arguments are almost as problematic. For instance, there’s his concept of a “priesthood of science,” an elite caste of scientific leaders whose words are taken as gospel and whose received wisdom never challenged. Alas, this mythic priesthood does not exist. The scientific process is inherently a contentious and antagonistic one, in which vast incentives exist for scientists to publish research that undermines what everyone thought was known and well established. In essence, the scientific process represents the institutionalization of doubt and skepticism. It is nothing like a priesthood.

Bethell also nourishes the misguided notion that journalists, when reporting on science, ought to act like Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein did when covering Watergate: They should be exposing bad science and looking for evidence of wrongdoing and scandal. This is fundamentally wrongheaded. It is within the scientific process itself that challenges to the veracity or accuracy of scientific work should be lodged, not in less critically equipped media venues. Bethell’s misleading book shows exactly why it’s a bad idea to turn non-expert journalists loose to evaluate scientific claims according to their own whimsy. That’s not to say that journalists reporting on science shouldn’t think critically themselves. But they should also understand and appreciate the strengths of the scientific process.

Finally, Bethell sneers at scientific “consensus,” noting that even if 99 percent of experts in a field accept a given theory, that doesn’t make it automatically true. But this fact notwithstanding, consensus plays an important role in the scientific process. It is how our knowledge progresses. Scientific conclusions are eternally subject to revision, but when consensus develops, it is based upon repeated testing and retesting of an idea or theory--and that’s hardly something to be taken lightly. In fact, when it comes to pressing matters of public policy where decisions depend upon a clear understanding of the underlying science (such as global warming), we ignore scientific consensus positions at our peril. All of these arguments made by Bethell--the scientific ones as well as the science-policy oriented ones--are very problematic. But what’s most disturbing about *The Politically*

Incorrect Guide to Science book is not the lack of scientific accuracy or its poor arguments. Rather, it’s the overall message that it preaches to conservative readers--in essence the following: “Don’t trust the nation’s scientific community, they’re a bunch of politicized liberals who are hooked on government funding.” In making such an argument so brazenly, and with such zest, I believe that Bethell takes the “war on science” to a new level. Consider that in, 2004 when many of the nation’s leading scientists criticized the Bush administration for misuses and distortions of scientific information, the administration’s response was not to attack science itself or the individual scientists. Rather, the administration claimed to have the best interests of science at heart, and simply disagreed about the facts.

That veneer of respect for science is gone in Bethell’s book, which reeks of a deep distrust of science as it is currently conducted, and the nation’s scientific community generally. The book’s back cover calls scientists “white-coated, lab-cloistered purveyors of political correctness”--as if there is no merit to what they do, no process that ensures the testing of results to determine their durability and robustness. A radical disdain for the scientific establishment, and especially its dependence on government funding, is rampant in the book. And the scorn spreads to encompass the government’s own science-centered agencies as well; at one point Bethell even suggests that we may not need the Environmental Protection Agency.

Overall, then, *The Politically Incorrect Guide to Science* is a very saddening and depressing read. While they have undoubtedly made mistakes, and certainly nourish individual biases just like all the rest of us, scientists in universities and in government have generally worked very hard and have--thanks to the scientific process--come up with a great deal of important and relevant knowledge. But along comes someone like Bethell and, in a book that’s likely to be read by a lot of people, radically distorts and undermines their conclusions and findings, while whipping up resentment of the scientific community among rank-and-file political conservatives. That Bethell is finding such a ready audience underscores the severe threat to the role of science in modern American life and, most importantly, in political decision-making.

Source: online at <http://www.csicop.org/doubtandabout/bethell/>
To read more articles by Chris Mooney visit:
<http://www.csicop.org/doubtandabout/>
<http://www.chrismooney.com/>




BOOK REVIEW II

Hitler and the Vatican: Inside the Secret Archives that Reveal the New Story of the Nazis and the Church
by Peter Godman
(New York: Free Press, 2004)

The leaders of the Roman Catholic church never openly condemned Hitler and the German Nazis. Much has been written about the relationship between Pope Pius and Germany in the thirties, during the war, and when millions were murdered in the death camps. Pius has been seen as so favorable to the Germans, he has been called "Hitler's Pope." Godman, a historian of the Renaissance was given broad access to the Vatican archival papers of the period. In this volume he tries to sort out just what the Pope did, wrote, and thought during the Nazi period, 1933 to 1945.

We need to consider two Popes, Pius XI (1922-February 1939) and Pius XII (March 1939-1958). The twelfth Pius was Foreign Secretary to the eleventh Pius before he ascended the throne of St. Peter himself, and thus carried out very much the same policy before and after he became Pope.

Soon after Hitler came to power in 1933 he signed a treaty (*concordat*) with the Vatican, which gave both sides what they wanted. The Pope was assured control over Catholic doctrine, teaching and appointment of members of the hierarchy, thus strengthening the power of the Vatican. Hitler's government realized international prestige and validity. Both parties were happy to agree there would be no independent Catholic politics, and the Catholic Center Party would be dissolved. Hitler violated the provisions of the treaty from the beginning, even before it was ratified. Yet, the Vatican did its best to hold fast to the treaty, in the hope its legal provisions would perhaps, some time in the future, be observed, or at least give a grounding to complaints. And, indeed, this treaty is still in effect, and forms the basis of relations between Germany and the Vatican today.

Godman emphasizes throughout his study, that the Vatican is a complex bureaucracy which spoke with several voices, despite the theoretically absolute authority of the Pope. Early in the Hitler period, Jesuit scholars were charged with examining what should be condemned in the Hitler system. By 1935 a long draft, a *List of Propositions [to be*

Condemned] on Nationalism, Racism and Totalitarianism was available to the Holy Office (formerly the Inquisition) and thus to the Pope. In an appendix Godman gives the text in Latin and English, with various changes and revisions. Yet, this condemnation was never made public or used by the Pope to rain malediction on the German evil doers. In the same period another part of the Vatican, in the person of Bishop Alois Hudal, the head of the German National Church in Rome, was advancing his career by writing books favorable, with qualifications, on the Nazis, their creed and their actions..

The Vatican had many reasons to pull its punches. It existed within, and was granted its modern and present territory by Fascist Italy. It had every reason to fear Nazi retaliation against German Cardinals, the rest of the hierarchy, and the ordinary faithful. Hitler and Germany appeared as the last and only force against godless, atheistic Communism. In the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) the legitimate, republican government was aided by the Communists and the Soviet Union. The Catholic Church migrated to the side of the Fascists, and thus found itself allied with Hitler and Mussolini. Between Hitler and Stalin, the Fascists were taken as the lesser evil. The Vatican wished to avoid a "war" between the Nazis and the Church, and for that did everything to keep peace with Germany.

If the Catholic Church were an ordinary, secular association, – an international association of financial institutions, for instance, – we would shrug our shoulders that they avoided exposure and did everything to protect themselves and their assets. But, the Church claims to speak for god, and to address and defend all mankind and true morality. Measured against their claims for authority and ethics, the Popes Pius failed. Godman shows that they knew the evils of Naziism, that they prepared a detailed condemnation, but that they did or said nothing.

– Wolf Roder



May Potluck: Tuesday 9th 6:30 PM

April Meeting: Tuesday 25th 7:00 PM



FIG Leaves
P.O. Box 19034
Cincinnati, OH 45219

FIG

Our Purpose

The Free Inquiry Group, Inc. (FIG) is a non-profit organization founded in 1991. FIG is allied with the Council for Secular Humanism as well as an affiliate of the American Humanist Association and of the American Atheists.

Though most of our members are secular humanists, we welcome to our meetings anyone interested in learning about or furthering our purpose.



To foster a community of secular humanists dedicated to improving the human condition through rational inquiry and creative thinking unfettered by superstition, religion, or any form of dogma.

In accordance with our purpose, we have established the following goals:

- To provide a forum for intelligent exchange of ideas for those seeking fulfillment in an ethical secular life.
- To develop through open discussion the moral basis of a secular society and encourage ethical practices within our own membership and the community at large.
- To inform the public regarding secular alternatives to supernatural interpretations of the human condition.
- To support and defend the principles of democracy, free speech, and separation of church and state as expressed in the Constitution of the United States and the Bill of Rights.

For more information, write the Free Inquiry Group at the address above, e-mail figinfo@gofigger.org, or leave a message at (513) 557-3836. Visit our web site at gofigger.org.