

# FIG Leaves

February 2000

## February Meeting - Margaret Downey

### Saving Children from the TAR Pits of Society

TAR is sticky goo that can pull people down and kill them. TAR is just like "tradition," "authority," and "revelation!" In a one-hour speech Margaret Downey will tell you why the acronym TAR is so meaningful to her and her philosophy of child rearing. Using overheads, props, and a video Margaret will poke fun at the notion that "tradition," "authority," and "revelation" are needed in today's society. Get ready for a lively presentation with audience participation, laughs, and appropriate door prizes.



Margaret has been an Atheist activist for fifteen years, starting with writing simple letters to the editor. She is now considered one of only a few national spokespersons for the Atheist community. She founded the Freethought Society of Greater Philadelphia (FSGP) in 1992. In 1993, She founded the Anti-Discrimination Support Network (ADSN). ADSN was founded to counter negative stereotyping of Atheists and to assist with legal battles such as bigotry in the Boy Scouts of America and religious testing for public office. She currently serves as a board member of the American Humanist Association as well as the Atheist Alliance, the Humanist Institute, and the Freedom From Religion Foundation. She is the editor of "The Greater Philadelphia Story" (FSGP's bimonthly newsletter). Her journalist work has also been published in several national newsletters and magazines. She has been an independent business woman for 20 years and currently owns and

## FIG Discussion Group

**When:** Wednesday, March 15, 7-9 PM

**Place:** Ethiopian restaurant (Addis Zemen) 421-2557  
Clifton and McMillan intersection  
(buffet, around \$10/person)

**Purpose:** Discussion and Dinner

**Topic:** What is truth? Part 2: Belief

**Optional Homework:** 3 Articles included with this issue of FIG Leaves:

- (i) Truth and Consequences, Matt Cherry
- (ii) Exposing the Emperor's New Clothes, Why We Won't Leave Postmodernism Alone, Jean Bricmont
- (iii) Questioning Truth and Reality, Victor J. Stenger

**Format:** focus discussion around the topic (not only the articles)

**Facilitators:** William Jensen and Gary Weiss

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## Events

**February Meeting**  
Margaret Downey  
*Saving Children from the  
TAR Pits of Society*  
Tuesday, February 22 at 7:00  
PM  
Geier Center

**Potluck Dinner**  
Tuesday, March 14, 2000  
at 6:30 PM

### FIG Members

If you have a red dot on  
your address label,  
your membership is in  
immediate danger!  
Sign up again today!

# Civil Rights Legislation

For the first two years of its existence, 1996 and 1997, Camp Quest, the only secular humanist summer camp in the United States, rented the camp facilities of the Bullittsburg Baptist Assembly in Boone County, Kentucky. [Edwin and Helen Kagin, the founders and leaders of Camp Quest, also live in Boone County.] Camp Quest was founded in 1996 by Edwin F. Kagin, a northern Kentucky attorney and Eagle Scout, who felt a summer camp for secular humanist children was needed to counter the discrimination of the Boy Scouts against non-theistic children. From the beginning, Camp Quest and its sponsoring organization, the Free Inquiry Group (FIG) of Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky, presented themselves as secular humanists to the Bullittsburg Camp and its owners, the Northern Kentucky Baptist Association (NKBA), a coalition of 66 Southern Baptist churches. The Bullittsburg Camp and NKBA had Camp Quest sign a contract in which the NKBA acknowledged that they followed the public accommodations laws. Despite some minor problems, the arrangement between the secular humanist organizations and the Bullittsburg Camp proceeded amicably for the nine days each summer that Camp Quest used the camp facilities. During the second year, however, while relations with the camp staff remained cordial, it became clear that Camp Quest was not really welcomed at the Baptist Camp, so Camp Quest moved to a camp near Lebanon, Ohio, for the summer of 1998, and this year will hold its fifth session at this location.

Camp Quest supporters and FIG members were surprised to learn from news reports on 14 January 2000, over 2 1/2 years after the last camp session in the Baptist facility, that the Northern Kentucky Baptists had experienced a "great deal of discomfort" at the presence of secular humanists in their summer camp. The Baptists complained that they were initially not made aware of the secular humanist nature of Camp Quest (a false claim), and that they only rented the property to Camp Quest because they were afraid of being sued (a belief that is entirely imaginary on their part). After two years of apparent discussion, the Baptists decided they now want the legal right to deny the use of their camp grounds to any organization that has a fundamental conflict with their religious beliefs. They therefore asked Kentucky Representative Tom Kerr to sponsor legislation (House Bill 70) that exempts churches from the common anti-

discrimination requirements of public accommodation laws. These statutes broadly state that if an organization rents its facilities to outside groups, it may not discriminate against them for the usual reasons of gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, religious belief, disability, and so forth. (Since many organizations, including churches, are private organizations, they may of course legally deny others the use of their private facilities if they use them exclusively for their own purposes and never rent them to outside groups. In the present case, the Bullittsburg Camp owned by the NKBA has frequently been leased to outside organizations, so the public accommodation anti-discrimination laws apply.)

The Kentucky House passed House Bill 70 (Amended) on February 2 by a vote of 82-17, allowing churches to discriminate against humanists, atheists, gays, pagans, and other groups whose tenets the churches disagree with. The legislation permits churches to deny the use of their property to such groups by exempting religious organizations from state civil rights laws by excluding them from the definition of "public accommodation." That means that religious organizations could refuse to make their facilities available to any group that doesn't share their religious beliefs. Legislators tightened the bill by approving an amendment that Tom Kerr hoped would appease critics who feared that churches might use the proposed law to discriminate against African-Americans and other minorities. The amendment inserted language into the bill making it clear that religious organizations can't discriminate on the basis of disability, race, color or national origin. It added another clause prohibiting discrimination in non-religious activities sponsored by religious organizations. The Kentucky Senate is expected to also approve this legislation, and the Kentucky Governor is expected to sign it into law. Civil rights, civil liberties, state-church separation, humanist, atheist, and gay groups oppose this legislation now as unconstitutionally discriminatory against them, and they plan to oppose it in the courts if it becomes law. [4 February 2000]

The 1996-1997 Camp Quest lease of the Bullittsburg Baptist Assembly Camp has unexpectedly

## Correction:

**The Schedule of Events in January's Newsletter, page 11, was that of U.C. Skeptics, not A.R.T. as was listed.**

FIG Leaves Volume 9, Issue 2, February 2000 - Editors welcome thoughtful articles, letters, reviews, reports, anecdotes, and cartoons. Submit in electronic format via Internet to FIGEditors@aol.com or on disk or typewritten via mail to Editor, FIG Leaves, P.O. Box 8128, Cincinnati OH 45208. Contributions received before the first Tuesday of the month will be considered for publication that month. All material printed in FIG Leaves may be reproduced in similar publications of non-profit groups which grant FIG Leaves reciprocal reprinting rights as long as proper credit is clearly attributed to FIG Leaves and the author. Opinions expressed in FIG Leaves are those of their authors and do not necessarily reflect opinions of the editor or the Free Inquiry Group, Inc., its board, or officers. © 1999 The Free Inquiry Group, Inc. FIG Board of Directors: President George Maurer, Vice President Edwin Kagin, Secretary Helen Kagin, Treasurer Joe Levee, Members: Nurit Bowman, Lyse Hurd, Tim Kelly, Inez Klein, Robert Riehemann, Gary



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become an issue of controversy with important implications for religious freedom and civil liberties. Check Edwin's webpage for updates on this fast-breaking story. I will post further news reports, editorials, and letters as they come in. To interview Edwin F. Kagin for this story, reporters may call him at 606-384-7000 or email him at edwinkagin@fuse.net. Representative Kathy W. Stein (Lexington, KY, who is leading the House opposition to HB70) may be interviewed for this story at 502-564-8100, ext. 675 (legislative office), 606-225-4269 (office), 606-252-1500 (home), or by email at kathy.stein@lrc.state.ky.us.

Steven Schafersman  
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<http://www.edwinkagin.com/>

"Sometimes, hair-splitting is necessary in order to reach a fair solution. Churches shouldn't discriminate, but neither

should they be forced to welcome atheism. A fine line can and should be drawn. Religious liberty can be protected without compromising civil rights."

From *The Cincinnati Enquirer*,  
page A-12, January 27, 2000.

The problem with Kerr's approach - as well-intentioned as it may be - is that it is difficult to write a law that can define where religious differences end and discrimination and hatred begins.

If the Northern Kentucky Baptist Association is concerned about who they might have to rent to, it shouldn't offer the campgrounds for rent.

*The Kentucky Post*, January 21, 2000

# Letters sent to the Kentucky Enquirer

Your January 27 editorial entitled "Atheists In Church: A Bad Law" was a strange mix of poor reporting and dubious reasoning. No law requires churches or other property owners to rent their facilities to anyone at all. The Kentucky law which the Enquirer inveighs against merely requires that once a church (or any other owner of public accommodations) has decided to do so, it cannot discriminate against prospective renters on the basis of religious belief.

The exception which the Enquirer urges be made in this fundamental civil rights statute would permit churches to refuse any rental that would "compromise fundamental religious tenets" of that church. African-Americans, Buddhists, Catholics and left-handed plumbers could be turned away if their presence at church-owned facilities was not compatible with church teachings. In other words, the exception would swallow the rule and turn the clock back to a time when with a wink and a nod, certain religious and racial groups would be effectively shut out of public accommodations.

My children have attended Camp Quest, the small secular humanist summer camp whose presence at a church-owned facility so discomfited the Bullitsburg Baptist Assembly. Under the leadership of the camp director, Edwin Kagin (whose name your editorial mangled), they were taught to evaluate religious beliefs with an open mind and a gentle curiosity. What a shame that the Enquirer believes this type of free inquiry to be so threatening that it warrants gutting all Kentuckians' rights to fair and equal access to public facilities--all in the name of a religion whose preeminent teaching is to love thy neighbor as thyself.

James F. Trumm  
Toledo, Ohio

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Can it be true that the Cincinnati Enquirer is advocating on its editorial page that one group of people discriminate against another group of people? It's true, and what's even stranger is that the Enquirer wants Christians to be allowed to discriminate. Throughout my lifetime, Christians have been accused of discriminating against women, Jewish people, African-Americans, gays and lesbians, Moslems, pagans, and many other minorities. While these accusations have merit, the Enquirer should realize that it does Christians no service to encourage them to discriminate some more, this time against atheists and secular humanists. Rather, one would think that the Enquirer would encourage some positive religious attribute, such as "Christian charity" or "love thy neighbor."

You made a fine distinction in your editorial: it is wrong to discriminate against racial minorities and Jewish groups, but okay to do so against atheists and secular humanists. "A fine line can and should be drawn," you said. The fineness of your line escapes me, however. Are atheists and humanists not people? Isn't discrimination against people--because of their beliefs, ethnicity, color, gender, and sexual orientation--wrong, because they are people? "Churches shouldn't be forced to welcome atheism," you argued, and churches shouldn't "be forced to compromise their faith for the sake of a rental agreement." I agree, but how is having atheist kids at a summer camp forcing churches to welcome atheism or compromise their faith? Are the church members being forced to attend, too? Does the presence of humanist children in their camp for a week

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cause their adult faith to weaken? Does the proximity of people who put their "faith in science and reason, not God," cause the camp buildings to absorb some sort of antitheist paranormal energy that radiates the Baptists the following month?

The current laws state that if a private organization rents its property to outside groups, it can't discriminate. The legislation of Kentucky Rep. Tom Kerr, allowing religious groups to discriminate against those with different beliefs, is not only unconstitutional and un-American, it is an abomination. It endorses bigotry by Christians against non-Christians, people who are otherwise kind, industrious, honest, patriotic, and law-abiding. No amount of "hair-splitting," as advocated by the Enquirer, can turn this bigoted and hate-filled bill into anything with redeeming human value, and I'm surprised that anyone would want to try.

Steven Schafersman  
Midland, Texas

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If Kentucky amends its civil rights laws so religious groups can discriminate against atheists, as the ENQUIRER recommends, that will not end an injustice. It will just grant another "special right" for religious believers. Why should atheists be singled out as the only group to which Christians can refuse to rent a public accommodation?

The ENQUIRER's proposed "solution," in which Christian owners must rent to Jews but could refuse atheists, tramples not only the rights of atheists, but of conservative Christians who may not share the ENQUIRER's ecumenism. If it's OK to discriminate against atheists, why shouldn't it be OK for arch-conservative Christians who regard Jews as "Christ killers" to snub Jews too? Where will it end?

It should end here, by letting Kentucky's existing law stand. Religious groups eager to discriminate can just keep their camp or other facility wholly within their own denomination. If they seek extra income by putting their facility on the rental market, then they must rent to everyone -- atheists most emphatically included. If Kentucky's Baptists are so eager to discriminate, let them stand on principle and turn their backs on Mammon. Surely that's not too much to ask of any Christian group.

Tom Flynn  
Buffalo, New York

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Editor  
Cincinnati Enquirer

Dear Editor:

On January 27, 2000, your paper opined that the current attempt by certain self-righteous modern Pharisees to gain special rights to discriminate against those who do not believe in their God, like the children of

Camp Quest, is a good idea that the Kentucky Legislature should pass into law. One might wish that, for this appalling assault on our American freedoms, you would have taken greater care to get your facts, your theology, and your spelling of my name right.

Camp Quest is the first residential summer camp in the history of the United States for the children of secular humanists and other non-believers. It is operated by the Free Inquiry Group, Inc. (FIG), of Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky, and is endorsed by the Council for Secular Humanism and by the American Humanist Association. It does not proselytize, but it does attempt to offer safe haven for those bright and beautiful children who may feel themselves diminished in consequence of the incredible prejudices directed against them by those who see themselves as superior to them by virtue of nothing more than their diverse, and contradictory, beliefs in a supernatural world. We teach these children, ages eight to thirteen, that they are not alone, but are rather in the company of giants about whom history has too often lied. One of the reasons Camp Quest was started is because the Boy Scouts do not, in obedience to their views of virtue and Americanism, admit children who are avowed non-believers to membership.

For its first two years, 1996 and 1997, Camp Quest was held at a camp facility rented from the Baptists in Boone County, Kentucky. The staff of the camp knew who we were, and we knew who they were. Their staff wore their "Jesus is Lord" tee shirts, and we wore our Camp Quest (Question, Understand, Explore, Search, Test) tee shirts. We got along wonderfully, and we treated each other with mutual respect. One Baptist staff member very kindly conducted a fishing derby for us. One of their children joined us in our pool sessions. We made these most decent hosts of ours an aerial photograph of their campgrounds on one of our plane rides, and we discussed with our campers the Bible quotes the Baptists had posted on their hiking trail. We were told that our campers were more polite, better behaved, and kept the grounds cleaner than many of the religious children to whom they normally rented. Their staff was left, we believe, with a different view of secular humanists that they had previously held, and we left with a better feeling for those Baptists who believe in a God who wants them to be kind to everyone, regardless of their creed.

Now, three years later, some, whose religion appears to consist of views that Jesus condemned in the Sermon on the Mount and in the parable of the Good Samaritan, have asked the Kentucky Legislature, in HB 70, to amend the civil rights laws of Kentucky so that churches can discriminate against those who do not believe in the basic tenets of their religion when they offer their facilities to the public for rental or other public uses. As grounds for this request, they claim that they were forced, by current law, to rent to Camp Quest, and to its parent organization of non-believers. This apparently proved unbearably traumatic to those good Christians sponsoring the bill who were never at Camp Quest. Now,

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they want the civil rights law changed to assure that they will never again have to trespass against their understanding of brotherly love by being forced to acknowledge Samaritans as their neighbors. They of course have, and have always had, the option of not offering their facilities for rent to the public at all.

Their proposed law, HB 70, is an attempt to give special rights, not equal rights, to churches. As such, it appears to facially violate the Constitution of Kentucky. Section 59 prohibits "special legislation," and Section 5 guarantees, as one of our basic freedoms, that "the civil rights of no person shall be taken away, or in anywise diminished on account of his disbelief of any religious tenet, dogma or teaching." In that this is exactly what the proposed legislation seeks to do, it is something our wiser ancestors saw coming. It is the sort of un-American activity they took great pains to prohibit and prevent, should any later day prospective tyrants ever again attempt to make their religion our law, followed by their inquisitions and heresy trials.

Just who, under the proposed law, will decide just what are the basic beliefs of any religious group? The courts? The camp staff Baptists, who saw their God and their religion as big enough to include the children of Camp Quest ("suffer the little children to come unto me"), or those Baptists who want the Samaritans kept off of their road? Questions of just who shall say what is to be believed have caused no little unpleasantness in the past.

We have separation of church and state in America so the Baptists and the Anabaptists won't have legal excuse to kill each other, so Catholic children do not have to endure forced readings of the Protestant Bible in public schools, and so churches cannot refuse, on what they choose to call religious grounds, to deny facilities offered to the public to atheists, to those who suffer from the last taboo. Under testimony in committee, those pressing the adoption of this law said they would rent to the KKK, for they believe in God. So did Hitler. The motto of the Nazis was "God With Us." The bill's sponsors, and your editorial, apparently find these God fearing folks less objectionable than the children of Camp Quest.

What Would Jesus Do?

Assuming the correctness of their views on reward and punishment in an afterlife, how will it be with those called before the Blissful Seat, before the great Judge of World, to answer for their deeds of life, when inquiry is made regarding just why they denied use of property dedicated to God to the children of Camp Quest.

Wonder if the reply, "Because they didn't believe in you, Oh God of Love" will prove to be an altogether satisfactory answer?

Edwin Kagin  
Camp Director  
Camp Quest

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I am responding to your article regarding Camp Quest and the Baptist Camp. I am a counselor at Camp

Quest. I do not understand the current trend to retreat back to the dark ages in creating law. If the proposed law is passed, there would be such a retreat. Your article states that the current amendment would read, "Churches could refuse only when a rental compromises fundamental religious tenets." Anyone thinking that "that is fair," is kidding themselves and the general population.

Anything could compromise religious tenets. Why, there are still groups that use the Bible to promote racism and hatred. I am appalled that a newspaper would advocate creating such a law. I would also like to address your comment that we believe in science, etc. and not god and "impart those beliefs on the children." This statement would lead one to believe, (as you may have intended), that we are brainwashing these innocent young minds. The children come to us with their beliefs already ingrained. They learn about bugs, evolution, take fossil hikes, swim in the lake, take balloon rides, sing songs by the campfire, learn about human diversity and tolerance and are encouraged to question every single thing that they are taught. Does that sound like a camp that is "imparting beliefs on the children."

If you are still not convinced, then come to our camp and see for yourself what we do. It is easy to sit in your armchair and make judgements, it is not so easy to do your research and find out the truth. That is what we, as secular humanists do. Has journalism taken a different course than it used to take? Maybe it is just your paper that has done so. And Kagin is spelled with a K, not a C.  
Lyse Hurd

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Your January 27 editorial clearly implies that the last group it is acceptable to discriminate against is atheists, since under the proposed law you support, church camps couldn't discriminate against racial minorities and Jewish groups. Why discriminate against good people because after an earnest search of their hearts and the evidence, they honestly conclude that they cannot accept your belief in God?

Your position ignores the fact that atheists seek to be good neighbors and citizens, and that secular humanists in particular expend much effort to demonstrate that one can be a good person without basing their ethics on the interpretation of a few ancient principles.

You disregard the fact that many philosophers and scientists have concluded that the evidence for the existence of God is not convincing. Moreover, many people without such extensive education find it hard to square the existence of so many deformed babies and the suffering brought by catastrophic natural disasters with an all-good God.

Atheists and secular humanists, like blacks and Jews, should be given equal treatment until their behavior marks them unworthy of it.

Joe Levee  
Cincinnati, Ohio

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## January Meeting Review

Marion Cooley was the featured speaker on the topic of Christian Science at the monthly FIG meeting held on January 25, 2000. She had planned a joint presentation with her husband Bill, but he was stranded in New York City by a snowstorm.

Marion became a Christian Scientist when she married Bill, and remained one for 35 years after that. Since leaving Christian Science she has become a vocal critic of the religion, especially in regard to the withholding of medical treatment for children. She works with CHILDR (Children's Health Is a Legal Duty) to repeal state laws that exempt religious groups from child abuse statutes.

Christian Science was founded by Mary Baker Eddy in the late 19th century. The religion endeavors to explain the existence of evil in a world that was created by a good and omnipotent God. The apparent contradiction can be resolved if we accept that the physical world is an illusion. Anything that seems to be evil is just a flaw in our

perception.

In their philosophy, the human spirit is real, but the body and all sensations are illusory. Every human spirit is a perfect creation of God, yet our human limitations allow error to creep into our thoughts. A true and complete understanding of these facts would allow the believer to live in perfection with God. Any acknowledgement of human existence in the material world is an erroneous thought, and leads to the perception of 'evil' things. Human illnesses are thus caused by the belief in illness, that is, a lack of faith in the unreality of illness.

Christian Scientists struggle to deny reality while living comfortably within it. As a result, they tend to keep their secular existence in one 'pocket', and their religious existence in another 'pocket'. Christian Scientists speak to each other in a sort of code that avoids mention of anything that is negative or less than perfect. There is little need for compassion, especially for strangers, since any suffering is both immaterial and self-inflicted.

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To the Editor:

Mea Culpa---I am guilty! As an instructor at the first Camp Quest I must admit that I took a telescope onto Baptist property and showed children, Camp Quest staff, and anyone else interested, the moons of Jupiter. I commented that this observation was condemned by the Christians at the time of its discovery by Galileo, in 1610, because it implied that the earth was not the center of the universe. This Copernican worldview had been condemned earlier by both Martin Luther and John Calvin as contrary to Scripture. Since the Catholics put Galileo under house arrest for supporting the idea, it is clear that my activity might have offended many Christians.

Why, indeed, should any decent Christian have to associate with me just because I am a member of the public? The justness of the expulsion of atheists from the rank of citizenship, as recommended by the ENQUIRER, could not be clearer. This distinction, as proposed in HB 70, reminds me of Section 187 of the Kentucky Constitution which states "...separate schools for white and colored children shall be maintained." We all surely agree on the greatness of that idea.

I await the day when we have our own drinking fountains and places to sit on the bus.

Bob Riehemann  
Bellevue, KY

I assisted in a class at the Camp Quest in Bulletsburg. The class consisted of a hike through the woods where we observed the scripture plaques the Baptist had erected to proclaim their doctrines. The class was an open forum in which the kids read the passages

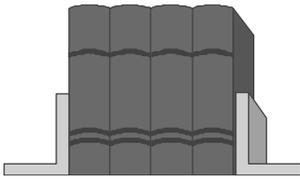
and asked questions and made comments on their meaning. I had time for comments and rebuttals. I gave a witness to my faith, but we respected each other. Although some of the teenagers expressed skepticism and doubts, I did not encounter any more skepticism (or outrageous interpretations) then I have at countless religious camps over the years.

The students and counselors were respectful of the Baptists and of my views. I tried to express respect for all views and doubts as well. I was unaware that the Baptists were so particular about the doctrines (or lack thereof) of persons or groups using their facilities. I am aware that public school districts use this facility for leadership camps. Do they have to pass a test of teachings in order to be welcomed guests? What if they teach that the world is older than 6,000 years? What if those school districts have policies that allow dancing or forbid discrimination against homosexuals?

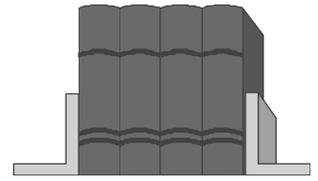
What about other religious groups that do not hold to current Baptist teachings on baptism or may serve wine in communion? Can only fundamentalist Christians use this camp? If so do they reject all public funds, all tax exempt privileges? Many Christians have more in common with the Camp Quest kids than with the KKK or Christian Identity groups who celebrate hatred (and would be welcome under this new law). Jesus said, "It is not those who say Lord, Lord, but those who DO the will of God". Many people have been wounded by religious bigotry. The state has no business in justifying this brand of discrimination. The Church has no business in asking the state to intervene. As Ronald Reagan said, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it".

Pastor Mendle Adams  
St. Peter's United Church of Christ





# Book Reviews



## ***The Jesus Puzzle:***

### ***Did Christianity Begin with a Mythical Christ?***

By Earl Doherty

(Ottawa: Canadian Humanist Publications, 1999)

The writer of the letter to the Hebrews has this to say (8 Heb:4): "Now, if he [Jesus] had been on earth, he would not..." clearly implying, contrary to everything we think the New Testament says, that Jesus never did dwell on earth. And that is the thesis of the Jesus Puzzle, a challenge to the very existence of a historical Jesus. With extensive scholarship and literary skill, Doherty lays out a clear case "for regarding the entire Gospel account of Jesus' life and death as nothing but literary fabrication." (P. 75).

The New Testament according to Doherty represents two quite different and contrasting strands of narrative, which he calls the Jerusalem and the Galilean traditions. The first is found in the epistles, especially the letters ascribed to Paul which are older than the Gospels. These documents never speak of Christ's earthly life, never refer to any actions, miracles, or statements of a man in a real place, neither in Jerusalem nor in Galilee. Rather, the epistle writers describe his actions, his being, and his sacrifice as something that took place in the spirit realm. This is a heavenly Christ who never came to earth. This Christ of the Jerusalem traditions resembles many of the mystery gods, goddesses, and cults of the first century Roman Empire. The acts ascribed to Mithras, for instance, took place in the heavenly realms, no one would try to find the body and blood of the slain bull on earth. Neither, do the epistle writers expect to find a real cross and a real body of Christ.

The Galilean tradition starts only with the Gospel of Mark, no earlier evidence for an earthly life of Jesus exists. To be sure, Mark had some sayings ascribed to the Jerusalem Christ, but the narrative of earthly doings, and the passion story seem to be his invention. Mark has given the spiritual founder a biography, a family, a hometown, a ministry and companions. He has linked him to some of the basic elements of the Jerusalem tradition and brought him to the city for death and resurrection. Mark seems to be the only source for these stories. The other Gospels borrowed from him and shaped their narrative to their own polemical needs. Thus, although Mark, Matthew, and Luke share many of the same sayings, the circumstances under which they were uttered, the place, and the occasion differ considerably.

The distance from Jerusalem to Galilee is about seventy miles, a journey of three or four days on foot. Yet, in the entire literature of the Jerusalem Tradition there is no evidence of such a journey. "Before the Gospels were adopted as history, no record exists that he was ever in the city of Jerusalem at all or anywhere else on earth." (P.

141). To me that is a telling point, but it is the absence of evidence. Much of Doherty's thesis rests on negatives, no journey to Jerusalem, Paul never shows interest in the earthly life of the Christ, and neither did his listeners, no relics of the man remain, the exact place of birth, baptism, or burial are not known. If Jesus ever existed, why did his followers not preserve mementos or keepsakes or stories?

A negative is extremely difficult to prove. The absence of evidence may have many causes, of which non-existence is only one and not necessarily the correct one. Does Doherty prove his case? I can't rightly say. If this were any other first century character, an Epikur or Lucretius, we would simply leave it at "don't know." You will just have to read the book for yourself, but that is worth doing.

**Wolf Roder**

## ***A Republic, Not an Empire: Reclaiming America's Destiny***

by Patrick J. Buchanan

(Washington: Regnery, Inc. 1999)

This is the notorious volume in which the outrageous author is claimed to have said we should have stayed out of World War II. And he does say that, but not because he loves the Nazis, but because he thinks it was a quarrel not of our making and none of our business.

This book is best described as a history of the United States, or more specifically as a history of our foreign policies and the wars we have fought to implement our dictates. It views foreign policy as an exercise of the national will to achieve definite ends, with very little concern if those ends are ethical or evil. It is a very *Realpolitik* interpretation.

Buchanan's thesis can be reported in few words. Throughout much of our history, or until about 1900 we pursued a foreign policy and fought wars in order to build a continental nation. In the process we grabbed real estate by pressure or purchase from all our neighbors, from Spain, France, England, Mexico, and Russia; and of course we took it by force from the Native Americans. This was all right and good, our Manifest Destiny, "extending the frontiers of American liberty and freedom" (p. 120). It was always about expanding the settlement of English speaking people and American culture.

It never was, and should never be, about imposing American rule on alien peoples.

We went wrong under Presidents McKinley, Roosevelt, and Wilson, and after 1900 by expanding overseas and creating an empire lording it over foreign peoples, who

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didn't want our rule and whom we could not defend in case of attack. Buchanan decries particularly our annexation of the Philippine Islands, which made eventual war with some other power unavoidable. It turned out to be Japan. Buchanan is definitely in favor of America First, avoiding entangling alliances, and most of all stay out of other folks' quarrels.

Buchanan sees no good reason for our intervention in the First World War. He ascribes this move to the unreasonable *anglophilia* of Wilson and the eastern upper crust establishment. And, we gained nothing for our blood,

treasure, and troubles. He considers Britain's entry into the Second World War sheer foolishness, since she could neither defend Poland from the Germans nor eventually rescue her from the claws of the USSR. According to Buchanan we and the western powers should and could have stayed out of that one. It would have been much better to let the two monsters, the Nazis and the Communists, fight it out. All we got for our troubles is 45 years of communist domination to the River Elbe. Buchanan is consistent in that he sees us having no business in the wars in Korea, Taiwan, Vietnam, Somalia, Iraq, or Kosovo.

Buchanan describes the policies he advocates as enlightened nationalism. He begins his book by enumerating all the states we have guaranteed to defend in case of attack, These include Israel, most of Latin America, much of Asia, Australia and New Zealand and all of western Europe. We now have extended our protective umbrella to several countries of eastern Europe with more in the offing. Clearly, we are not in any position to make good on these promises if, Buchanan would say when, a determined adversary or an alliance of adversaries appears on the scene. The idea of a Pax Americana rests on the quasi-religious belief that Americans can shape a global democracy under the United Nations with a common market under the World Trade Organization and the World Bank. To Buchanan this is a chimera if not a nightmare. Here we have inherited the ideas of the British Empire and of Kaiser Bill. History shows we shall offend many with our persistent crusades, failed promises, and refusal to risk American soldiers' lives. No top dog is loved by all or forever. It is merely a question of time until those we have pushed around will band together to oppose our hegemony.

Is this a good book? It is definitely not an original assessment; many thinkers share Buchanan's ideas. It is worth reading, especially if you don't believe global peace and prosperity under American aegis is forever.

**Wolf Roder**

**Don't Forget!**  
**Woman's City Club presents Terry Gross**  
**March 6, 2000 at 7:30PM**  
**Plum Street Temple, 8th and Plum**  
**Ask Helen Kagin for more information.**

### **MEN, WOMEN**

You can't turn back the clock

A letter writer criticized women who work outside the home, stating that the Bible requires women to stay home and serve their husband. The writer's interpretation of the Bible is correct, as evidenced by verses such as  
Genesis 3:16.

Those verses consigned women to second-class status for thousands of years. Those days are gone, and religious fundamentalists can't turn the clock back. But we should not view such anachronistic goals as quaint or harmless. Fundamentalists are not harmless.

Almost every culture has a segment of religious extremists who wish to impose their beliefs on everyone else. Fundamentalist Jews in Israel have blocked streets and rioted to prevent secular and less orthodox Jews from watching movies on the Sabbath. It's even worse if fundamentalists take power, such as the Taliban theocracy in Afghanistan. Muslim extremists kill women if they dress improperly or speak to someone they're not supposed to.

Fortunately, our Constitution provides for freedom of religion and the separation of church and state. Imagine, though, if religious extremists gained power and rewrote the Constitution. Their beliefs -- based on ancient Bible verses -- would become law.

No more working women. We would be forced to comply with the First Commandment, which requires belief in one particular god. Homosexuality and atheism would be outlawed, perhaps even punishable by death. Forced tithing would send our taxes to support fundamentalist churches (the only churches permitted) and their religious schools.

Is this likely? Not if we're vigilant and protect the wall that separates church and state.

Matthew J. Barry, Redmond  
In today's Eastside Journal



### **Letters to the Editor**

We have a new e-mail address:  
FIGEditors@aol.com

The mail address remains:  
Editor, FIG Leaves, P.O. Box 8128,  
Cincinnati, OH 45208



(Continued from page 6)

Christian Scientists who fall ill due to their lack of faith are instructed to visit with a 'practitioner' who helps them to correct their thoughts. Practitioners are discouraged from providing any sort of physical contact or assistance. Seeking help from the medical community is seen as further confirmation of one's lack of faith. Members who seek outside help are not shunned or excommunicated, but they are made to feel inadequate.

The church teaches that children become ill through the failings of their parents, and it is therefore the parents' responsibility to heal their children through prayer. Bill and Marion Cooley's children suffered through childhood illnesses, some of them quite serious. They knew other parents whose children had died. Yet they persevered in the religion because they had invested so much of themselves. The religion reinforced their beliefs through the Wednesday night testimonials, where the latest faith healings were proclaimed. Nevertheless, Marion sought conventional medical treatment after being diagnosed with breast cancer. She then drifted further from the church before making a complete break.

The Cooleys now want to protect the children of Christian Scientists and all other sects that reject medical science. CHILD has helped to repeal religious exemption laws in Maryland, Massachusetts, Oregon, and Hawaii, but many other states still allow children to suffer for their parents' religion. At the federal level, Christian Scientists

continue to wield enough power to ensure that their sanitarium receive Medicare and Medicaid payments, even though those facilities do not provide the requisite medical care. In addition, the sanitarium do little to ease suffering, and sometimes expel patients whose suffering is not sufficiently private.

**Philip Ferguson**

.....

■ Try as he might, Crapanzano has not been able to avoid presenting the Christian fundamentalists he interviewed as unconversable, blinkered, and badly suited for citizenship in a democratic society. He tries but fails to repress his exasperation at their inability to see the circular reasoning involved in taking the Bible's word for its own inerrancy, and at their blissful assurance that they are in receipt of noise-free transmission from God. He has found it a good deal harder to fathom these fellow Americans than to comprehend the exotic cultures he has explored in the past.

■ Richard Rorty in a review of anthropologist Vincent Crapanzano's *Serving the Word: Literalism in America from the Pulpit to the Bench*

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**February 2000**



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