

FIG LEAVES

Volume 21 Issue 2

February 2012

February FIG Meeting:

Saturday, February 25, 3-5pm,

National Underground Railroad Freedom Center
50 E Freedom Way, Cincinnati, OH 45202

Courage: The Vision To End Segregation, The Guts To Fight For It, Tour And Discussion

For February, we will visit the Freedom Center to tour their new traveling exhibit, *Courage: The Vision to End Segregation, The Guts to Fight For It*. Admission to the tour is free. After visiting the exhibit, we will have a discussion reflecting on the exhibit and exploring contemporary issues in education, including the role of integration of schools today and teaching evolution in schools.

Half a century ago, a series of lawsuits that changed America were launched. These lawsuits led to the 1954 landmark Supreme Court decision, *Brown v. Board of Education*. The *Brown* decision determined racially segregated schools were unconstitutional and set in motion a series of events that continue to shape our lives today. The *Courage* exhibit is an award-winning, groundbreaking exhibition that tells the story of Rev. J.A. De Laine and other brave citizens of Clarendon County, South Carolina. Through photographs, oral histories and key artifacts, the *Courage* exhibit explores the grassroots community activism that one community initiated to begin the process that ended legal segregation of all races in America's schools.

After the tour, for those individuals who are interested, we will eat at the Holy Grail Tavern and Grill at the Banks next door to the Freedom Center. Admission to the exhibit is free, but individuals will have to pay for parking. There is metered parking available on Third St. (one block up from the Freedom Center) or garage parking is available underneath the Freedom Center (enter on Main St across the street from the Reds Stadium).

March FIG Meeting: Wednesday, March 14, 2012,
6:45-8:45 PM, Madeira Branch Library

Please Note: We must end our meeting at 8:45 PM because the library will be closing, so we will start a few minutes earlier than normal.

Breaking Their Will: Shedding Light on Religious Child Maltreatment, A Book Talk with Janet Heimlich

In this revealing, disturbing, and thoroughly researched book, Ms. Heimlich takes an in-depth look at the many forms of child maltreatment that manifest themselves in religious contexts, including biblically-prescribed corporal punishment; beliefs about the necessity of "breaking the wills" of children; terrorizing children with scary religious messages; sexual abuse perpetrated by religious authorities; and religiously-motivated medical neglect. After speaking with dozens of victims, perpetrators, and experts, and reviewing a myriad of court cases and studies, Ms. Heimlich also explains how religious child maltreatment happens.

The book will be available for purchase at the meeting and \$9 for every book is being donated to FIG through an agreement with the publisher. Ms. Heimlich will be available to sign books as well.



Inside

Page

January Meeting.....	2
Atheists In FoxHoles Songs by Edwin Kagin.....	3
January Science Cafe.....	4
Science Book Club.....	5
Contradiction Corner.....	6
In the News.....	7
Things To Do, Things To See.....	8
What's God Got To Do With It? by Michael Shermer.....	10
<i>Forged: Writing In The Name Of God - Why The Bible's Authors Are Not Who We Thing They Are</i> by Bart D. Ehrman, Book Review by Wolf Roder.....	10

Events

Note dates & times

February 2012 Meeting

Saturday February 25, at 3-5 PM
National Underground Railroad
Freedom Center
50 E Freedom Way,
Cincinnati, OH 45202

March 2012 Meeting

Wednesday, March 14,
at 6:45-8:45 PM,
Madeira Branch Library

Please Let Us Have Your E-Mail

Address!

Whenever we send out an E-mail, several rejections are returned. If you want to stay in touch with FIG, please make sure we have your correct and up-to-date E-mail address. We also need your current snail mail address.

To confirm your E-mail and Snail-mail address if it has changed, please send an E-mail to Brian Sellers at bsellers@fuse.net.



January Meeting

One Tribute, Many Tributes.

For our January meeting, we had many tributes to Christopher Hitchens who died on December 15, 2011. Several FIG Members were able to offer a few words, and we all watched videos of some of Hitchens' best moments.

These are the three links that were shown at the meeting. A much more extensive list of videos are available on YouTube.



- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wls_cnBRTB4
Christopher Hitchens (Part 1)- On the Hour
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=doKkOSMaTk4>
Christopher Hitchens on Hannity & Colmes about Rev. Falwell's Death
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HA55jGyq2C8>
Christianity is False and Immoral. (Christopher Hitchens)

We had personal spoken tributes from Chuck Byrd, Ben Hart, John Welte, Edwin Kagin and Pamela Whissel. Here are the words of FIG Member, Chuck Byrd, on his tribute to Hitchens.

Christopher Hitchens

Jesus Christ! Christopher Hitchens is a tough read. Yes it's true that "god is not great." It's also true that "religion does poison everything." I think it's safe to say that everyone in this room would wave that banner proudly. I do stick to my belief that Hitchens is a tough read. So what are my options to deal with this problem?

I guess I could have contacted Christopher Hitchens and asked him to write a "Dummy's Guide to Freethinking" or a "Dummy's Guide to being a smarty pants," or a "Dummy's Guide to being outspoken and standing by what you believe."

Well, I'm glad I didn't do that!

I feel like I owe the memory of Hitchens a little debt. The only way I can repay that debt is....

- To learn new vocabulary words.
- Brush up on my history lessons.
- Use reason in my thinking and my opinion.
- Speak out when the situation calls for it.
- Don't back down from a fight with close minded people.
- Pass this knowledge down to my daughter to give her a leg up when she has to make a decision in her life about her own spirituality and to stand by her decisions whatever they might be.

It's not up to people like Christopher Hitchens to dummy it *down*....It's more important for people like me to try to elevate myself *up* to his level.

Christopher Hitchens was much more than a great writer. He was a fantastic debater also. How many of you (like myself) have spent hours and hours watching video clips on You Tube of Hitchens crushing so called religious leaders or experts. ⇨



FIG Leaves - Thoughtful articles, letters, reviews, reports, anecdotes, and cartoons are very welcome. Submit in Electronic format via the internet to figmessage at gofigger dot org; or on disk or typewritten via mail to Editor, FIG Leaves, P.O. Box 53174, Cincinnati, OH 45253. Contributions received before the first Friday 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 authors and do not necessarily reflect opinions of the editor or the Free Inquiry Group, Inc., its board, or officers.

FIG Board of Directors:

President: Shawn Jeffers
 Vice President: *Open*
 Secretary: Susan Davis
 Treasurer: Bryan Sellers,
 Program Chair: Shawn Jeffers,
 Social Networking Chair:
 Emily Mullen
 Members: Michele Grinoch,
 John Welte,
 Pam Whissel
 Dennis Davis
 Terry Kassnel
Open

FIG Leaves Editor: Wolf Roder.

Memberships run from:

1 January to 31 December.
 One year: \$30
 Family: \$40

If you join during the year, you receive a \$2 discount for each month that has passed.

We request contributions above membership dues. Contributions are tax deductible.



You can't help it! I would rather be crucified on a tree than debate Hitchens about religion.

One of my personal favorite books is Hitchens' *Portable Atheist* anthology. We are treated to the voices of great thinkers: Hobbes, Spinoza, Mill, Darwin, Lovecraft, Twain, Mencken, Orwell, Russell, Dawkins and many others. There's the history lesson I was talking about earlier.

Growing up Catholic, I think the thing that totally blew me away about Hitchens was his exposure of Mother Theresa. Man that took a huge set of balls. They wanted to make her a saint for Christ sake.

Saying out loud in public that you are a fan of Christopher Hitchens and that you are an atheist or that you lead a secular life or that you are a freethinker also takes a huge pair of balls. Ladies you can come up with your own analogy too.

Well, I just want to say out loud that I am proud to call my self one of "those people."



FIG Accepting Credit Card/PayPal Donations

FIG now can accept donations online through PayPal - pay with your credit card or PayPal account. A link for a PayPal donation is available on www.gofigger.org. OR You can also donate online by using this web address - <http://tinyurl.com/3dtvpp4> OR You can also find the information on our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/gofigger.



Exiting church on Sunday, a middle aged woman said to her husband "Do you think the Nicholson girl is tinting her hair?"

"I didn't even see her admitted the husband."

"And that skirt Mrs Rogers was wearing," continued the woman. "Don't tell me you thought that was suitable attire for a mother of two?"

"I'm afraid I didn't notice that either," said the husband.

"Huh," said the woman. "A lot of good it does you going to church!"

Atheists In Foxholes Songs

by Edwin Kagin

(May be sung to the tune of the Marine Corp Hymn)

Music: <http://www.niehs.nih.gov/kids/lyrics/marine.htm>

For the Bill of Rights of our free land
For the Treaty of Tripoli
Many Atheists have fought and died
In the air, on land and sea

Atheists in many foxholes served
No task too hard to try
Give Atheists the thanks deserved
Don't dismiss them with a lie.

(May be sung to the tune of The Army Goes Rolling Along)

Music: <http://www.defenselink.mil/multimedia/audio>

In the field, under sail
Atheists will never fail
Atheists were there all along
Helping us stay free
Protecting liberty
Lying about them is wrong.

So where e'er you go
People need to know
Lying about them is wrong
Where free people go
Let them always know
That Atheists are going along.

(May be sung to the tune of The Navy Hymn)

Music: <http://my.homewithgod.com/heavenlymidis/USA/usnhymn.html>

To Atheists who were so brave
Thank you for all you did to save
Our freedoms that permit a few
To lie about the things you do
>From your foxholes hear and see

This thanks from those you helped keep free.



January Science Cafe

Dr. Glenn Storrs - Dinosaur Hunter

Dr. Glenn Storrs joined us at last month's Science Cafe to talk about his life as a dinosaur hunter! For the last twelve years he has spent his summers leading members of the public in search of dinosaur fossils at a site in Montana. Dr. Storrs joined the Cincinnati Museum Center in January 1995 and administers its collection, research, preservation and conservation efforts, which include this project involving the general public. One of the priorities of the program is to familiarize and educate people about the processes involved in doing science. "In today's world, to make rational decisions, it is important to have grounding in science, if not in the specifics of a particular field, at least an understanding of how science works." The dig provides the opportunity for its members to hypothesize, collect data, test, and form conclusions based on the evidence.

Dr. Storrs illustrated his talk with interesting slides taken at the dig site. These showed people at work and the rock formations which reveal 300 million years of the earth's history in their stratification. The level at which the dig is located is from the late Jurassic period. The fossils are found in sedimentary rocks formed in ancient river beds and which have been thrust upwards by geologic disturbances. This area of the western United States was mostly dense forest at the edge of rivers surrounded by semi-arid savannah at the time that bones from the dig were deposited. Large dinosaurs were able to survive by eating this lush vegetation.

The most important aspect of a dig like this is probably the most mundane task involved. It is the recording of data. In order to effectively study and gain knowledge from these fossils once they are transported to the lab, comprehensive note taking, mapping and measuring techniques are essential. Fossils are cocooned in plaster casts called field jackets for shipment and then the plaster is carefully removed in the lab. Great care is taken to keep the bones intact until they are exposed in the climate controlled lab.



Contrary to popular belief, most fossil skeletons are not found intact but are disarticulated. The bones fossilized at this site are a scattered and jumbled collection from many individuals of the species *Diplodocus*. The *Diplodocus* was a large herbivorous sauropod. What is most intriguing is that all the bones are from juvenile individuals and they all died at the same time. The exception is the presence of a few carnivore (*Allosaurus*) teeth. Some of the bones have been found to have teeth marks, probably from the scavenging carnivore. Fossilized footprints found at the site show that these animals exhibited herding behaviors. Tracks of several animals were found to be traveling in the same direction. Even fossilized skin was found at the site.

Many clues as to the nature of the rock, the behavior of the dinosaurs, the condition in which the bones were found, and the positions in which the bones were found, were meticulously documented and studied to determine what killed these animals. Many hypotheses were rejected as new data came in and were discovered to disprove previous ideas.

Dr. Storrs kept the audience engaged as he related the process of discovery concerning what catastrophe befell these long dead animals. It played out like a detective story complete with red herrings and dead ends. Many audience members had guesses as to what happened. With each guess the truth got closer.

As the TV detective Monk says as he sums up a case, "Here's what happened." A *Diplodocus* herd was migrating from one oasis to another during the seasonal drought as shown by the tracking footprints. The juveniles succumbed to the harsh conditions that the larger animals were able to withstand. After their young died the adults moved on to find food and water, leaving the corpses of the young to desiccate in the dry heat, which allowed bits of skin to fossilize. Of course predators fed on some of the bodies leaving teeth and teeth marks behind. Later, during the rainy season, a mudslide occurred washing the bones down slope into a debris field. This accounts for the jumbled position of the bones. That's another ancient mystery solved. ⇨



Dr. Glenn W. Storrs is Assistant Vice President for Collections and Research and Withrow Farny Curator of Vertebrate Paleontology at Cincinnati Museum Center, and Adjunct Professor of Geology at the University of Cincinnati. These include programs at Cincinnati Museum Center at Union Terminal, the nearby Geier Collections and Research Center, The Cincinnati Historical Society Library, The Richard and Lucile Durrell Edge of Appalachia Preserve System in Adams County, Ohio, and the Museum's Dinosaur Field School in Red Lodge, Montana. In particular, he oversees the Museum's fossil vertebrate research program and collections, the largest such program in the Ohio Valley. He is an international authority on the anatomy and evolution of fossil reptiles and is particularly well known for his work on fossil crocodiles and extinct marine reptiles, especially plesiosaurs and their relatives. He has studied dinosaurs and other fossil reptiles in many parts of the world, including the U.S. Western Interior, Canada, England, Germany, Russia and East Africa. He has led numerous expeditions to Wyoming, Montana, Kansas, and Nevada, as well as many nearer to home in Ohio and Kentucky. Recent Museum excavations have resulted in the discovery of several fossil animals previously unknown to science. Dr. Storrs is the author of many scientific papers, book chapters and popular articles on fossil vertebrates, as well as two books for children.

He has received grant awards from the National Science Foundation, National Environmental Research Council, the National Geographic Society, the Leverhulme Trust and other societies and foundations. He is an active member of The Society of Vertebrate Paleontology, The Paleontological Society, The Geological Curators Group, The Systematics Association, and The Yellowstone - Bighorn Research Association. Dr. Storrs was elected a Fellow of the Linnean Society of London in 1993 and serves on numerous professional committees.

– reported by John Welte ☚



Religion In Action

Worker Billy Hyatt filed a lawsuit claiming “religious discrimination” after the Berry Plastics company fired him. The company required its employees to wear stickers indicating the number of consecutive days free of accidents. When those days hit number 666 on March 12, Hyatt refused to wear the sticker, because this number is “the mark of the beast” according to the Book of Revelation. He insisted it would condemn him to hell. He was suspended, then fired.



Science Book Club

2012 Schedule, books, and dates

All meetings are on 3rd Sunday of month except in June on 4th Sunday because Father's Day falls on 3rd Sunday. All meetings at the Hamilton County downtown Public Library in room 3A except for April and May (room 3B) as noted below:

February 19 — *The Day We Found the Universe*, Marcia Bartusiak 2009

March 18— *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined*, Steven Pinker 2011

April 15 --- *Who's in charge?: free will and the science of the brain*, Michael Gazzaniga 2011 (room 3B)

May 20 — *A Life Decoded: My Genome, My Life*, Craig Venter 2007 (room 3B)

June 24 (Not 3rd Sunday) — *The Roving Mind*, Isaac Asimov 1983

July 15 — *The emperor of all maladies : a biography of cancer*, Siddhartha Mukherjee 2010

August 19 — *The Grammar of Society: The nature and Dynamics of Social Norms*, Cristina Bicchieri (game theory) 2005

September 16 — *Thinking in pictures : and other reports from my life with autism*, Temple Grandin 2006

October 21 — *Drama of the gifted child : the search for the true self*, Alice Miller 2008

November 18 — *The Revenge of Gaia: earth's climate in crisis and the fate of humanity*, James Lovelock 2006

December 16 — *How We Decide*, Jonah Lehrer 2009





Contradiction Corner

By Dennis Davis



This month I will finish my series on logical fallacies. These are being presented for that time when you just know that believer's arguments don't make sense but you can't figure out why.

The first fallacy I will address this month is the Argument from Final Consequence. This is essentially arguing that just because a certain result occurs, it must have been planned. This is most readily seen in the creationist's argument that because life exists the universe had to have been designed with us in mind. The absurdity of this argument becomes obvious when you realize that things occur all the time without intentional design. There is absolutely no justification to assume any outcome was planned or predetermined without evidence that it has been.

The Argument from Final Consequence is very closely related to the non-sequitur, which in English means "does not follow." This fallacy is committed whenever a person makes an unjustified connection between two events claiming one as cause and another as effect. A good example of this fallacy is committed almost any time a Christian attributes a positive result to prayer, or a conservative assumes that the wealthy are rich because they are more deserving.

The discussion of prayer leads to another fallacy often committed by religious believers called "ad-hoc reasoning" also known as special pleading. Ad-hoc reasoning is essentially loading the results of a question or research so that a desired outcome always wins. Where prayer is concerned, religious believers generally pay attention when prayers appear to be answered but ignore or rationalize away when they are not. A controlled study reveals that prayer has no impact on outcomes but religious believers continue to think it works due to the ad-hoc fallacy.

Next I will discuss "begging the question." This is generally manifested through loaded questions that have a built in bias. A good example of this is when a believer asks the question I'm sure we all have heard, "If God didn't create the universe, then who did?" This question is biased in that it assumes that a "someone" must have "created" the universe. If we do not counter this bias, we are left only to argue over the creator's identity. This bias ignores the possibilities that the universe could have always existed or it could have come about by natural means. The most absurd point that is often missed in this argument is

that creationism assumes a non-corporeal creator without a universe for the creator to exist in. Thinking is what brains do, but the believer is positing the existence of intelligence without a brain because physical matter does not yet exist. We have never in all of history seen an example of intelligence without a physical brain, so how could it be reasonable to leap to intelligence as a cause for the universe?

Because religion tries to propagate the illusion that they have all the answers, followers of religion think that you must have all the answers as well. In fact they don't offer solutions, by answering every mystery with a mystery beyond comprehension, religion doesn't answer anything. This deception is doubly evil in that it not only fools the believer into thinking they have meaningful answers, but it makes them incredulous when the unbeliever admits that there are things they don't know. This is the fallacy of confusing the unknown with the unknowable. When a creationist argues with a scientist they inevitably ask a question such as "how did life come from non-life." At this point scientists are not yet sure how life originated yet, so the scientist answers, "we have theories, but we don't yet know." The creationist will break out in a knowing "gotcha" smile. For them, admitting to an unknown is equivalent to never being able to know, and in their mind, a world view lacking one answer is incomplete and therefore worthless. The problem with this fallacy should be obvious; "I don't know" is a completely adequate answer and honestly admitting an unknown is not a weakness, it is strength. The only way we can ever find out truth is by identifying unknowns and searching for answers. Pretending to have mysterious answers with no substance prevents mankind from finding truth.

With all else failing, a typical argument generally degrades into a *tu quoque* fallacy. *Tu quoque* is Latin for "you too" and this is often presented in the form of an admission that while they may be wrong, you are just as wrong. We often see this in the form of New Atheists being characterized as being just as bad as religious fundamentalists. This is nothing more than a character attack without taking the time to address the actual arguments. The best response to this attack is to redirect the discussion back on the evidence instead of the personal attack.

I hope you find this discussion of logical fallacies helpful and look forward discussing more about confronting religious apologists in the future. ☞



Black Nonbelievers Are Speaking Out

African Americans for Humanism (AAH) has launched an advertising campaign highlighting the rise in religious skepticism among African Americans. Coinciding with Black History Month, this national multimedia effort showcases

religious skepticism in the African American community and features prominent African American humanists from history along with contemporary activists and organizers.

"African Americans who question religion often feel rejected by religious family and friends, and by the greater black community," said Debbie Goddard, director of AAH. "But there is a rich heritage of religious skepticism and humanism in black history. By featuring the historical faces as well as the modern in our ad campaign, we show people that questioning religion is not new and that there are many of us here."

The ads began appearing January 30 and January 31 in New York City; Washington, DC; Chicago; Atlanta; and Durham, North Carolina. This week, the campaign is being launched in Dallas and Los Angeles. Advertisements will be found on roadside billboards and in public transit sites. The Stiefel Freethought Foundation provided substantial creative and financial support for the campaign.

AAH hopes that the campaign will bring attention to the presence of and increase in religious skepticism within the black community, encourage those who have doubts about religion to share their concerns and join other freethinkers in their local communities, and educate many about the history of black freethought.

All of the ads display the same message: "Doubts about religion? You're one of many." In the ads, images of writer-anthropologist Zora Neale Hurston, poet-activist Langston Hughes, and social reformer-publisher Frederick Douglass are paired with contemporary freethinkers. Representing their respective hometowns are activists leading the way for African American nonbelievers, including Mark D. Hatcher of the Secular Students at Howard University, Mandisa L. Thomas of Black Nonbelievers, Inc. (Atlanta), Kimberly Veal of Black Nonbelievers of Chicago, Jamila Bey of African

Americans for Humanism—Washington, DC, Veronique Matthews of the Triangle Freethought Society, Leighann Lord of the Center for Inquiry—Harlem, Alix Jules of the Dallas—Ft. Worth Coalition of Reason, and Sikivu Hutchinson of Black Skeptics Los Angeles.

For more information, including ad images, information about historical African American freethinkers, photos, and videos, please visit We Are AAH.

AAH supports skeptics, doubters, humanists, and atheists in the African American community, provides forums for communication and education, and facilitates coordinated action to achieve shared objectives.

In an irrational world, those who stand for reason must stand together.

(All Rights Reserved. ©2012 Council for Secular Humanism, 3965 Rensch Road, Amherst, NY 14228)

Serious About The Song.

"I don't think the national anthem is something we ought to be joking around with," said Indiana state Sen. Vaneta Becker, explaining her proposed law to regulate the singing of "The Star-Spangled Banner" -- the national anthem. Under the bill, the state education department would create "performance standards," and anyone singing the anthem for school events would have to agree to comply -- and face a \$25 fine if the performance broke the rules. Becker said she was prompted by a constituent who was upset about altered lyrics that had been used in a school program, but says she had also heard the song parodied on TV. (*Indianapolis Star*)

Perhaps they used the original drinking song lyrics, "To Anacreon in heaven" . . ., or they thought singing "the land of the free and the home of the brave" was parody itself.

The Palmetto State Or The Zombie State?

In the middle of a court fight to determine whether South Carolina's Voter Identification law is Constitutional (so far: no), Kevin Shwedo, director of the state's Department of Motor Vehicles, announced that "more than 900" people listed in state records as deceased have "recently voted" in elections. "If you have voted after you are dead," Shwedo told reporters, "there is a good, strong possibility that you did something illegal." (AP) Perhaps, in the Bible Belt they'll believe anything.



FIG LEAVES



THINGS TO DO...

THINGS TO SEE...



THINGS TO DO...

THINGS TO SEE...



Monday, February 20, 2012 6:30 PM

Monthly Monday Meetup @ The Washington Platform, 1000 Elm Street

Wednesday, February 22, 2012 6:00 PM

February Science Cafe – Nicholas Money – "On Mushrooms and the Meaning of Life"

The Science Cafe is changing venues.

Cock & Bull, English Pub

275 E. Sharon Road, Glendale, OH

This month - Join us at our new location (upstairs) at Cock and Bull Pub in the Glendale neighborhood to learn about all the ways that mushrooms have taught Nicholas Money about the meaning of life! In his book *Mushroom*, Money explores the history and science behind the fungal organisms that appear overnight on lawns, are occasionally poisonous and sometimes end up in our medications and on our dinner plates.

For the past 30 years, botanist Nicholas Money has studied the microorganisms that most people associate with bad smells, itchy toes, damp basements and rotten food. A renowned fungal researcher at Miami University in Ohio, Money has devoted his career to studying indoor molds, fungal movements and the mysterious world of mycology.

"My work is defined by my love of science and belief in its power to make sense of life, the universe, and everything else."

Thursday, March 01 7:00 PM

First Thursday @ The Hofbräuhaus

Hofbrauhaus Newport

200 East 3rd Street, Newport, KY 41071

Atheists, Agnostics, Humanists and Freethinkers meet here. Regular monthly gatherings are held on the 1st Thursday. New people join every month, and we all wear name tags (no quizzes). Check the Message Board for current hot topics.

Monday, March 19, 2012 6:30 PM

Monthly Monday Meetup @ The Washington Platform, 1000 Elm Street

Friday, March 23, 2012

6:00PM–9:00PM

CFI–Washington D.C.

Hill Center at the Old Naval Hospital

921 Pennsylvania Avenue SE

(Just two blocks from the Eastern Market Metro station.)

Washington, DC 20003

Before you trek to the Mall to demonstrate at the Reason Rally on Saturday, join us Friday night at the beautiful and historic Hill Center for a memorable evening with CFI staff and special guests!

In addition to CFI president & CEO Ronald A. Lindsay, Council for Secular Humanism executive director Tom Flynn, African Americans for Humanism director Debbie Goddard, CFI Office of Public Policy director Michael De Dora, CFI-DC executive director Melody Hensley, and other CFI staff, special guests include:

- Richard Dawkins, evolutionary biologist and author
- Lawrence Krauss, director, ASU Origins Project, honorary board member, CFI
- R. Elisabeth Cornwell, executive director, RDFRS
- Sean Faircloth, director of strategy & policy, RDFRS
- Jamie Raskin, state senator, Maryland
- Jessica Ahlquist, student activist and volunteer high school coordinator, CFI On Campus

Light fare will be served—along with great conversation and remarks from our guests—but space is limited, so be sure to purchase your tickets soon!

CFI-Washington DCTickets are \$50 per person.

Make your reservation online or by calling 716-636-4869, ext. 406.

For more information, email grassroots@centerforinquiry.net





THINGS TO DO....

THINGS TO SEE...



Come one and come all!

March 2012:

Reason Rally & American Atheists Convention,
Washington, DC.

The next focus for American Atheists is the National Reason Rally to be held on the National Mall in Washington DC on Saturday, March 24. We want to get as many of you to DC for this rally as possible!

Here's an explanation of the Rally from American Atheists president Dave Silverman:

We are now about five months away from the most important large event in the history of the secular movement, the Reason Rally. Fifteen major national organizations are co-sponsoring this celebration, which will be held on the National Mall in Washington DC on March 24th. This rally will be the largest gathering of atheists and freethinkers in world history, and I am privileged to Chair the event.

The rally is not a protest, and it's not about bashing religion. Rather, it's a celebration – a chance for us to rejoice in growing faster than religion in every state in the union. Under the banner of “Celebrating Secular Values”, we will hear live performances by musicians and comedians, as well as short speeches from our movement's leaders, luminaries, and maybe even a politician or two. Our objective is to make this a truly enjoyable and memorable experience for all who attend.

But it's more than just fun. An event of this size has the potential of being a turning point in our movement. If we bring thousands of new members into our organizations, it will re-energize the movement on the whole and give us all a new level of support as we grow. Even more importantly, a good showing in Washington DC, on television and in front of politicians in an election year, could really highlight the political clout that secular people deserve.

I am often asked “what can I do to help?” and nowadays I always give the same answer: Come to the Reason Rally, even if this is the only activist thing you do all year. Come to Washington and be seen, be counted, and be surrounded by thousands of other secular people. The sponsors are all investing money and time into this event, and we need humans on the Mall to make it worthwhile.

www.freeinquirygroup.org

There will be no video streaming -- we need people to come to DC, physically, and be a part of this event.

You have the ability to positively affect the movement while engaging your memberships by arranging for your group to come to this epic event. The experience itself will strengthen your group, and you can advertise outside of your group to the local atheists to coax them into going with you, which will further aid in your membership recruitment. The Reason Rally is providing discounted bus charters, airline tickets, and hotel rooms to help you defray costs.

For those who want more, the rally is followed immediately by the American Atheists National Convention in Bethesda MD (on the DC Metro). Our theme this year is “Come out, come out, wherever you are”. Speakers Richard Dawkins, Taslima Nasrin, and PZ Myers will be joined by former preachers and other experts who will target their talks on coming out of the closet to friends and family. We also include events like a vlogger panel (starring Aron Ra and Thunderf00t), comedy night and costume dinner to make the convention well-rounded, educational, motivational, and fun for all ages.

This weekend is going to be epic, but only if people come. We need you, our friends and affiliates, to do whatever you can to get your members to DC so this event can achieve its fullest potential, and truly shift this movement into the next gear. Please help us make this happen by advertising, organizing a trip, and most importantly, attending this most important occurrence. I look forward to celebrating our secular values with you, and thousands of other secular people, in Washington DC. See you there.

– signed by Dave Silverman, for American Atheists ☚



Prayer Work

The International House of Prayer in Kansas Cify recently celebrated twelve years of around the clock musical praying. Pastor Mike Bickle and his congregation believe this is necessary to fight the devil's infiltration of the realms of power in society, business, media, and government. To keep the music going the church engages 25 bands playing throughout the day and week in two hour sets.





What's God Got To Do With It?

by Michael Shermer,

This op-ed was originally published in the
Los Angeles Times, 4 November 2011.

He may be invoked in the national motto, but God has nothing to do with why Americans are free and secure

The House of Representatives voted last week by a margin of 396–9 to reaffirm as the national motto the phrase “In God We Trust,” and encouraged its pronouncement on public buildings and continued printing on the coin of the realm. The motto was made official in 1956 during the height of Cold War hysteria over godless communism and—in the words of Brig. Gen. Jack D. Ripper in Stanley Kubrick’s and Peter Sellers’ 1964 classic antiwar film *Dr. Strangelove*—“Communist infiltration, Communist indoctrination, Communist subversion and the international Communist conspiracy to sap and impurify all of our precious bodily fluids.”

As risible a reason as this was for knocking out a few bricks in the wall separating state and church, it was at least understandable in the context of the times. But today, with no communist threats and belief in God or a universal spirit among Americans still holding strong at about 90%, according to a 2011 Gallup Poll, what is the point of having this motto? The answer is in the wording of the resolution voted on: “Whereas if religion and morality are taken out of the marketplace of ideas, the very freedom on which the United States was founded cannot be secured.”

What is troubling—and should trouble any enlightened citizen of a modern nation such as ours — is the implication that in this age of science and technology, computers and cyberspace, and liberal democracies securing rights and freedoms for oppressed peoples all over the globe, that anyone could still hold to the belief that religion has a monopoly on morality and that the foundation of trust is based on engraving four words on brick and paper.

If you think that God is watching over the United States, please ask yourself why he glanced away during 9/11 (why not divert those planes and save those innocent people?), or why he chose to abandon the good folks of New Orleans during Hurricane Katrina (surely an omnipotent deity could hold back the flood waters as surely as he unleashed them on Noah’s generation), and why he continues to allow earthquakes and cancers to strike down even blameless children. The problem of evil—why bad things happen to good people if an all powerful and all good god is in control of things—has haunted the faithful since

it was first articulated millennia ago with nigh a solution on the horizon.

It’s time to drop the god talk and face reality with a steely-eyed visage of the modern understanding of the origin of freedom on which the United States was founded and continues to be secured. God has nothing to do with it. If you want freedom and security you need the following:

The rule of law; property rights; a secure and trustworthy banking and monetary system; economic stability; a reliable infrastructure and the freedom to move about the country; freedom of the press; freedom of association; education for the masses; protection of civil liberties; a clean and safe environment; a robust military for protection of our liberties from attacks by other states; a potent police force for protection of our freedoms from attacks by people within the state; a viable legislative system for establishing fair and just laws; and an effective judicial system for the equitable enforcement of those fair and just laws.

With these in place the citizens of a nation feel free and secure. Why? The answer is in the final word of the motto: Trust. Claremont Graduate University economist Paul Zak has studied trust between nations and found that the more of these components that are in place, the more citizens trust one another. Zak even computed the differences in living standards that trust can affect, demonstrating that a 15% increase in the proportion of people in a country who think others are trustworthy raises income per person by 1% per year for every year thereafter. For example, increasing levels of trust in the U.S. from its current 36% to 51% would raise the average income for every man, woman and child in the country by \$400 per year or \$30,000 lifetime. Trust pays.

Trust has fiscal benefits that are derived through specific political and economic policies that have nothing whatsoever to do with religion or belief in God. Despite a strong belief in God, the percentage of Americans who believe that “religion can answer all or most of today’s problems” has plummeted from 82% to 58%, while those who believe that “religion is old-fashioned and out of date” leaped from 7% to 28%, according to a 2010 Gallup Poll. Thus it would seem that Americans are more aware today than a half century ago that it’s up to us to secure our freedom through enlightened secular policies with practical social applications rather than faith-based hope in empty mottos reflecting an era gone by. ☞





BOOK REVIEW

Forged: Writing in the Name of God – Why the Bible's Authors Are Not Who We Think They Are
by Bart D. Ehrman
(New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2011)

It is of course widely known that the books of the New Testament were not written by its named authors. No apostle Matthew or John wrote the gospels that bear their name, neither did companions of apostles write Mark or Luke. Scholarly research agrees that only seven of the letters assigned to Paul were written or dictated by him, the others are forgeries, or so explains this book.

Generally and in the past many theologians have told us that assigning a famous name to a written argument or essay was common and acceptable in times of antiquity. In fact, or so many defenders of the Bible held, followers and students would credit their teacher with their own expositions of philosophy. This was merely to honor their mentor, and was accepted as due tribute. Consider for instance Plato putting all his books in the mouth of Socrates. Ehrman thinks it is time to clear up such excuses and to call these New Testament books what they are, namely forgeries. Publishing under a false name, intended to deceive, is fraud and falsehood.

In a long chapter on “a world of deceptions and forgeries” Ehrman goes to considerable trouble to examine what the ancients thought about cheating. Examining many ways of and motivations for writing under a false name, Ehrman shows the practice was far from acceptable. Quoting from many writers in the first century Roman Empire we learn the ancients reacted to forgeries very much as we might, with outrage and condemnation. To borrow someone else’s fame or reputation is simply fraudulent.

Ehrman continues to examine writings forged in the name of Peter and Paul, the most important leaders of the early church. The Gospel of Peter did not make it into the NT because it contained *docetist* arguments, “that since Christ was fully divine, he could not have been fully human and could not have really suffered.” Two letters ascribed to Peter did make it into the NT, and

Ehrman provides excellent reasons why these could not have been written by the apostle. Aside from the fact, that the real Peter was most likely (1) illiterate, a poor fisherman, and (2) not able to write or dictate in the literate Greek of the letters.

Numerous letters and stories outside the NT tell about Paul. None of them acceptably true. But within the NT, why were some letters ascribed to Paul, what did the forgers want to convey. Certainly they disagreed with Paul, and intended to place their ideas to contradict Paul. The second letter to the Thessalonians for instance tries to explain why Jesus has not returned, as Paul preached. Well, with god a day is like a thousand years, so that means not much “real” or god’s time has passed. Or perhaps, god has mercifully given mankind extra time to repent and become good.

Ehrman brings out some of the outright contradictions in Paul’s letters. On the one hand he refers to women as leaders in the church, on another he insists women are not to speak in church, or to command men, but to be silent and listen and learn from their husbands at home (1 Cor; 1 Tim). Other disagreements deal with the boundary between Judaism and Christians; whether and to what extend gentile converts should or should not follow dietary and other laws in the Hebrew scriptures.

The most famous false addition to an actual gospel is the ending of Mark. The oldest manuscripts end with the opening of the Jesus tomb (Mk 16.8). In the additional twelve verses in the KJV translation we find the famous instructions that believers will be able to (1) speak in foreign tongues, (2) pick up poisonous snakes, and (3) drink poison without suffering harm. Also a late forgery is the story of “the woman taken in adultery” in the gospel of John (7-8), which contains what is probably Jesus’ most famous saying: “Let the one without sin among you be the first to cast a stone at her.” All lies.

Is it any wonder that Bart Ehrman has lost his faith in god? There is some truth to the warning often given staunch fundamentalists, do not go to college, lest you lose your belief in Jesus.

– Wolf Roder ☚





March FIG Meeting
 Wednesday March 14, 2012
 at 6:45 -8:45 PM
 Madeira Branch Library



February FIG Meeting
 Saturday February 25
 at 3-5 PM
 National Underground Railroad
 Freedom Center



FIG Is On Facebook
 If you have a Facebook account, become a Fan of FIG. To join you can type in this long weblink: <http://www.facebook.com/#!/pages/Cincinnati-OH/FIG-Free-Inquiry-Group-of-Cincinnati-and-Northern-Kentucky/306015475868> or it is much easier to search for "Free Inquiry Group" and find it the first option on the search page.
 By being a Fan you can receive FIG updates and meeting notices and RSVP for events such as the monthly FIG Community Dinners.

FIG Leaves
 P.O. Box 53174
 Cincinnati, OH 45253

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 - [figmessage at gofigger dot org](mailto:figmessage@gofigger.org), or visit our web site at gofigger.org or freeinquirygroup.org.