

# FIG LEAVES

Volume 15 Issue 2

February 2006

## February FIG Meeting: Tuesday, 24 February 7:00 PM

**February FIG Meeting**  
**Tuesday, 28 February 2006 7:00 PM**

### A Darwinian Menagerie

Presented by Dr. Gene Kritsky

Charles Darwin's theory of evolution changed our perception of the animal world. This illustrated presentation will examine the animals that enabled Darwin to establish that evolution had taken place and to demonstrate the power of selection. We will also look at the animals that have since generated the greatest evolutionary biology headlines.

We are pleased to welcome Dr. Kritsky back for the third year to help us celebrate the birth month of Charles Darwin. Among the reasons we continue to invite him back are his knowledge and enthusiasm about Darwin and his ability to convey them so well. Gene Kritsky, Ph.D., is Professor of Biology at the College of Mount St. Joseph in Cincinnati and Editor of the *American Entomologist*.



**March FIG Meeting**  
**Tuesday, 28 March 2006 7:00 PM**

Conrad Goeringer of American Atheists will speak on **Expanding and Defending the Secular Universe**. Conrad is Senior Staff writer for *American Atheist Magazine* and a popular member of their Speaker's Bureau. He tracks legislative issues for American Atheists.

### Your FIG Membership!

We would like to thank of the old and new members of FIG who have renewed their membership in the group! Special thanks go to all and any who have made a donation in addition to their membership!

AND

Please, would all others renew for 2006 immediately, forthwith, instantly, presto and right away, in other words soon.

Thank you.

## Inside Page

January Meeting	
by George Maurer .....	2
Things to do-Things to see .	5
Report from CFI .....	6
Kagin Named Legal Dir. ....	6
Science Book Club .....	7
Poem - <i>Tall Tales</i> .....	10
Darwin Day Conference .....	8
It's Not Over Yet! .....	8
In the News .....	9
<i>Why Intelligent Design Fails: A Scientific Critique of the New Creationism</i> Edited by Matt Young and Taner Edis	
Book Review .....	11

## Events

(Watch the dates!)

### February Meeting

Tuesday, 28 February 2006  
 7:00 PM at the Vernon Manor  
 400 Oak Street, Cincinnati, Ohio

### March Meeting

Tuesday, 28 March 2006  
 7:00 PM at the Vernon Manor  
 400 Oak Street, Cincinnati, Ohio

*Quote* .....

• There are none more ignorant and useless than they that seek answers on their knees  
 • with their eyes closed. Friedrich Nietzsche on faith... (1844-1900)

..... *Unquote*



## January Meeting...

### NOMA: “Nonoverlapping Magisteria”

Wolf Roder, Professor Emeritus of Geography at UC



NOMA is an acronym taken from the title of an article by Stephen Jay Gould published in the magazine *Natural History* in March, 1997. This article is still widely discussed. Wolf outlined his talk as (1) what Gould said in this article; (2) why he is wrong, and (3) where he is right.

Gould’s article starts with “how can anyone believe in God and evolution at the same time?” Then he goes on to explain that there is no conflict between the two magisteria of the title. A magisterium might be defined as a professional area of expertise, a realm of knowledge. There

are two major magisteria: one is religion (and there are experts in religion: philosophers, theologians etc.); and there is the magisterium of science which deals with the empirical material constitution of the universe. Religion is the search for proper ethical values and spiritual meaning of human lives. Or, another definition: Religion deals with claims about the existence, nature and actions of God, with life after death, and the ultimate significance of physical reality in human life. There is no conflict between these two, because they don’t overlap, i.e. science has nothing to say about God and ethics; and religion stays out of the realm of empirical nature.

Gould argues that neither Judaism, Catholicism, nor most Protestants, take the Bible as literal truth. Theologians, at least, take the Bible as illuminating literature, based partly on metaphor and allegory, and demanding interpretation for proper understanding. Science has nothing to say about ethical values and the spiritual meaning of human lives and religion has nothing to say about the empirical material constitution of the universe. The purpose of his essay, “permits the prospect of respectful discourse, of constant input from both magisteria toward the common goal of wisdom.” Thus science and religion were never opposed to each other and science has never been intrinsically opposed to Christianity.

Gould goes on to look at a 1950 encyclical of Pope Pius XII, *Humani Generis*. He quotes from this document that “Catholics can believe whatever science determined about the evolution of the human body, so long as they accepted that, at some time of his choosing, God had infused the soul into such a creature. And specifically into a single couple which accords to the doctrine of original sin.” On this thought H.G. Wells, the historian and science fiction writer, commented. It was rather strange, he wrote, that sometime in pre-history a couple of animals who looked pretty much like humans but were probably monkeys or apes raised a human baby at the point when God infused a soul. But then, Pius XII wrote in that same encyclical, that “angels are personal beings.” In commenting on the difference between matter and spirit, Gould said: “religion deals with the rock of ages and science deals with the age of rocks.” He also quoted a thought attributed to Galileo that religion deals with how to go to heaven and science deals with how the heavens go.

According to Brent Dalrymple in *Ancient Earth, Ancient Skies*, “science can determine the age of the Shroud of Turin (AD 1325 + 65 years) but has nothing to offer on its religious significance.” This is the shroud reputedly used to wrap the body of Jesus when⇒



**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.

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: Margaret O’Kain,  
Vice President: Donna Loughry  
Secretary: George Maurer,  
Treasurer: Bill O’Kain,  
Program Chair: Joe Levee,  
Members: Nurit Bowman,  
Helen Kagin,  
Bryan Sellers,  
Philip Ferguson,  
Shawn Jeffers,  
Kathy Lyons  
FIG Leaves Editor: Wolf Roder.



**Memberships** run from 1 January to 31 December.

One year: \$25

Family: \$35

Subscription: \$10

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.



# FIG LEAVES



he was interred in the cave. This winding sheet has been carbon dated by three separate labs and all three agreed it dates from the 14th century. Chemical analysis shows what looks like blood on the Shroud is actually paint. No doubt, god can take Christ's burial cloth, sequester it without carbon aging over a thousand years, and make it reappear in the workshop of an artist in France. But which religion is going to accept this?

Gould is wrong, according to Wolf, to limit "science" to physics, chemistry and biology and maybe other natural sciences. The social sciences, notably history, anthropology, and archaeology have plenty to say about religion. These historical sciences unearth facts and written evidence like other sciences. There is a continuum from paleontology to geologic earth history to what archaeologists dig up to written history. Interpretations may differ, but facts must be respected as in all sciences.

Contrary to the claims of Stephen Jay Gould, it's easy to prove that God doesn't exist. The scientist is not obligated to prove a universal negative. Only a hypothesis put forward by the Quran or the Book of Mormon, or by the Bible needs to be shown as untenable. It can be shown these sources can not sustain the god thesis advanced. We shall discuss Christian claims, which have been examined by the work of many scholars. They include Albert Schweitzer who was a theologian before he studied medicine. In *The Search for the Historical Jesus*, published in 1905, he summarized 19<sup>th</sup>



century research on the Bible. He found the gospels contradict each other, the Jesus mentioned in the Gospels is a figure of myth who expected the end of the world in his life time. The historical man behind this myth cannot be

known. Wolf expressed amazement that Schweitzer could keep his faith.

Many scholars have followed in Schweitzer's footsteps and tried to make sense out of the Old and New Testaments. Scholar have dug into the archeology and the history. The First Century Roman Empire was the peak of the classical

civilization. No evidence that Jesus ever lived has been found. The village of Nazareth did not exist in his lifetime. Outside of the Gospels, there is no mention of him until about 120 CE, when Christians are mentioned by Pliny the Younger. Scholars have considered him a zealot who was executed by the Romans; another has considered him a wandering magician influenced by Egyptian ideas. Jesus Christ does not appear as a person in the Letters of Paul which are the oldest part of the New Testament.

It is impossible to know the words of Jesus. He did not speak Greek, the language of the New Testament. He didn't speak Hebrew either. He spoke Aramaic, which is to Hebrew as Italian is to Latin. They're close but one still needs a translator. The gospels record only one sentence in Aramaic. Jesus would have been executed between 26 and 36 CE when Pilate was Procurator. The oldest



Gospel (of Mark) was probably written about 70 CE. That is about 35-45 years later. How accurate can spoken words be, translated, after such lapse of time? The virgin birth appears to be a pious myth based on a mistranslation from the OT. Luke has the parents living in Nazareth and moving to Bethlehem for a census unknown to history. Matthew has the parents living in Bethlehem. The Bible is a bunch of myths no more reliable than the stories of King Arthur and the Round Table. Gould is wrong because science says flatly, the evidential base of Christianity is not even weak.

Wolf thinks Stephen Jay Gould did not believe what he said about magisteria. For one thing he wrote in the very article that he was a Jewish agnostic. A footnote in memorial to Carl Sagan seems to re-iterate that doubt about his thesis. On the other hand he explained specifically, he was not saying these things to be politically correct (a term not yet coined at the time), that is to avoid disputes and quarrels.

So why does Wolf think Gould is right? People need a religion, this need and the ability to believe a dozen impossible things at the same time seem to be hard wired into the human brain by evolution. We know that we can have ethics without religion. In the absence of god, ethics are clearly man-made.





But what keeps people in line? Statesmen know it is religion. Cicero, a near contemporary of Jesus, admitted that belief in the gods (Jupiter, Minerva et al.) was hogwash, but insisted religion was necessary to keep peace in the empire. Karl Marx thought religion was an opium to keep the people down and quiet. G.K. Chesterton, English writer, devout Roman Catholic, suggested if a person doesn't believe in god, he'll not believe in nothing, he will tend to believe in anything. This seems borne out by the young generation without religion. Research on what they believe, indicates almost anything supernatural: new age miracles, UFO abductions, ghosts, Satanism, witchcraft etc.



A final note: if you follow the NOMA discussion on the Internet the big debate is not about whether Gould is right or wrong, but about where is the dividing

line between religion and science. Because religion doesn't defer to science on questions of fact, and science doesn't defer to religion this "dividing line" is difficult to fathom. On issues of creation of the universe, or intelligence in natural history each magisterium goes its own way and does not hesitate to wander all over the "absent" overlap.

— Reported by George Maurer

**A Camp Experience for  
Young Humanists and Freethinkers.**

Camp Quest, the secular summer camp, is now accepting registrations from prospective campers for its summer 2006 session. Camp Quest is the first residential summer camp in the history of the United States for the children of Atheists, Agnostics, Humanists, and Freethinkers.

Camp Quest 2006 will be held at our wonderful location obtained in 2002- YMCA Camp Campbell Gard, outside Cincinnati. The dates are **July 15<sup>th</sup> - July 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2006.**

The fee for this year's camp is \$550 for one camper and \$500 for each additional sibling from the same family unit. Fees must be paid in full by June 15, 2006.

Apply early to reserve your spot for a camp experience that combines reason, science, and critical inquiry with such traditional camp activities as swimming, high ropes, crafts, nature study, and camp food. We expect the bunks to fill up early. When full, we are full. The two invisible unicorns are still there-with a prize, as yet unclaimed, of a godless \$100 bill for any camper who can prove they aren't there.

For additional information and registration forms, visit [www.camp-quest.org](http://www.camp-quest.org) or contact [registrar@camp-quest.org](mailto:registrar@camp-quest.org)

Shawn Jeffers  
Education Coordinator



**Traveling in the South.**

During the many hours listening to Christian radio, I was assured again and again that the Bible is the best source of information on contemporary events and the only guide anybody needs on how to vote. When I watched religious talk shows on TV at night, I heard that the many wars that the President has promised us have happily been foretold in the Bible. "Let us restore to God the thunder," the poet John Crowe Ransom wrote in 1930, and the people who called in would have readily agreed. Peace on earth went unmentioned. What excited the people I heard was the force of deadly weapons. I got the impression that it was a greater offense to believe in evolution than to bomb a city into rubble.

— Charles Simic in *The New York Review* (12 August 2004) p. 46

**Quote**.....

We can be confident that action which is in accord with a few basic beliefs cannot be wrong and can at least testify to the values we will need to cultivate. These are the beliefs that the human race is a family that has inherited a place on the earth in common, that its members have an obligation to work toward sharing it so that none is deprived of the elementary needs for life, and that all have a responsibility to leave it undegraded for those who follow.

— Gilbert F. White

"Stewardship of the Earth." (1975) Reprinted: Robert W. Kates and Ian Burton, editors *Geography, Resources, and Environment. Volume 1. Selected Writings of Gilbert F. White..* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1986) pp. 403-404

.....**Unquote**



THINGS TO DO....

THINGS TO SEE...



### CSER Launches New Journal

The Committee for the Scientific Examination of Religion (CSER), a project of the Council for Secular Humanism is pleased to announce the launch of an e-journal entitled *Elenchus: The CSER Review*. There has never been a greater need for a journal such as this. The rise of religious fundamentalism gnaws at the fabric of American democracy and threatens liberal and secular movements around the world.

While Rome burns, the mega-church phenomenon grows; bookstores peddle titillating works of religious fiction, ranging from *The Da Vinci Code* to devotional apocalyptic fantasies like the *Left Behind* series; school boards waste taxpayers' money by debating scientific issues about which they are largely illiterate; liberal churches, steering unsuccessfully between the Scylla of fundamentalism and the Charybdis of humanism, preach vague forms of "spirituality" as a substitute religion; conservative religious organizations decry birth control, stem-cell research, euthanasia, and abortion; and according to a depressing recent survey, 44% of American Christians believe the "Rapture" will come in their lifetime, and 85% believe in a literal heaven and hell.

*Elenchus: The CSER Review* is designed to challenge and examine religious practices, ideas, ethics, and truth claims with a critical eye that investigates the veracity of those claims, their social and historical foundations, and the societal implications and interpretations.

To subscribe to *Elenchus: The CSER Review*, please call 1-800-458-1366 and ask to speak to Sarah Jordan.

### The Cincinnati Atheists Meetup Group has an event every month.

**When:** Tuesday, February 21 at 8:00PM

**Where:** Joseph-Beth Booksellers  
2692 Madison Rd. Rookwood Pavillion  
Cincinnati OH 45207

**Phone:** 513-396-8966

To see who's coming and to see more event details:  
[http://atheists.meetup.com/90/events/4835592/t/rem\\_ve](http://atheists.meetup.com/90/events/4835592/t/rem_ve)

### 4th International Rationalist Conference (26-29 December 2006)

Towards the end of the year, on 26-29 December 2006, we are planning to hold the fourth International Rationalist Conference at New Delhi, India.

The 1st International Rationalist Conference was held at New Delhi in 1995, the 2nd at Trivandrum in 2000 and the 3rd at New Delhi in 2002. Delegates and speakers from all over the world participated in these conferences - among them Paul Kurtz, Lewis Wolpert, Jim Herrick, Jean Claude-Pecker, Rob Tielman, Fons Elders, Indumati Parikh, Lavanam, Jan Loeb Eisler, Bill Cooke, Levi Fragell, Roy Brown, Rob Buitenbergh, Pekka Elo, Kjartan Selnes, Richard Lead, Nehal Karim, V.K.Madhavankutty, Richard Saunders, Jane Winnie Wilson, Lorentz Stavrum, Iain Middleton, Ajoy Roy, Amardeo Sarma, Lasse Siren, Mikael Goransson, Lars Gunnar Lingas, Arild Stensland, Jaana Yrjonsuuri, Bjorg Haaland, Tove Beate Pedersen, Abu Abraham, Raja Mohan, Roberto La Ferla, Perti Holopeinen, Patricia Lopez and others.

More details about the 4th International Rationalist Conference are to follow.

Reserve the dates 26-29 December 2006 and ensure your participation in the forthcoming New Delhi conference. Please contact: <[Conference@rationalistinternational.net](mailto:Conference@rationalistinternational.net)>

### Whatever happened to postmodern science?

Enter George W. Bush. For while pomos turn to materiality, my friends in physical geography are increasingly acknowledging just how powerful discourse has become in this administration's "social construction" of the environment. Bush has now thoroughly semiotized earth processes, so much so that even our most scientifically inclined colleagues have come to accept what the pomos were saying in the 1990s: "it's not that reality doesn't exist, only that no one has unmediated access to it and that its interpretation is therefore always a struggle for the control of meaning." Bush has shown how ideological those mediated interpretations can be. Take his administration's disregard for and manipulation of scientific findings about global warming, some of which were penned by his own scientists, add to it evidence of collusion with corporate interests, and his intransigence in the face of "facts" makes him the spinmeister *extraordinaire*, the King of Discourse. This administration treats science worse than any "postmodernist" ever did.

– John Paul Jones, *AAG Newsletter* (v. 40, no. 8, Sept. 2005) p. 19



Report to Our Readers:

## The Center for Inquiry's Impact Increases In Spite of Dangerous Challenges

by Paul Kurtz, Chairman



We are pleased to report that the Center for Inquiry—*Transnational* continued its rapid growth in 2005. Our point of view is rather unique. We are defenders of science, reason, and freedom of inquiry in every area of human interest. We wish to develop the public appreciation for the methods of science and extend them wherever possible. We are also

committed to secular and humanist values.

Many institutions in modern society are surely interested in science. Unfortunately, many of these institutions are narrowly specialized. Very few have been willing to advocate the general naturalistic perspective of science or to explore its dramatic implications for ethical and social values. The truth of the matter is that we are surrounded by dominant religious and ideological viewpoints that are rooted in tradition or power, and not committed to rationalism, skeptical inquiry, or humanist ethics.

The Center for Inquiry publishes two flagship magazines, *Skeptical Inquirer* and *Free Inquiry*—plus fifteen other magazines, journals, and newsletters. It has established some thirty Centers for Inquiry or Communities in the world, with others in various stages of development. CFI is thus exerting strenuous efforts to expand its public impact.

The intense Culture Wars now being waged in the United States unfortunately are fulfilling the warning expressed in the "Secular Humanist Declaration," published in the first issue of *Free Inquiry* magazine twenty-five years ago, that the Moral Majority—later the Christian Coalition and still later the Religious Right—would seek to seize political power in America, using the Bible as its weapon. Alas, this prediction is coming true, though many in the public are now becoming aware of the dangers. The Culture Wars have broad ramifications, for the principles at issue are at the center of a global struggle with other forms of fundamentalism. These include attacks on science, secularism, and humanist ethics; the injection of conflicting views of God in the public square; and the war with Islam.

## Kagin Named American Atheists National Legal Director

Attorney Edwin Kagin has been named as the new American Atheists National Legal Director.

A native of South Carolina, Mr. Kagin served in the United States Air Force, and later attended the University of Missouri. He earned his J.D. from the School of Law at the University of Louisville in Louisville, Kentucky.



As an attorney, Mr. Kagin has frequently litigated on civil liberties and constitutional issues. He has been a member in good standing of the Bar of the Supreme Court of the United States since 1975.

He was a founding member in 1991 of the Free Inquiry Group, Inc. (FIG) of Greater Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky. He is also a prolific writer, and in 2003 contributed to Kimberly Blaker's book "*Fundamentals of Extremism: The Christian Right in America*." In 2005, a collection of his essays, poems and opinion columns was published in his book, "*Baubles of Blasphemy*."

Mr. Kagin, along with wife Helen Kagin, a retired anesthesiologist, founded Camp Quest, the nation's premier camp for Atheist, Freethought and other nonbelieving youngsters. The couple was named "Atheists of the Year" by American Atheists in 2005.

Edwin Kagin also serves as Kentucky State Director for American Atheists. He is an outspoken public critic of religious intrusions into government, and a frequent speaker and debater at local and national events. He has appeared on hundreds of radio and television programs, sparring with such prominent religious right advocates as Michael Medved. He ran prominently, albeit unsuccessfully, as the "candidate without a prayer" for the Kentucky Supreme Court (1998) and the Kentucky State Senate (2000).

As Legal Director, Mr. Kagin will help supervise and plan First Amendment and related litigation on behalf of the organization. His appointment replaces Duane Buchholtz, who has served as the AA National Legal Director since 1996 and is retiring from that post.

(American Atheists is a nationwide movement that defends civil rights for Atheists; works for the total separation of church and state; and addresses issues of First Amendment public policy.)



## Maybe this is where the people who claim “no religion” disappeared to?

By George Barna



There is a new breed of Christ-follower in America today. These are people who are more interested in being the Church than in going to church. They are more eager to produce fruit for the kingdom of God than to become comfortable in the Christian subculture. They are focused on the seven spiritual passions that facilitate their growth as genuine people of God and citizens of the kingdom. These people are Revolutionaries.

A growing national population of more than 20 million adults who are committed to living their faith and making God the top priority in their life. Some are doing so through the ministries of a local church, but many are not. The emphasis is upon allowing God to transform them in every aspect of their life.

This groundswell of spiritual passion and intensity is likely to amount to a *Third Great Awakening* in the United States, but with a very different look, feel and outcome than previous religious upheavals. In many ways, this new move back to God is designed to return the American Church to its roots – its first-century roots, as depicted in Acts 2.

The Revolution is here. The American Church will never be the same

## Chirac warns of nuclear response to terrorism.

The president of France is trying to convince Iranians that he might use nuclear weapons to retaliate against terrorism. This may be a poor strategy for dealing with Iran’s strange president, who is intent on building nuclear weapons of his own. President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, a religious looney, seems to be anxious to collect a martyr’s reward in the next life.

– *What’s New*, Robert L. Park, 20 January 2006

### Tall Tale

Just how much would it have to rain each day  
To cover every hill and mountain peak?  
If there were forty days and nights it may  
Rain and pour and drown the strong and weak?

Now, let me see, to rain around the clock  
For just five weeks plus five more extra days  
To flood the earth from Spain to Antioch  
Feet seven hundred fifty, tempest fray!

Now, I said feet, not inches! Holy cow!  
Three hundred seventy inches by the hour-  
Well, that’s precipitation man, and how!  
The bible god sent one helluva shower!

– Dorothy B. Thompson

## 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.

**Feb 26** - *Looking for Spinoza: Joy, Sorrow and the Feeling Brain*: Antonio Damasio

**Mar 26** - *Global Survival: The Challenge and its Implications for Thinking and Acting* ed. by Ervin Laszlo & Peter Seidel

**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





## Darwin Day Conference

**March 4, 9:00 am - 5:00 p.m.**

Darwin Day Conference CFI Community of Indiana IUPUI Indianapolis, IN On Sunday, March 4th the CFI Community of Indiana will be hosting the first annual Darwin Day Conference at Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis. The Conference will run from 9:00am through 5:00p.m. and will feature presentations and panel discussions featuring speakers from the Center for Inquiry, Americans United for Separation of Church and State, the American Civil Liberties Union, the Indiana Department of Education, the Indiana General Assembly, and more. Graduate Credit will be available through IUPUI and CRUs will be available for educators. Admission is free for students and faculty.

**8:00-8:45 am** - Registration (donuts, etc. available)

**8:45-9:00 am** - Welcome (CFI Coordinator and Staff)

**9:00-9:45 am** - A Short History of the Evolution Controversy -- Dr. Carl Weinberg, Butler University

**9:45-10:30 am** - The Scientific Method and Critical Thinking -- Dr. Gregory R. Quinting, PhD.

**10:30-12:30 p.m.** - Panel: Evidence for Evolution

Moderator: Sean O'Brien

Dr. Carl Rexroad, Geology, Indiana University-Bloomington

Dr. Richard Miller, Biology, Butler University

Dr. John Langdon, Associate Dean, College of Arts and Sciences, University of Indianapolis

**12:30-1:15 p.m.** - Box Lunches (Must be purchased in advance, please use registration form.)

**1:15-2:00 p.m.** - What is a Species? -- Sarah Jordan, CFI Transnational

**2:00-3:30 p.m.** - Panel: The Evolution/ID Controversy

Moderator: Brad Matthies, Librarian, Butler University

Kim Lanahan, President, Indianapolis Chapter of Americans United for Separation of Church and State

Fran Quigley, Executive Director of ACLU of Indiana

David Orentlicher, Indiana State Representative in General Assembly

Representative from the Indiana Department of Education

**3:30-5:30 p.m.** - Debate: Evolution/Intelligent Design

Scott Hartman, Science Director, Wyoming Dinosaur Center

Roddy Bullock, Director, Intelligent Design Network of Ohio

**5:30-6:00 p.m.** - Campus and Community Organizing Meeting -- Sarah Jordan, Reba Wooden.

All interested persons are invited to attend. For more information regarding this event please visit the conference website:

[www.centerforinquiry.net/indy/IUPUI\\_Program.html](http://www.centerforinquiry.net/indy/IUPUI_Program.html).

## It's Not Over Yet!

**The Dover School Board case didn't end it**, but who thought it would? In Dover, the issue was that intelligent design was misrepresented as science. So why not misrepresent it as something else? In Lebec, CA, a course on the Origins of Life is listed as Philosophy, but it's still intelligent design.



The Calvary Chapel Christian School in Murrieta, CA is suing the University of California for not giving credit for courses with a "Christian viewpoint." At Calvary Chapel, that's everything but mathematics.

In Ohio, they don't bother to disguise it. The Board of Education voted to keep a controversial biology lesson, Critical Analysis of Evolution, that tells students to examine "alternate theories of evolution." Lamarckian perhaps?

In a fund raising letter, Discovery Institute founder Phillip Johnson dropped all pretense, "our ultimate goal is to affirm God and defeat Darwinism...to shape public policy in accordance with conservative Christian philosophy and get it into our schools."

-- *What's New*, Robert L. Park, 13 January 2006

This week, the El Tejon school system in rural California agreed to halt the course on intelligent design at Frazier Mountain High mentioned in last week's *WN*. The minister's wife who taught the course said it all: "This is the class that the Lord wanted me to teach."

On Wednesday, the Dover decision was characterized by the official Vatican newspaper as "correct."

At the Discovery Institute they may be worrying about structural unemployment.

-- *What's New*, Robert L. Park, 20 January 2006

## The Intelligent Design dispute is to yesterday!

Muslims are waving guns in the air and boycotting Danish pastry, while in Italy, an Italian judge has ordered a priest to appear in court this month to prove Jesus Christ existed. The Muslims are outraged by publication in Danish papers of political cartoons depicting Muhammad. In Viterbo, north of Rome, Luigi Cascioli accused Father Enrico Righi of "abuse of popular credulity," an offense under the Italian penal code. The claim that Jesus is a fabrication is not new. What Father Righi might offer as proof of Christ's existence is not clear. But, the Italian Judge dismissed the case against the Parish Priest.

-- *What's New*, Robert L. Park, 3, 10 February 2006



## The real world and the alternate world.

New Horizons, which is on its way to Pluto, is the fastest spacecraft ever built. Even so, the trip will take nine years. At the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics meeting last year, an award was given for a paper about a new propulsion system that could do it in a day. So why are we doing it the old-fashioned way? Because it works. There are two worlds. There is the world that sends robots to explore Mars, finds a vaccine for cervical cancer, unravels the structure of DNA, invents Global Positioning, etc. And then there is an alternate world that discovers cold fusion, homeopathy, the Podkletnov gravity shield, hydrinos, and the Heim space drive. Inhabitants of both worlds speak similar languages, look alike, even have identical DNA. It's not just that things don't work in the alternate world, that can happen even in the real world. But in the alternate world it doesn't seem to make any difference.

**Earth is getting warmer: last year was the warmest in a century.** NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies reports the highest annual average surface temperature since instrument recordings began. 1998 was about as warm, but for the two warmest years to be that close together is even more troubling. Warming is no longer the question. What is causing the increase? Is it simply natural solar variation, as the polluters prefer to believe, or a build up of greenhouse gases?

The administration would rather not know. The Deep Space Climate observatory, already built and waiting five years for launch, would provide an unambiguous answer. This clearly puts the administration in the "alternate world."

**Transportation in the alternate world.** Huge gaps in virtually every field of science would have to be overcome for a hydrogen car to be feasible. The goal is for hydrogen vehicles to be in showrooms by 2020, 12 years after Bush leaves office. Energy Secretary Bodman kicked off the Washington Auto Show on Tuesday with the announcement of \$119M in funding and a "Research Roadmap." It's a roadmap of the alternate world.

— *What's New*, Robert L. Park, 27 January 2006

## Quote

When a man is freed of religion, he has a better chance to live a normal and wholesome life

Sigmund Freud

## Unquote.

## Maybe scientific openness is "only a theory."



Top NASA climate scientist James Hansen was under pressure to cool it on global warming. The pressure, we have since learned, was coming from 24-year old White House appointee George Deutsch, who had been an intern in the Bush-Cheney re-election campaign. Earlier, Deutsch had informed a NASA contractor that the word "theory" had to be added to every mention of the Big Bang. "This is more than a science issue," he declared, "it is a religious issue." On Friday, NASA chief Michael Griffin made it clear to all NASA employees that it's not the job of public affairs to "alter, filter or adjust" material from the technical staff. Wednesday, Deutsch resigned. What was he doing in a sensitive position in the first place? Although his job at NASA was a reward for work in the re-election campaign, he did have a journalism degree from Texas A&M, didn't he? Well, actually no. He lied about that. Deutsch was right about one thing: science issues can also be religious issues.

**And maybe god didn't make himself perfectly clear.** There is a rare split among evangelical Christians. A group of 86 evangelical leaders formed the Evangelical Climate Initiative to combat global warming <[www.christiansandclimate.org](http://www.christiansandclimate.org)>, even taking out a full-page ad in the NY Times. However, a number of evangelical heavy weights, including Jerry Falwell and James Dobson, oppose the initiative, and the National Association of Evangelicals has decided not to take a position. But what does God say? "Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth," Genesis 1:28. Well, we've done it. We've subdued just about everything.

**Consider the plight of the polar bear.** Maybe they'll grow flippers when the arctic ocean melts. Environmental groups sued the government in December to add polar bears to the endangered species list; their habitat is fast being destroyed by global warming. According to the Washington Post, the Bush administration has agreed to study whether polar bears should be on the list. Coming just as the Evangelical Climate Initiative is announced, the reality of global warming now seems to be accepted by almost everyone except petroleum geologists.

— *What's New*, Robert L. Park, 10 February 2006



## Intelligent Design Arrives in California

Micheal Shermer reports on 19 January 1006 for the © Skeptics Society.

If you think ID will go away after our victory in Dover, Pennsylvania, think again. In my own home state of California, a group of parents filed suit against the local high school in Lebec, just an hour's drive north of Los Angeles (we don't use miles in L.A., only time intervals in a car).



The IDers have once again "evolved" a new strategy, this time offering the same course curriculum, but calling it philosophy instead of science. But the course syllabus still says that students will learn about the gaps in evolution, how evolution is only a theory, and that Intelligent Design is a legitimate scientific alternative to evolution. To wit:

The class will take a close look at evolution as a theory and will discuss the scientific, biological and biblical aspects that suggest why Darwin's philosophy is not rock solid. The class will discuss intelligent design as

an alternative response to evolution. Physical and chemical evidence will be presented suggesting the earth is thousands of years old, not billions.

This course, called *The Philosophy of Design*, began on January 3rd and is taught by a teacher who, according to the lawsuit, "has no training or certification in the teaching of science, religion or philosophy," and is "the wife of the minister for the local Assembly of God Church, a Christian fundamentalist church, and a proponent of a creationist world view." The school superintendent, John W. Wight, said that he had consulted the school district's attorneys and that they "had told him that as long as the course was called 'philosophy,'" it could pass legal muster.

It may pass legal muster, but it doesn't pass skeptical scrutiny.

About the same time, Bob Park in *What's New* reports the same school system in rural California agreed to halt the course on intelligent design at Frazier Mountain High. The minister's wife who taught the course said it all: "This is the class that the Lord wanted me to teach."

## Quote

**Frank Wright, president of the National Religious Broadcasters**

Today, the calls for diversity and multiculturalism are nothing more than thinly veiled attacks on anyone willing, desirous, or compelled to proclaim Christian truths. Today, calls for tolerance are often a subterfuge, because they will tolerate just about anything except Christian truth. Today, we live in a time when the message entrusted to you is more important than ever before to reach a world desperate to know Christ.

For the first time in history, representatives and senators may pass hate-crime legislation, which is one step to oppose what you do as against the law. If we had to give equal time to every opposing viewpoint, there would be no time to proclaim the truth that we have been commanded to proclaim. We will fight the Fairness Doctrine, tooth and nail. It could be the end of Christian broadcasting as we know it if we do not.

— quoted in Chris Hodges, "Soldiers of Christ II" *Harpers* (May 2005)

## Unquote



## Theologians

Hans Küng, Leonardo Boff, and Joseph Ratzinger die at the same time and appear together in a waiting room outside St. Peter's gates. Peter appears and points at Küng, saying: "Jesus will see you now." Küng disappears into an office, leaving the other two men waiting. After more than two hours, Küng emerges with an expression of wonder on his face: "How could I have been so mistaken?" he asks. Next Peter gestures to Boff. The fiery Brazilian liberation theologian is gone for more than five hours. He, too, eventually stumbles out of the office, dumbfounded. "How could I have been so foolish?" he asks, dazed. Finally, Peter gestures to Ratzinger. His Eminence rises, gathers his papers, and walks slowly into the office. The better part of a day goes by, and periodically sounds of shouting and then weeping fill the air. Eventually the door swings open... and Jesus Christ himself walks out, asking: "How could I have gotten everything so wrong?"

— John L. Allen, Jr. *Pope Benedict XVI: A Biography of Joseph Ratzinger* (London: Continuum, 2000)



## BOOK REVIEW

### *Why Intelligent Design Fails: A Scientific Critique of the New Creationism*

edited by Matt Young and Taner Edis

(New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004)

Intelligent Design claims to be a scientific alternative to evolution and related science insights. It masquerades as science, but is in fact a sophisticated and heavily financed propaganda for religious creationism. It is rejected by scientists, because its explanations are false and it makes no testable scientific predictions which are falsifiable. This book is a collection of essays by scientists in the relevant fields, who show the specific errors in the claims made by proponents of Intelligent Design.

The editors of the volume are at some pain to explain why they bother to refute assertions which are clearly not based in science but essentially driven by religious needs. The proponents of Intelligent Design are well financed, skilled advocates, and insist they are excluded from the worlds of education and science by persistent prejudice. The prejudice they perceive to be a prior commitment to materialism by modern science. The intention of the editors is to place a book in the hands of lay persons, school boards, and political decision makers which explains in clear language and reason why and where Intelligent Design fails.

Virtually all the scientific claims for Intelligent Design have been made by only two *bona fide* scientists. Micheal Behe is the author of *Darwin's Black Box* (1996) which discusses several biochemical features which are "too complex" to be the result of evolution. William A. Dembski is the author of *The Design Inference: Eliminating Chance through Small Probabilities* (1998) which asserts that evolutionary events are too improbable to occur. He is also the author of "*The Explanatory Filter: A Three-Part Filter for Understanding How to Separate and Identify Cause from Intelligent Design*" (1998). The filter claims to outline a process for distinguishing designed structures from those arising by chance evolution. The essays in this book take these claims apart one by one and reject them chapter after chapter.

Several scholars discuss Behe's claims by outlining the evolution of the structures he claims are just too complex to have evolved. David Ussery explains "The Biochemical

Evidence for Evolution," (ch. 4). Alan D. Gishlick recounts "Evolutionary Paths to Irreducible Systems: The Avian Flight Apparatus," (ch. 5), and Ian Musgrave takes on "Evolution of the Bacterial Flagellum," (ch. 6)

Dembski's mathematical analysis is assessed by Jeffrey Shallit and Wesley Elsberry in "Playing Games with Probability: Dembski's Complex Specified Information," (ch. 9). It appears Dembski's "specified complexity" is an incoherent concept, i.e. the complexity of natural structures can not be unambiguously specified. Yet, this is necessary for calculating the probability of the structure arising by evolution, and hence, his inconsistent methodology does not provide a means to distinguish designed from undesigned objects.

Separating designed, i.e. man-made objects from undesigned, i.e. natural objects is a routine task of archaeology and anthropology in classifying finds at a dig. The tasks of forensics at a crime scene are similar. Dembski claims these sciences use a filter, which may also allow us to distinguish God's design from ordinary things. Forensic anthropologist Gary S. Hurd considers "The Explanatory Filter, Archaeology, and Forensics," (ch. 8). It appears scientists simply don't use Dembski's filter. On the contrary it is our prior knowledge and experience of man-made objects and structures which allow the investigator to infer the difference between stone tools and broken pebbles, between an accidental injury and a deliberately inflicted wound. Far from following a simple three step filter, the scientist draws upon an extensive understanding of human activities, including actions in the past, to interpret finds in the present. To recognize human design it is imperative to have knowledge of the designer's nature and the means he uses to impose his intentions on the material. We do not have this knowledge about the means and intentions of God – or any extra-terrestrial designer. Hurd concludes: (p. 120)

Natural theology presumed that the universe was the product of God's will and that the rational study of the universe would reveal God's will on a par with the direct revelation of holy scripture. Two hundred years later, the intelligent-design movement is a desperate attempt to find in the universe unambiguous evidence that God exists at all.

This is a very important book. It should be required reading for anyone inclined to believe or defend the intelligent design propaganda.

– Wolf Roder



**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](mailto:figinfo@gofigger.org), or leave a message at (513) 557-3836. Visit our web site at [gofigger.org](http://gofigger.org).