

FIG LEAVES

Volume 18 Issue 6

June 2009

June FIG Meeting:

Sunday, 28 June 2009

3:00 PM

Acupuncture and Chinese Medicine and Science

Colin Thornton

An invisible force that can neither be detected nor measured flowing through invisible conduits mapped across our body - this is the outdated Chinese magic known as “chi”. It’s an ancient wisdom of unknown origin that seems to work for some people, even though it’s claims are biological impossibilities that have yet to be proven by science.

It’s perfectly justifiable to say that there is no difference in a belief in chi and a belief in a deity, and yet there are some atheists who lay down their weapons of science and reasoning in deference to this elaborate antiquated placebo.

They say that chi is a mystical force that regulates our general health, but they can’t prove their claims under blind placebo-controlled studies. They say that needles placed in specific spots will stimulate a hidden energy, though they don’t say how or why. They say humans have channels called meridians that are associated with certain organs, but they don’t say who discovered these meridians or how anyone knows they exist. No. Patients of Traditional Chinese Medicine are expected to take these claims on faith. Who are “they”? Why should we believe them?

My wife took two years of classes in alternative medicine and acupuncture before she had to drop out due to an unplanned pregnancy. At the time, I had reservations and doubts about the efficacy of needling, but I supported my wife in her endeavors. As time has passed, I’ve become immersed in the subculture of skepticism, which is a way of examining claims by using a combination of science and reasoning. Using the skeptic’s tools that I’ve picked up over the years, I’m now able to see Complementary and Alternative Medicine for what it is - innocent quackery. Needless to say, that’s made my marriage quite interesting, but we’ve been able to come to terms with our differences of opinion, to the point that she is letting me pick her brain and borrow her tools of the trade for my presentation.

I will focus on the history of acupuncture, the claims of how it’s supposed to work, the misleading science reporting about it, and why it’s “success” can be chalked up to the placebo effect. I hope you enjoy my talk, and that it stimulates your brain - not your chi.

-Colin Thornton is an at-home father, a director of children’s theatre, and an advocate for science and reason. His blog is Science-Based Parenting (dot com), where he writes on parenting issues, filtered through the lens of skepticism.

July Fig Meeting - Sunday 26 July from 3 to 5 pm

Sunrock Farm, 103 Gibson Lane, Wilder, KY 41076

www.sunrockfarm.org; cost \$ 5.00 per person.

For our July meeting we will take a tour of Sunrock Farm led by Farmer Frank Traina. Sunrock Farm is a natural history and evolution educational center, which stands in contrast to the creationism museum at the other end of I-275. Farmer Frank will lead us on an evolution tour through the animals at the farm and discuss the history of adaptations visible in the animals.

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Events

June Meeting

Sunday June 28, 2009

3:00 PM St. John’s Unitarian

Universalist Church, 320 Resor Ave.

Cincinnati, OH 45220

We will meet in Krolfifer Hall.

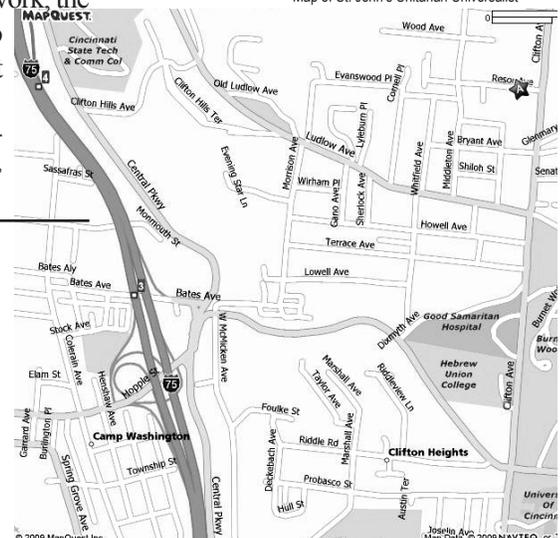
July Meeting

Sunday July 26, 2009

3:00-5:00 PM, Sunrock Farm, 103

Gibson Lane, Wilder, KY 41076

Map of St. John’s Unitarian Universalist





May Meeting

Atheism and Free-Thought in 19th-Century Cincinnati: Some Historical Snapshots **William B. Jensen, University of Cincinnati**

Professor Jensen educated and entertained us with comments carefully selected from four nineteenth century sages who have lived and worked in Cincinnati. Frances Trollope lived in our city from 1827 to 1831, and is most famous for her resulting book, *Domestic Manners of the Americans*, containing her rather jaundiced impressions of life in the town. Isabella Bird published the first of many travel books in 1856, *The Englishwoman in America*, with a chapter of her impressions of Cincinnati. Mark Twain worked as a printer in Cincinnati from 1855 to 1857 before he became a steam boat pilot on the Mississippi. Best known as a freethinker, Moncure Daniel Conway lived in Cincinnati from 1854 to 1862.

I. Francis (Fanny) Trollope (1780-1863)

“Church and State hobble along, side by side, not withstanding their boasted independence. Almost every man will tell you that he is occupied in labors most abundant for the good of his county; and almost every woman will tell you that, besides those things that are within her house, she has coming upon her daily the care of the churches. Yet in spite of this universal attention to the government, its laws are half asleep; and in spite of the old women and their Dorcas societies, atheism is awake and thriving.”

II. Isabella Bird (1831-1904)

“There are nearly 50,000 Germans, and I believe 40,000 Irish, who distinctly keep up their national characteristics. The Germans almost monopolize the handicraft trades, where they find a fruitful field for their genius and industry; the Irish are here, as everywhere, hewers of wood

national characteristics. The Germans almost monopolize the handicraft trades, where they find a fruitful field for their genius and industry; the Irish are here, as everywhere, hewers of wood and drawers of water; they can do nothing but dig, and seldom rise in the social scale. The Germans, as at home, are a thinking, skeptical, theorizing people: in politics, Socialists - in religion, Atheists. The Irish are still the willing and ignorant tools of an ambitious and despotic priesthood.”

“The Germans, in that part of town almost devoted to themselves [i.e., Over the Rhine], have succeeded in practically abolishing the Sabbath, as they utterly ignore that divine institution even as a day of rest, keeping their stores open the whole day. The creeds which they profess are “Socialism” and “Universalism,” and at stated periods they assemble to hear political harangues, and address invocations to a universal deity. Skilled, educated, and intellectual, they are daily increasing in numbers, wealth, and political importance, and constitute an influence of which the Americans themselves are afraid.”

III. Mark Twain (1835-1910)

Our boarding-house crew was made up of commonplace people of various ages and both sexes. They were full of bustle, frivolity, chatter, and the joy of life, and were good-natured, clean-minded, and well-meaning; but they were oppressively uninteresting for all that - with one exception. This was Macfarlane, a Scotsman.”

“He was forty years old - just twice my age ... six feet tall and rather lank, a serious and sincere man. He had no humor, nor any comprehension of it. He had sort of smile, whose office was to express his good nature, but if ever I heard him laugh, the memory of it is gone from me. He was intimate with no one in the house but me, though he was courte-



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

fignotes at(@) gofigger.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.

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ous and pleasant with all. He had two or three dozen weighty books - philosophies, histories, and scientific works - and at the head of this procession were his Bible and his dictionary."

"I always spent my evening by the wood fire in his room, listening to his tireless talk and to the dulled complainings of the winter storms, until the clock struck ten ... Diligent talker as he was, he seldom said anything about himself. To ask him a personal question gave him no offense - nor the asker any information; he merely turned the matter aside and flowed placidly on about other things. He told me once that he had had hardly any schooling, and that such learning as he had, he had picked up for himself. That was his sole biographical revelation, I believe. Whether he was a bachelor, widower, or grass-widower, remained his own secret. His clothes were cheap, but neat and caretakingly preserved. Ours was a cheap boarding house; he left the house at six, mornings, and returned to it toward six, evenings; his hands were not soft, so I reasoned that he worked at some mechanical calling ten hours a day for humble wages - but I never knew."

"Of course his thinking and reasoning and philosophizing were those of but a partly taught and wholly untrained mind, yet he hit by accident upon some curious and striking things. For instance, the time was the early part of 1856 - fourteen or fifteen years before Mr. Darwin's *Descent of Man* startled the world - yet here was Macfarlane talking the same idea to me there in the boarding house in Cincinnati."

"The same general idea, but with difference. Macfarlane considered that the animal life in the world was developed in the course of eons of time from a few microscopic germ seeds, or perhaps one microscopic seed germ deposited on the globe by the Creator at the dawn of time, and that this development of was progressive upon an ascending scale toward ultimate perfection until man was reached; and that then the progressive scheme broke pitifully down and went to wreck and ruin! He said man was ... the sole animal in whom was fully developed the base instinct called patriotism, the sole animal that robs, persecutes, oppresses and kills the members of his own immediate tribe, the sole animal that steals and enslaves

the members of any tribe. He claimed that man's intellect was a brutal addition to him and degraded him to a rank far below the plane of the other animals, and that there was never a man who did not use his intellect daily all his life to advantage himself at other people's expense."

IV. Moncure Daniel Conway (1832-1907)

"There was in Cincinnati a small society of so-called 'infidels' who gathered every Sunday afternoon in a room on Fourth Street. I attended some of their meetings, taking an obscure corner place. The speakers were partisans, the most prominent of them Englishmen, who, with somewhat faulty grammar, had good sense and a certain rude eloquence. I was impressed by the fact that, although these men had no belief in God or immortality, nearly every speech expressed enthusiastic homage for Thomas Paine, a fervent apostle of theism. Paine had become to them, more than the founder of a deistic church; he was the standard-bearer and apostle of religious freedom; to these freethinkers he was what George Fox was to the Quakers and John Wesley to the Methodists."

"In early life I had heard Paine occasionally mentioned by preachers with abhorrence, but it was only in Cincinnati that I discovered that those denunciations were of interest to me as a student of myths and legends. In listening to the freethinkers in their humble hall I became aware of the large mythology grown and growing around Thomas Paine ... These clerical fictions also reminded me that towers may be measured by the shadows they cast. I could not help be interested in a writer whom Jehovah was said to have chosen for the object of his special wrath."

"The immediate result of these researches was an announcement that on Paine's birthday, January 29, 1860, the subject of my sermon would be Thomas Paine. The church was crowded. I had feared that my pleading for Paine might excite some opposition in my congregation, or at least some remonstrance on my imprudence; but instead of that I received next day a request to publish my discourse. It was signed by many eminent and wealthy citizens, some of whom did not belong to my congregation;

their letter and names were printed as the preface of the sermon, which bore the title 'Thomas Paine. A Celebration.' From that time the freethinkers frequented my church, and I arranged that there should be each week an evening discussion with them. I had gained their good-will, and Moreau, a leading writer of their faith - for it was a fervent faith - dedicated a volume to me as the first who had ever uttered from a pulpit any word favorable to Paine."

"My vindication of Paine and its unexpected success was felt by the freethinkers of Cincinnati as a vindication of themselves also, and I felt it my opportunity for grappling with what I considered their errors. My theism was not indeed of the Paine type - I had passed from all dynamic theism to the theism evolved from pantheism by the poets - but I found that in criticizing these atheists I undertaken a difficult task. Several of them - I remember the names of Colville, Miller, and Pickles - were shrewd disputants and steadily drove me to reconsider the basis of my beliefs. I entered upon a severely logical statement of the corollaries of theism. In a course of discourses I had already rejected supernaturalism, to the distress of a third of my congregation, this being the first time that simple theism had invaded any western pulpit."

"That, however, was less disturbing than a sermon on 'God' in which I maintained that the creation and government of the universe by an omnipotent and omniscient deity was incompatible with any free will. I affirmed that the so-called free agency of man was a much overrated notion. I contended that what theologians called the Will of God was a misconception; an all-wise and morally perfect deity could have no freedom. There is only one very best and to that he must adhere; the least deviation from it would undeify him."

"My theological and philosophical heresies reported in the Ohio journals excited discussion far and near ... I do not find anything in the church broil at Cincinnati of sufficient interest to dwell on here. The secessionists who went off on account of my series of sermons on 'Miracles,' and established the 'Church of the Redeemer,' were sufficiently numerous for our committee to agree to a division of the church property as a measure of peace." ❧



THINGS TO DO...

THINGS TO SEE...



Media Events/Programs

The Humanist Perspective

Show times on Time-Warner Cable:

Channel 15: Tuesday 3:30 am and Saturday 7:30 pm

Channel 24: Friday 12:30 pm.

Programs:

- 9-12 June: *The Search for Meaning*,
with Tom Flynn
- 16-19 June: *Tribute to Thomas Paine*,
with Christopher Hitchens
- 23-26 June: *Prospects for Secularizing Islam*,
with Ibn Warraq
- 30 June- 3 July: TBA
- 7-10 July: TBA

The Cincinnati Atheist Meetup(s)

When: Monday, 15 June 2009 at 6:30 PM

Where: Joseph-Beth Booksellers 2692 Madison Road Rookwood Pavilion Cincinnati OH 45208(513) 396-8960

6:30 - 9:00 * Please note earlier time * The bookstore now closes at 9 PM, so we've shifted the meeting a bit.

Atheists, Agnostics, Humanists and Freethinkers meet here. Regular monthly gatherings are held on the 3rd Mondays. New people join every month, and we all wear name tags (no quizzes). Check the Message Board for current hot topics.

This is a purely social gathering. No agenda, no speaker, no rules of order. If you'd prefer a bit more structure, please check the calendar for lectures, FIG meetings, and other events.

To find us: Go in the front doors of the bookstore and turn left. Enter the Bistro and walk straight back as far as you can go. We're all freethinkers, so we'll look just like you.

The Bistro has a full menu, including vegetarian options. If you like, enjoy dinner, dessert, tea, or a brewski. Restaurant direct line: 513.396.8970 The Bookstore / Bistro is not associated with this meetup group, and will not be able to answer questions. Please use our Message Board to connect with fellow group members.

Hear! Hear! *Answers in Atheism* at

<www.answersinatheism.net>

JOIN US! - We are live on the internet Thursday evenings from 7 pm to 8 pm EST. Our shows are also available as archived audio files, so you can listen later at any time. Please tune in at www.answersinatheism.net.

The Answers in Atheism crew

2009 SCIENCE BOOK CLUB Schedule - all meetings will be on the 3rd Sunday every month except for June 14 and June 28.

Meetings at the downtown Cincinnati Public Library, Room 3A at 2:30 pm.

June 14-in Room 3B or 28 - *Commonsense Rebellion: Taking Back Your Life from Drugs, Shrinks, Corporations, and a World Gone Crazy* by Bruce E. Levine. The author himself will lead the discussion.

June 28 - *What We Believe But Cannot Prove* edited by John Brockman, continuation of selected articles from November 2008 discussion.

July 19 - *Why Science* by James S. Trefil

Aug 16 - *Death by Black Hole : and Other Cosmic Quandaries* by Neil deGrasse Tyson

Sept 20 - one of a number of books on complexity theory and applications

Oct. 18 - *Are Universes Thicker Than Blackberries?: Discourses on Godel, Magic Hexagrams, Little Red Riding Hood, and Other Mathematical and Pseudoscientific Topics* by Martin Gardner

Nov 15 - *God, the Failed Hypothesis* by Victor Stenger

Dec 20 - *Origins of Creativity* by Karl Pfenninger & Valerie Shubik





Leadership Changes Announced by the Center for Inquiry (2 June 2009).

The Center for Inquiry and its affiliate organizations, the Council for Secular Humanism and the Committee for Skeptical Inquiry, announced today that in support of its two-year succession plan Dr. Paul Kurtz, the visionary leader and founder of all three organiza-

tions, will become chair emeritus. Kurtz in this capacity will continue as a voting member of the boards of directors for the balance of his terms ending in 2013. In his new role Kurtz will have time to concentrate on writing and numerous public speaking engagements on behalf of the Center for Inquiry as the founder and face of the organization.

Dr. Ronald A. Lindsay remains chief executive officer and president of the three corporations, with all rights and responsibilities associated with those positions. "Transition is challenging for an organization, but I believe because of the strength and resources of the Center for Inquiry and its affiliate organizations, including most importantly the quality and dedication of the staff, we will be able to carry out these changes successfully," Lindsay said. "Indeed, I believe that these changes will ultimately strengthen the organization."

Board member Richard K. Schroeder has been named chair of the three boards, and board member Jonathan Kurtz has been named to the new position of vice chair of the three boards. "I look forward to working with the new board chair, Richard Schroeder, and the new vice chair, Jonathan Kurtz," added Lindsay.

The Board reaffirmed the goals of the organizations, which are to foster a secular society based on science, reason, freedom of inquiry, and humanist values, and to promote critical investigation of controversial and extraordinary claims through the use of responsible, scientific inquiry. From this point forward, the Board will take a more direct role in overseeing their policies and overall direction. Three new committees will be formed within the Board: a Policy Committee, a Nominations Committee, and a Compensation Committee.

The Center for Inquiry/Transnational, a nonprofit, educational, advocacy, and scientific-research think tank based in Amherst, New York, is also home to the Council for Secular Humanism, founded in 1980; and the Committee for Skeptical Inquiry (formerly CSICOP), founded in 1976. The Center for Inquiry's research and educational projects focus on three broad areas: religion, ethics, and society; paranormal and fringe-science claims; and sound public policy. The Center's Web site is <www.centerforinquiry.net> .

A letter from Paul Kurtz:

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

May I set the historical record straight. I was unceremoniously ousted as Chairman of the Center for Inquiry/Transnational on June 1, 2009. It is totally untruthful to state that I was not. The effort by the CEO to cover up this deed offends any sense of fairness and I do not wish to be party to that deception. It was a palace coup clear and simple by those who wish to seize immediate power.

I founded the various organizations of the Center for Inquiry (CFI), including CSICOP (now the Committee for Skeptical Inquiry or CSI) and the Council for Secular Humanism (CSH) and I labored tirelessly for years. And I served without any compensation whatsoever for over 33 years, devoting my life blood to these organizations and the high ideals that they represent. The broad goals of CFI are to defend the scientific outlook and critical thinking in the public at large and to develop secular ethical humanist values as alternatives to religion. There are now 40 Centers and Communities world wide. We are the largest secular humanist and scientific rationalist organization of its kind in North America.

The Board of Directors removed me as Chairman (I am "Chairman Emeritus") and stripped me of any authority or responsibility to see that the Center for Inquiry continues to grow during the current economic crisis. I had agreed to a succession plan, but it was supposed to be a gradual process. I am concerned that the direction CFI will be changed.

I should further state that at one point, the Board majority notified me that if I did not agree with my ouster that they would eject me from my office from our world headquarters in Amherst, New York, a building that I designed and raised the funds to build. It is across the street from the State University of New York at Buffalo campus, where I served for many years as Professor of Philosophy.

I have agreed to remain on the Board for now — though I feel completely demoralized by the power grab — after a degrading Inquisition conducted by the Board a year ago and my final Expulsion from an organization, which I love dearly, and whose future survival I fear is now endangered.

Quote

I am not afraid of the priests. They have tried upon me all their various batteries, of pious whining, hypocritical canting, lying and slandering, without being able to give me one moment of pain.

- Thomas Jefferson

Unquote



Why the delay in naming Francis Collins NIH director?

Unlike previous administrations, the Obama White House has been swift and wise in filling the major science posts. Only the \$30 billion National Institutes of Health, flush with stimulus money, remains without a permanent leader. The President lifted Bush administration restrictions on stem cell research early in March.

It would have been natural to name Francis Collins as director at that time. Until his resignation a year ago, Collins led the National Human Genome Research Project in its successful race against maverick Craig Venter.

Collins is expected to be named NIH Director any day, but why has it taken so long? Many scientists are uncomfortable with Collins' outspoken position on the God issue. On questions of scientific fact, Collins invariably sides with science. However, he is founder and president of the BioLogos Foundation, which emphasizes the compatibility of Christian Faith with the findings of science. In *The Language of God*, Collins describes his parents as only "nominally Christian" and says he regarded himself as an atheist through graduate school. He attributes his conversion to the same reasons cited by each of the physicists who have won the Templeton prize: the moral law and the anthropic principle.

Toward the end of his book he describes a moving religious experience with a young farmer in Nigeria who was dying of tuberculosis; he interpreted it as a vision of God's purpose. As Park noted in *Superstition*, that an M.D. with a PhD in chemistry could not distinguish a hormone rush from an encounter with God is troubling.

- *What's New* by Robert Park, 05 June 2009

Gender Bias: NAS report finds none in academia.

It is undeniable that there has been enormous progress in recent years, not just in academia, but in industry and government as well. I note that for 100 years the chief operating officers of the American Physical Society were all male physicists and held the title of Secretary. When a female physicist was finally named, the title had to be changed to Executive Officer. She is being succeeded by Kate Kirby of the Harvard Astronomy Department. Her selection was praised by APS President, Cherry Murray, deputy director of Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory. An editorial in today's Science points out that too many scientifically trained women are rejecting academia in favor of other career paths. And in my freshman physics classes I still see far fewer women than men.

- *What's New* by Robert Park, 05 June 2009

Darwin's golden retriever?

Biologist Thomas Huxley was known as "Darwin's bulldog" for his spirited defense of Darwin's theory. Darwin's chief defender today is Eugenie Scott, director of the National Center for Science Education, who just won the inaugural Stephen Jay Gould Prize of the Society for the Study of Evolution. She was ranked by Scientific American as one of the top ten science leaders just a few weeks ago.

- *What's New* by Robert Park, 05 June 2009

Eugenie Scott Honored

National Center for Science Education executive director Eugenie Scott has been named by *Scientific American* as one of the leaders in science education today. This award, called the Scientific American 10, recognizes outstanding people "who have recently demonstrated outstanding commitment to assuring that the benefits of new technologies and knowledge will accrue to humanity." On their page honoring her, they stated:



Eugenie Scott

Eugenie Scott has emerged as one of the most prominent advocates for keeping evolution an integral part of the curriculum in public schools in her role as head of the nonprofit National Center for Science Education (NCSE).

Genie Scott has been a tireless defender of evolution and its teaching in the classroom. She and the NCSE have fought creationists in many states, and are in many ways responsible for keeping back the rising number of politicians trying to wedge religious teaching into the public school system.

At the Kitzmiller vs. Dover Area School District trial in 2005 -- where creationists used thinly disguised Intelligent Design arguments as a wedge to get religion taught in schools and to downplay evolution -- the work of Genie and the NCSE loomed large as consultants for the plaintiffs, and were a major reason the creationists not only lost that case, but did so resoundingly. Our congratulations to Genie, and of course to *Scientific American* for showing excellent taste

- from JREF *Randigram* (5 June 2009)





The Laws of Thermodynamics: Why can't we just burn the ashes? Plants do it.

A friend called my attention to an April 30 article in the business section of the *New York Times*. To reduce the emission of carbon dioxide from power plants, there are plans to sequester it deep underground. You have to pay to extract it and then pay again to get rid of it. However, a company called Carbon Sciences has an audacious plan: Recycle the carbon by turning it into liquid hydrocarbon fuels. The author experiences a brief attack of self-doubt, "how much energy would it take to recombine carbon with hydrogen to produce a fuel that could then substitute for gasoline." But his self-doubts seem to be swept away when the company assures him they have a secret biocatalyst that will combine the hydrogen in water with the carbon in carbon dioxide without the usual large expenditure of energy. That's the same claim that inventor Sam Leach made almost 40 years ago when he scammed investors out of millions with an automobile that ran on water.

- *What's New* by Robert L. Park, 21 May 2009

Scientist or Journalist, Diamond Was Wrong

Earlier this month, popular science author Jared Diamond (*Guns, Germs, and Steel*) published a story in a section of *The New Yorker* titled "Annals of Anthropology," relating the violent customs of a New Guinea man and his tribe—except the story isn't true, says the man named in the article, who has filed a defamation lawsuit.

The New Yorker has claimed that Diamond, who is not an anthropologist, was writing as a journalist and not a scientist, and therefore should not be held to the same standards of scientific accuracy. But as Jessica Palmer explains on bioephemera, "Trotting out the tired old science/journalism dichotomy doesn't explain away the problematic aspects of this case. Whether 'Annals of Anthropology' was the title or not, Diamond is...understood by the public to be a scientific authority who writes popular accounts of science."

Question: You [George Barna] list two tribes under the "Christian" umbrella. What are the primary differences between the Casual and Captive tribes? [66 and 16 percent respectively of US population]

Barna: The lives of Captive Christians are defined by their faith; their worldview is built around their core spiritual beliefs and resultant values. Casual Christians are defined by the desire to please God, family, and other people while extracting as much enjoyment and comfort

from the world as possible. The big difference between these two tribes is how they define a successful life. For Captives, success is obedience to God, as demonstrated by consistently serving Christ and carrying out His commands and principles. For Casuals, success is balancing everything just right so that they are able to maximize their opportunities and joys in life without undermining their perceived relationship with God and others. Stated differently, Casuals are about moderation in all things while Captives are about extreme devotion to their God regardless of the worldly consequences.

Letters To The Editor



Some thoughts on Paul Kurtz.

By way of background, I served on the Center for Inquiry's Board of Directors in the late 90s and early 2000s. As treasurer, I helped to oversee CFI's financial and investment policies. I resigned about five years ago for personal reasons, and certainly not because I was unhappy with Paul Kurtz or the CFI Board.

What kind of a person was Paul Kurtz? He did suffer from many of the faults that R. Joseph Hoffmann accused him of, but Hoffman certainly exaggerated them. More importantly, he did not give Paul adequate credit for conceiving and building the diverse organizations of the Center for Inquiry. He did not acknowledge Paul's incredibly hard work and his ability to enlist others to work and contribute to help grow the organizations. Paul was clearly CFI's top fundraiser.

From my viewpoint, among Paul's faults was his effort to control all aspects of the organization. For example, he was displeased when FIG became allied with American Atheists and the AHA. Other CFI affiliated organizations formed similar alliances. Paul therefore decided he needed a more easily controlled setup for local groups in the United States, so he developed a system of branches which provided him with better control.

Paul was also opposed to cooperating with other groups working broadly for the same objectives, and only briefly joined the Coalition set up by Herb Silverman.

In spite of such attitudes, overall I was pleased to work with Paul Kurtz to advance the cause of secular humanism. I also liked him as a person.

- Joe Levee



July 2009 Potluck
Tuesday July 14, 2009



June Meeting
Sunday June 28, 2009 3:00 PM



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 fignotes at (@) gofigger.org, or visit our web site at gofigger.org or freeinquirygroup.org.