

FIG LEAVES

Volume 13 Issue 3

March 2004

March Meeting: SUNDAY, 21 March (note date change)

Humanism, the Emotions, and Counseling

James W. Worth, Ed. D. and Clinical Psychologist, Washington and Lee University

On Sunday, March 21, James Worth will speak to FIG on "Humanism, the Emotions, and Counseling." From his experience in counseling humanists among a great variety of people, he will comment on whether guiding humanists requires a significantly different approach from treating persons with a religious orientation.

His talk will cover a range of topics, such as whether the humanists' emphasis on rationality may result in underplaying the role of the emotions. Recognizing the importance of rationality in analyzing certain types of issues, he will discuss whether humanists can put aside emphasis on rationality to enable them to deal with the emotional dimensions of psychological issues.

Why are many humanists so suspicious of the term "spirituality"? What is the role of spirituality in counseling? Is there a naturalistic spirituality which would be appropriate for counseling humanists? Is there a role for emotions in dealing with intellectual issues? Our speaker will be especially interested in having your views on these topics.

James Worth is a licensed Clinical Psychologist who in 1972 initiated the first full-time counseling service at Washington and Lee University, serving the undergraduates, law students, student spouses, faculty and staff. Soon

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Events

March Meeting

Sunday, 21 March
7:00 PM at the Vernon Manor
400 Oak Street, Cincinnati

April Potluck

Tuesday, 13 April 6:30
at the home of

April Meeting

Tuesday, 27 April
7:00 PM at the Vernon Manor
400 Oak Street, Cincinnati

Tuesday, 27 April, Brant Abrahamson of The Teachers' Press,
"History of the Hebrew Bible: Current Academic Understandings."
This has been the focus of his studies for the last few years.

.....

- People, including Thomas Jefferson, have said: "I'm ready to accept Jesus
- as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God." That is
- the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said
- the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would
- either be a lunatic — on the level with the man who says he is a poached
- egg — or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice.
- Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or some-
- thing worse.

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FEBRUARY MEETING:

Charles Darwin, His Life and Times.

Speaker: Gene Kritsky, Professor of Biology, College of Mt. St. Joseph

Gene Kritsky started off by citing a current educational situation in the State of Georgia where the Superintendent of Public Instruction had an idea that would lessen the controversy surrounding evolution by eliminating it from the school curriculum by calling it biological change. However, this suggestion seemed to generate even more controversy. He was reminded by this situation in Georgia of an experience he had had with a family member, an aunt, who was a fundamentalist and who having read a dramatization of the life of Darwin by Irving Stone called *The Origin*, remarked, "but he (Darwin) was a family man. I didn't know that." This demonstrates some of the misinformation and animosity that surrounds Darwin even today.

Kritsky then talked about the book he intended to write after his next one was published. It would be around the theme of "If Darwin were living today, what would he be like?" Some of the source material for the projected book would be derived from his experience in examining Darwin's papers at the University of Cambridge, England where he spent a year. What he wanted to do this evening was to present Darwin as a human being. The people in the audience could then determine for themselves whether he was the type of person you might like to spend some time with.

Charles Robert Darwin was born on February 12, 1809, the same day and the same year that Abraham Lincoln was born in the United States. It is interesting to note that these two men born the same day in the same year on opposite sides of the Atlantic one to wealth; the other to poverty was each to have an enormous impact on his country in the 1860's.

Darwin was born into a wealthy family. His father was a noted physician and was considered one of the best diagnosticians in all of England. He had a thriving practice. Darwin was raised mostly by his sisters because his mother died before he reached his teens.

Darwin decided he would become a doctor like his grandfather, his father and his older brother, Erasmus. In those days the training of doctors was different from what it became later. Instead of going to school, aspirants became apprenticed to a doctor as Charles was to his father. So that by the time he was 16 he had a list of patients he was seeing. He would discuss their symptoms with his father who would then prescribe medicines that young Charles would compound in their home laboratory and give to his patients. His father had the idea that most patients would get better any way regardless of what you did. Charles' older brother, Erasmus enrolled in the University of Edinburgh to become a physician and the father decided that young Charles had enough training to tag along.

While there, he found the anatomy lectures extraordinarily dull. But he also attended the "operating theater", a walled room where physicians where people would come on Saturday night and watch the surgeons perform surgery. The one that Charles attended was that of a young girl who was put on the operating table, her legs were held down, a rag was put into



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her mouth to muffle her screams and they proceeded to cut her open. Young Charles bolted from the room and threw up. A reaction one would not expect from an aspiring physician. ➡

About this time there was an American man going about Edinburgh giving lectures to raise money to publish his paintings of birds. His lectures explained how he shot them, then mounted them on boards in natural positions and painted them. Charles attended one of his lectures. The man's name was John James Audubon. Whether he had an effect or not, Charles came to the realization that he would not be a physician. So he returned home and discussed with his father what his future plans would be. His father undoubtedly asked him what he liked to do. What Charles liked to do was collect beetles, shoot birds and ride horses. This pointed him in the direction of Natural History.

In those days (1820's) if you wanted to be a Professor of Natural History, you had to become an Anglican clergyman. They had the field sewed up. While the Darwins were not overly religious, they were not anti-religion either. So they decided that Charles would return to Cambridge, enroll in Christ College and become a clergyman. That would give him all the academic credentials to become a natural history professional. Darwin's father sent his son to Cambridge with an allowance of a quarter of a million dollars (in today's currency). Among his first expenditures, Charles hired a man to construct a large cabinet to house his insect collection. He became very friendly with his cousin, William Fox, who served as a conduit to other people. The curriculum for natural history training in those days was based on the study of natural philosophy rather than more scientifically oriented material. One of Darwin's teachers was J.S. Henslow, a professor of botany. Darwin followed him around so much that he became known as "the man who walks with Henslow." It was Henslow who was invited by Captain Fitzroy to accompany the crew of the HMS Beagle on its voyage to South America to map the coast. Since he was unable to go, he recommended Charles Darwin as his replacement. Charles rushed home to ask his father for permission, which was re-

fused. However, his father stipulated that if Charles could find one man whom the elder Darwin could respect to recommend that he should go, he might reconsider. Charles went to visit his Uncle Josiah for a hunt.

During the course of dinner, Charles told him of his predicament. Uncle Josiah felt that he should go and agreed to write a letter to that effect. However when Charles came down the next morning, Uncle Josiah was dressed for traveling and he said they must go back to The Mount and see his father right away because this was too important an issue to delay. When they arrived back at The Mount, Uncle Josiah and Darwin Senior closeted themselves and discussed the issue. When they emerged father Darwin said that, "I told you to bring me one man whom I could respect and you brought the only man I can respect."

Armed with his parent's consent, Charles went to the Admiralty where he encountered another obstacle in the person of Captain Fitzroy, the commander of the HMS Beagle. He didn't like the shape of Darwin's nose and told him the position had been filled. However, he did some further checking and learned that Charles came from a wealthy family and this knowledge caused him to change his mind and approve Charles for the voyage. Despite the original hang-up, Charles Darwin and Captain Fitzroy became very good friends facilitated by the fact that they were close to each other in age; Darwin being 22 and Fitzroy just 27.

In December of 1831 the HMS Beagle set sail for what turned out to be a 5-year voyage around the world. When they reached the shores of South America, Darwin visited the rainforest, collected fossils and rocks and sent them back to England on the next available naval vessel. When they came to the Galapagos Islands in 1835, he became intrigued by the tortoises and the variations between them from island to island. He was also fascinated by the birds particularly the finches. From studying the birds he was able to see the impossibility of a single creation event as the creationists of his day believed.

Back in England in 1838, Darwin began to consider marriage. He proposed to his cousin Emma, Uncle Josiah's daughter and

they were married in 1839. Uncle Josiah's last name was Wedgwood and he owned the famous china works. Charles and Emma settled in at The Mount where they raised their 10 children. They also played two games of backgammon every evening and in the 1870's Charles wrote a letter saying that they had just finished their game of backgammon and he had won again. He said that at that point he had won 2700 games and Emma had won only 2400. The Darwin home became a focal point for the Darwin/Wedgwood family.

In 1858 Darwin received a letter from Alfred Russell Wallace that described his experiences on a South Pacific Island where the coral was so recently formed that one can cut one's shoes on it and also noticed that there were new species of birds on these islands. He wrote this up in a 12-page report, which he included. When Darwin saw this he wanted to scrap his book on Natural Selection. But Joseph Hooker and Charles Lyell suggested he write a paper as well and both could be presented at the next meeting of the Linnean Society and they urged him to finish his book. This happened and the book entitled *The Origin of Species by Natural Selection* was published in 1859. It became an instant best seller.

In 1871 Darwin published *The Descent of Man* which included man in the process of natural selection which he had not done in *The Origin of Species*. Also in the 1870's he devoted several books to the botanical field.

In 1880 he began to complain about stomach problems. When in South America, an insect had bitten him and it was suspected that he might have developed Chagas' Disease. He kept a diary of his daily activities even his intimate ones such as sexual intercourse, the color of his stool, etc. Despite it all, he continued to write six books and over a hundred scientific papers.

In March of 1882 while visiting George Romanes, the botanist, he complained of violent chest pains and collapsed. He was taken back to The Mount. He lingered on for several weeks and died on April 19. His last words were, "I am not afraid to die." He has now been dead for 122 years but he is still with us in our classrooms and in the



The Law and Secular Humanism

by David Koepsell, executive director, Council for Secular Humanism
(Secular Humanist Bulletin, vol. 19, no. 4, Winter 2003/04, p.4-5)

If you follow the opinion pages of your local newspaper, chances are you have, or will, run across a letter or two in which the following argument is made: "The Supreme court has held that Secular Humanism is a religion, and since evolutionary theory is a tenet of Secular Humanism, teaching it in schools violates the First Amendment."

This is an argument being propounded by David Noebel, author of *Mind Siege* and critic of secular humanism in public schools. His agenda is not so much to get the teaching of evolution out of schools, but rather to get creationism, repackaged as "Intelligent Design," into public-school curricula. There are a number of reasons that this agenda is flawed, but one might well ask: "If secular humanism is a religion, then ought not its precepts be kept out of public schools?" No court has ever held that secular humanism is a religion, but no one seems to be challenging Noebel and the letter writers he inspires on this basic, flawed premise.

To understand the roots of this perverted view of the law, we must start with the source, the most oft-quoted case in support of their stance. In *Torcaso v. Watkins* (1961), the Supreme Court first mentioned secular humanism in a footnote, lumping it with other "religions" that do not necessarily teach a belief in God, stating

among religions in this country which do not teach what would generally be considered a belief in the existence of God are Buddhism, Taoism, Ethical Culture, Secular Humanism and others [further citations omitted]. *Torcaso*, fn. 11

Attorneys know full well that a mention in a footnote amounts to "dicta," but not to a "holding." This footnote does not establish any law whatsoever. Moreover, the use of this quote by those who try to prove secular humanism is a religion takes it entirely out of its context and forty years of subsequent interpretation. Among the cases cited as precedent for the dicta in this footnote is *Washington Ethical Society v. District of Columbia* (D.C. Cir. 1957). That case regarded the classification of an organization as a tax-exempt not-for-profit. In holding that the Ethical Society deserved such classification (the court reversed and remanded to the district court) the Supreme Court held that the legislative purpose of the tax-exemption

statute was "to grant support to elements in the community regarded as good for the community," and thus, although the Ethical Society did not demand a belief in god, it should be accorded the status of a "religious" organization to promote the broad public purposes of the statute.

In 1994 the Ninth Circuit soundly denounced both the classification of secular humanism as a religion and evolution as a religious tenet. In *Pelozo v. Capistrano Unified School District*, the Ninth Circuit held:

... neither the Supreme Court, nor this circuit, has ever held that evolutionism or secular humanism are "religious" for Establishment Clause purposes. Indeed, both the dictionary definition of religion and the clear weight of the caselaw are to the contrary. The Supreme Court has held unequivocally that while the belief in a divine creator of the universe is a religious belief, the scientific theory that higher forms of life evolved from lower forms is not. [*Edwards v. Aguillard* (1987). *Pelozo*, p. 521.]

The Ninth Circuit in *Pelozo* cited in a footnote of its own the dictionary definition of religion as necessitating a belief in a supernatural power and cited a few cases and authorities that also supported its holding, including an Eleventh Circuit case from 1987 and a Second Circuit case from 1985 (*United States v. Allen*), which itself cited a book by constitutional scholar Lawrence Tribe. Each of these cases rejected the definition of secular humanism as a

religion.

In 2000 the D.C. Circuit court considered a line of cases regarding the definition of religion, and specifically whether secular humanism was one. It noted the narrow contest of *Torcaso* and its predecessors, which grew out of consideration of tax-exempt status, as well as the fact that *Torcaso* was not a holding, but only dicta. In *Kalka v. Hawk*, the D.C. Circuit stated:

The Court's statement in *Torcaso* does not stand for the proposition that humanism, no matter in what form and no matter how practiced, amounts to a religion under the First Amendment. The most one may read into the *Torcaso* footnote is the idea that a particular non-theistic group calling itself the "Fellowship of Humanity" qualified as a religious organization under California law. [It cited, among others, *Pelozo*'s holding that secular humanism has never been held to be a religion.]

Yet, despite the clear state of the law on secular humanism failing to amount to a religion, David Noebel, in his alarmist screed *Clergy in the Classroom*, which urges people to write letters to the editor on just this topic, cites *Torcaso* and two other cases from 1892 and 1943 to support his argument that secular humanism is a religion and that the courts have held it to be so.

There are a number of other shortcomings to Noebel's argument, including the leap from claiming that secular humanism is a religion to evolutionary theory being a religious tenet rather than an empirical fact. Ironically, this rather lengthy antiscientific



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From: Godfree1st@aol.com
Sent: Thursday, February 26, 2004 11:57 AM

Subject: Anonka makes history in Michigan Federal Court
Re: Anonka and Tammy Jocham v. Tuscola County; US District Federal Court, E. District of Michigan, Northern Div., Case #01-10385 a jury trial captioned Equal Protection of The Laws Under the Fourteenth Amendment. Case before the Honorable David M. Lawson, commencing, Tuesday, February 24, 2004, at 8:30 AM.

This important and, perhaps, precedent setting case applied to religious discrimination -- in this case, Atheists - was settled, February 25, 2004, before going to Jury, after Atheist, Anonka, testified. Beyond the cash award, the Tuscola County Board of Commissioners are required to issue a "Public expression of regret."

Lead Counsel for the Plaintiffs, Jean Marie Hansen, is to be commended for her dedication and outstanding research on this case beginning in December 2001. Throughout this three year ordeal Ms Hansen was assisted

by Co-Counsel, David Wright, and supported by the efforts of American Atheists: Frank Zindler, Editor of American Atheist Press; Conrad Goeringer, American Atheists News; Ellen Johnson, President American Atheists; Arlene-Marie, Michigan State Director, American Atheists; George Shiffer, Assistant State Director, numerous Michigan Atheists, and the tireless commitment and determination of plaintiffs Anonka and Tammy Jocham.

When it became clear that Mr. Wright, Co-Counsel, would be unable to attend this case, Edwin Kagin, Kentucky State Director, American Atheists, an attorney, came from Kentucky to Co-Counsel and present this case.

Details of the trial began with Mr. Kagin presenting a fine opening statement, followed by direct and lengthy examination of plaintiff, Anonka, detailing the events that began December 11, 2001 when she (Anonka), an Atheist and owner of a witch museum that displays the atrocities committed by the Christian church, stood up at an open meeting with Tuscola County Commissioners to protest a nativity display on City property. In response, the county commissioners told her she had no right to be there and proceeded to publicly ridicule and denounce her.

At one point, during her emotional and tearful testimony, Anonka held up a wooden cross stating, "this represents a campaign by the Caro business community to discriminate against me, boycott my business and drive me out of town because I am not a Christian."

The opening of the trial on day two, began with opposing counsels examination of Anonka. Once again, Anonka was emotional and tearful as she testified to the threats she and her family have received; the physical abuse she and her family have encountered; and the vandalizing of her personal and business property, with the thieves leaving personal notes of warning and religious tracts behind.

After a grueling and emotional one hour of testifying, and at 9:35 AM Anonka stated she did not feel well. With her lead counsel, Ms Hansen, at her side it became clear that Anonka failed to take her heart

medication that morning. Emergency rescue was called and 66 year old Anonka, mother of 5 children, grandmother to 17 grand children and great grandmother to 10 great grand children, was taken from the witness stand, by ambulance, to Bay County emergency where she was stabilized. At 12:30 PM, and at her request, she was discharged. And, upon her insistence, George Shiffer and Arlene-Marie returned her to the Federal Court where negotiations for a settlement were in process.

Back at the comfort of our hotel and by the dinner hour that evening, February 25, 2004, a personal and long awaited victory celebration was in full swing.

At the Michigan State Atheist Convention in November 2003, Michigan State Director, Arlene-Marie named Anonka the Outstanding Michigan Atheist of the year for her courage and continued effort to defend separation of state and church and freedom of speech in Tuscola County. Join us as Michigan Atheists applaud the courage of Anonka, 'an amazing woman,' and her devoted family. Join us as we express deep respect for her Counsel and those who supported this effort for the past three years. We trust that the settlement of this case holds that Atheists are a protected class under the Constitution and that the settlement terms will bring Equal Protection of The Laws Under the Fourteenth Amendment to Atheists border to border.

Respectfully submitted by: Arlene-Marie, Michigan State Director, American Atheists

Just a Note

- "I don't see genetics as offending
- the Gods because I don't think
- there are any Gods up there", said
- 75-year-old James D. Watson,
- now president of the Cold Spring
- Harbor laboratory in New York,
- in a message on the occasion.
- Strongly criticizing US-President
- Bush's stand on genetic research,
- he remarked: "I am lucky because
- I had a better upbringing [than
- Bush]. I had a father who didn't
- instill religion in me."
- — quoted in Rationalist International
- (Bulletin no. 107; April 2003)





Are Ethics Eternal?

A Defense of Whig History
By Christopher Orlet

Not long ago the television show Biography aired a documentary on the life of Henry Ford, founder of the Ford Motor Company. Midway through the film came the obligatory two minutes concerning Ford's anti-Semitic rantings, his Nazi medal, and his anti-Jewish newspaper The Dearborn Independent. When it came time to put Ford's anti-Semitism into perspective, the film-makers explained that Ford's views were part and parcel of growing up on a Reconstruction-era farm in southeast Michigan, and as such the great man was no different than anyone else of his time and place. The film-makers didn't go into the reasons why the good folks of southeast Michigan should be naturally anti-Semitic. There were after all no Jews to speak of in rural Michigan in the late 19th century. Ford would later blame the Jews for jazz, communism and immoral moving pictures, but in turn-of-the-century Michigan these were as unheard of as antiperspirant. The important thing, the film-makers seemed to suggest, was that we didn't judge Henry too harshly, him being simply a product of his backward time and culture. And, as everyone knows, judging historical figures, particularly a nation's heroes, by contemporary moral standards is unfair. Among many historians it is not only unfair, it is an academic abomination known derisively as whig history.

The term whig history—also known as presentism—was first coined by British historian Herbert Butterfield in his 1931 study *The Whig Interpretation of History*. Butterfield's criticisms were aimed largely at Lord Acton (1834-1902) and Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800-59), whose *History of England from the Accession of James III* was an exercise in "present-minded" history and a hymnal to what Macaulay saw as British physical, moral, and intellectual development (apparently unable to practice what he preached, Butterfield applied twentieth-century standards of historical scholarship to nineteenth century historians). The gist of Butterfield's critique was that because modern moral and ethical standards are superior to those of the past, it is unreasonable to impose such standards on historical figures. Better to leave right and wrong, and judgments about winners and losers out of the history texts altogether. After Butterfield many historians began to make wildly evasive maneuvers to steer clear of moral judgments. Thus it wasn't long before we began to hear dubitable dons mouth such palpable absurdities as communism wasn't good or bad—just different.

Accusations of presentism have long been employed by apologists to rationalize the depraved behavior—in particular the

anti-Semitism—of historical figures from Martin Luther to Louis Farrakhan. Luther's present-day disciples are particularly outspoken on the subject of whig history, though few would recognize the term. The Great Reformer, it is repeatedly alleged, was but a product of his time and place, i.e., a typical superstitious, Jew-hating, Medieval Saxon, and as such modern society cannot hold him accountable for beliefs, ideas and actions that only today in our hypersensitive, morally advanced times are thought sinful. This scarcely corresponds with our innate need to hold our ecclesiastical heroes—men like Luther, Augustine of Hippo, and the numerous contemporary Muslim clerics thought to have God's ear—to a higher standard of moral accountability than the rest of us mere laypeople. Indeed, in each case a close examination of the man and his moral ideas proves disappointing. Hence supporters have but one recourse to justify the vile behavior and the sinful pronouncements of their leaders: Allegations of presentism. Yes, Luther was an ultra-nationalist who loathed Jews, Anabaptists, Catholics, peasants, the Renaissance and reason, but didn't everyone? And yes, Augustine advocated burning heretics and advised that the Jew "suffer and be continually humiliated," but then in his day that was simply par for the course. Taken to its logical conclusion, then, we must concede that Adolf Hitler and Heinrich Himmler were but products of their time and national character. Thus

if Martin Luther's anti-Semitism is excused on grounds that it was normal for his place and time, are we to absolve the Nazis of the Holocaust since their anti-Semitism was similarly common in twentieth-century Deutschland?

I will concede that critics of presentism are correct in one respect: only a beetle-head would blame the ancients for the lack of scientific knowledge extant in their day. Socrates believed in a preposterous pantheon of Greek gods and goddesses. Does this make Socrates' views on government any less insightful? Does the fact that Aristotle was a slave-owner who judged the sun to move round the earth diminish the genius of his poetic theory? Because of the then scarcity of scientific evidence (fossil records, geological deposits) it would seem proper to make allowances for those pre-Darwinians who accepted the existence of gods and godlings. And when one allows for gods, one is open to all sorts of the superstitious manifestations. Post-Darwinian man, however, does not get off quite so easily, and may explain why many humanists regard the pre-Darwinian skeptics—thinkers on the order of Diderot, Paine, Shelley, Voltaire, and Wollstonecraft—to be the greatest intellectual heroes of their age, in particular those who thrived in a repressive Christian age whose monotheism, admittedly, was rather easier to swallow than the Roman and Greek deities. If we regard Columbus as a hero—despite the ongoing attempts of some to turn him into a genocidal maniac—it is because in the midst of the repression and persecution of



the Spanish Inquisition, he courageously sought to discover the truth about the physical world. The same goes for Abelard, Copernicus, Galileo, Servetus, and countless more medieval martyrs.

It is easy to see why presentism is held in such contempt, for without an uncompromising belief in the evolution of right and wrong many of our historical heroes would come off looking no better than a Senator Joe McCarthy or a Slobodan Milosevic. Anti-whig historians must then accept that morals and values, rather than being fixed like the vast and immovable stars, are as changeable as a bi-polar sufferer's disposition.

I, for one, am not convinced. Generally speaking, wrong has always consisted of inflicting injuries on other people, whereas "right wrongs no man," to quote the Scottish proverb. It follows then that murder, hatred, exploitation, intolerance, and bearing false witness have always been wrong, and have always been known to be wrong. Doubtless, the Christian rabble-rousers of the Middle Ages who led the persecution of "witches" and "Jewish devils" were fully aware of the viciousness of their acts, despite the blessings of Mother Church. If one were legitimately in doubt as to the ethics of such persecutions, one had only to recall the commandment of Jesus of Nazareth: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you..."

Anti-Semitism and slavery remain two of history's popular moral benchmarks, though most modern historians grant dispensations to historical heroes for their Jew hatred and slave-owning. Difficulties arise, however, when one recalls men, even in Medieval Europe, who condemned the heinousness of anti-Semitism and slavery. One of these was the theologian Pierre Abelard, who, in the tenth century, wrote in defense of the Jews:

No nation has ever suffered so much for God. Dispersed among all nations, without king or secular ruler, the Jews are oppressed with heavy taxes as if they had to repurchase their very lives every day. To mistreat the Jews is considered a deed pleasing to God. Such imprisonment as is endured by the Jews can be conceived by the Christians only as a sign of God's utter wrath. The life of the Jews is in

the hands of their worst enemies. Even in their sleep they are plagued by nightmares. Heaven is their only place of refuge. If they want to travel to the nearest town, they have to buy protection with the high sums of money from the Christian rulers who actually wish for their death so that they can confiscate their possessions. The Jews cannot own land or vineyards because there is nobody to vouch for their safekeeping. Thus, all that is left them as a means of livelihood is the business of money-lending, and this in turn brings the hatred of Christians upon them.

We know what Abelard received for his pains: murder attempts, condemnation and castration. Meanwhile Luther's excuse was that Yahweh expected too much from sinful man, that there was no way in hell mankind could keep God's rigorous commandments. May as well then toss Holy Writ down the crapper.

What then shall we make of men like Thomas Jefferson, author of the Declaration of Independence, founder of the University of Virginia and pre-eminent slave-owner? Do we topple him from his pedestal and T.P. his monument, or do we rather accept that he was a normal eighteenth-century Virginia planter? To be sure, Jefferson was in no way a "normal" Virginian, not by any stretch of the imagination. But he was a human being, born in original sin, and acquiring a good deal more along the way. Voltaire said that "every hero becomes a bore at last." I take this to mean that every hero becomes a human being at last, with all the failings, stupidities, prejudices and inconsistencies of our damned human race. Luther, a passionate believer in Heaven and Hell, was correct when he said we are all sinners--himself in particular. Fortunately for Luther--and many another historical hero--he will not be subjected to the flames and agonies of

Quote

... what Bush has had to say about the doctrine that bears his name, such as, "The liberty we prize is not America's gift to the world, it is God's gift to humanity." That is not in my Bible; the words sound more like those of a Jesus-freaked Rudyard Kipling carrying a very beg stick.

— James P. Pinkerton, Washington Post Weekly Ed. (16 Feb.'04)p. 33

Unquote

Reptiles And Roses

by Robert William Service (1874-1958)

So crystal clear it is to me
That when I die I cease to be,
All else seems sheer stupidity.

All promises of Paradise
Are wishful thinking, preacher's lies,
Dogmatic dust flung in our eyes.

Yea, life's immortal, swift it flows
Alike in reptile and in rose,
But as it comes, so too it goes.

Dead roses will not bloom again;
The lifeless lizard writhes in vain;
Cups shattered will not hold champagne.

Our breath is brief, and being so
Let's make our heaven here below,
And lavish kindness as we go.

For when our Death shall close the door
There will be darkness evermore;
So let us kneel in prayer before

Each day and let our duty be
To fight that mankind may be free ...
There is our Immortality.

Atheists in Foxholes Song (Tune - Marine Corps Hymn)

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.

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Creationism still in Ohio Schools.

From New Scientist, (21 February 2004) p. 4.

Creationism back in the classroom

Critics say it is creationism by stealth. Ohio's State Board of Education is attempting to include criticisms of evolutionary theory, which include ideas from advocates of intelligent design, in an official lesson plan for public schools.

In a move that has shocked biologists, the board has given preliminary approval for the lessons to be introduced into the curriculum for tenth-graders aged 15 to 16. Intelligent design theory repackages creationism in non-religious terms to get round a US ban on teaching religion in public schools.

The US National Academy of Sciences

and the Ohio Academy of Science have asked the board to purge creationism from the plan. But on 10 February the plan was given preliminary approval with only two minor changes: deleting references to the book *Icons of Evolution* by intelligent-design advocate Jonathan Wells, and to a non-existent paper critical of evolution that was supposedly published in *Nature* in 1992. But Patricia Princehouse, a special-

ist in evolutionary theory at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, says the revised plan is riddled with errors and should be scrapped.

The document has still to receive final approval from the state board. State officials say that the vote will come no earlier than April, and that hearings may be required first. But Princehouse points out

From The Observer (27 February 2004)

Professors debate intelligent design

by Robert Arons, Staff Reporter

Case professors Dr. Cynthia Beall, Dr. Lawrence Krauss, and Dr. Patricia Princehouse gave a press conference at the Cleveland Museum of Natural History Wednesday to discuss new biology lesson plans for Ohio high school students in the ongoing intelligent design vs. evolution debate.

One of the new model lessons, "Critical Analysis of Evolution," for the 10th grade, will be voted on by the Ohio Board of Education (OBE) on March 9. The model lesson attempts to poke holes in evolutionary theory,

and has been repudiated by scientists and scientific organizations including the Case Faculty Senate, the Ohio Academy of Science, and the National Academy of Sciences. It has also been dismissed as "pseudo-science" by the Ohio Faculty Council, made up of members from all public Ohio universities.

The model curricula passed the OBE vote for intent to adopt by a 13-4 margin this February, and likely will pass an adoption vote by a 12-7 vote March 9, when a public hearing will be held before the final adoption vote takes place. According to sources within the OBE, if the lesson plan is adopted it will become a part of the curricula tested on the Ohio proficiency exam, which is used to determine school success and fund allocation; it is also necessary to pass the test to earn a high school diploma in Ohio.

At the heart of "A Critical Analysis of Evolution" is what has been called "a pattern of deception" by Princehouse, an evolutionary biologist, and "an attack

on science" by Krauss. The lesson plan has been criticized for lack of clarity, false historical information, incorrect or missing footnotes, footnotes directly from books on intelligent design, false definitions, using outdated scientific information, and errors of fact. For instance, the lesson plan defines a theory as a "supposition," when scientists usually define a theory as an explanation of phenomena that has passed empirical tests. The end result, critics believe, is that this is the first step in getting rid of all scientific theories that go against creationist teachings.

Richard Baker, an avowed creationist and vice president of the OBE, disagrees. "I voted for it because I think you need to look at more than one situation as part of the learning process," he said. According to him, the plan's only goal is to "critically analyze" the theory of evolution, and that it does not violate laws that separate church and state.

Baker accused the scientific community of wasting time debating the plan. "We

spend all this malarkey and baloney when 99 percent of all the people who are taught this have nothing to do with the rest of their lives. These scientists, they don't care about wasting their own time or anybody else's time. In business we don't waste time. To me, [the lesson] is not a big deal." According to Baker, the real reason scientists want to do away with the lesson plan is, as he said to a group of scientists at a board meeting concerning the lesson plan, "[They] think [they] know everything. [They're] just a bunch of paranoid, egotistical scientists afraid of people finding out [they] don't know anything."

Lynn Elfner, director of the Ohio Academy of Science, disagrees with this thinking. Noting many footnotes to creationist works and similarities of argument between creationist works and the lesson plan, he said that "the concepts of intelligent design are embedded throughout the document and they are traceable to intelligent design organizations. By using the lesson plan, we can go from the document to the pew and



Panning The Passion.

passion n. the sufferings of Jesus, beginning with his agony in the garden of Gethsemane and continuing to his death on the Cross b) any of the Gospel narratives of Jesus' Passion and of accompanying events c) an artistic work, as an oratorio or a play, based on these narratives. Webster's New World Dictionary.

After the movie *The Passion of the Christ* opened on Ash Wednesday (that's the Roman Catholic thing where ashes are smeared on a believer's forehead as a public sign of penance, despite the command of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount not to do public penance), I was contacted by several media people (well, two). They wanted comments on *The Passion of the Christ*. So my Helen and I went to see it. I don't like to comment on things I have not seen or read as do certain of the Christian persuasion.

The Passion of the Christ is one of the worst movies I have ever seen. Sort of a mixture of B horror movie, B Italian Gladiator movie, and slapstick comedy. Terrible acting, if the cartoon like performances can be called

acting. If one didn't know the story, they might think this movie was some kind of satire. It is in two different languages that are not English, with English subtitles. Yet it was praised by Christian Fundamentals who, among other things, have little patience for anything not in English. The only reason to see this movie is to be able to help defend reason when *The Passion of the Christ* is discussed, as it is being discussed almost everywhere just now.

This movie is a bloody revelry in gore, splattering a story that is improbable even for religious drama. It is about beating and crucifying Jesus, and, like the lurid reports of anti-pornographers, seems fascinated with that which it condemns. It appears to have proceeded from a diseased mind, and offers nothing of those things in Christianity, or in the stories of the teachings of Jesus, that may arguably be of some merit. In the style of Cafeteria Christians, the director selects those passages of the Bible he likes and ignores those that are different from, or contradictory to, his selections or interpretations—sort of like those Ash Wednesday celebrants, or like people praying in public, who have no problem ignoring the biblical report that the Son of God said not to engage in public penance or public prayer.

Fundamentalist Christians have praised the movie for telling the truth. But, as Pontius Pilate, the Roman procurator of Judea, supposedly asked, "Quid est veritas?" Well, one truth is that no human (none known to me anyway) could have lifted the cross depicted in the movie (obviously the movie prop was much lighter—like movie chairs that fly to pieces when one is hit in the head with them in old Westerns) which

appeared to be made of oak beams the size of railroad ties. Ever try to lift a railroad tie? Try it sometime, and then think about the same stuff in a cross with an upright beam of well more than twelve feet long (after it was fixed in the rock, the actor's feet were in the air at the proper height to be kissed by his movie mother) and a cross beam of over eight feet long (for stretched out arms plus some extra room to hook ropes onto to lift it up). Now one can cheat and claim Jesus was a god and all, but then that doesn't fit with the idea of his "Passion," and one really can't have it both ways.

Further, in the "truth" department, the Romans crucified people naked to add to their humiliation. The movie Christ wears a most ample wrap on his loins that is somehow spared and left clean and intact after seemingly every inch of his body not so covered is beaten and bleeding. Thus doth modesty impact truth. We also note that in this absurdity of a movie, the title victim is crucified with a nail thru each palm, and only one nail which goes through both feet. Now it is well known, both from remains of victims of crucifixion and from cadaver experiments, that people were not crucified with nails through the palms. The body would pull the hand through and off of the nail. In real life crucifixions, the nail was placed between the radius and ulna bones of the forearm, with a plate of wood set between the head of the nail and the flesh to secure it further. If there be any doubt on this point, please check the photos of the Shroud of Turin, believed by fundamentals to be the actual burial shroud of Jesus. You will note that the hand wounds are on the

forearms, not on the palms of the hands. So, the movie is wrong, and the fourteenth century forgery of the shroud got that one right. This must be a real problem for those who think both the Shroud of Turin and the movie are historically correct.

The one nail securing both feet is interesting, recalling an old and quite bad school boy Easter joke. If you don't know it, ask someone. This method of nailing Jesus has been identified as a heresy called "triclavianism." For a splendid discussion on this point, see:

<http://objective.jesussave.us/pastorscorner.html>.

My compliments to the author.

More time has already been devoted to this sick travesty than is merited but, as a final observation, it should be noted that no human being could have lived through the beatings depicted, much less thereafter walked and carried, for a while at least, a cross made of at least twenty running feet of railroad ties. The movie Jesus was beaten, inter alia, with chains and by several burly cartoon character Roman soldiers who each used an implement known as a cat-of-nine-tails (nine lengths of leather, with metal tips on each, set into one handle). These artifacts break bones, rip muscles and tendons loose from their attachments, and destroy internal organs.

The work has also been criticized by many for the implication that Jews had something to do with the death of Jesus. Well, if he existed and was executed, Jews may well have had something to do with it. He was, after all, Jewish, as were most





FIG LEAVES



other persons, followers or critics involved in the story, who were not Romans. But so what? Shall we also condemn Romans (or their descendants who are now known as Italians) for what they did to Jesus? And for what the Romans, now the Italians, did to Germans, and English, and French, and Egyptians, etc? And all Europeans who did violence to the indigenous peoples of North America and elsewhere? And all people whose ancestors owned someone else's ancestors? And, for that matter, Christians for the estimated twenty million human beings they murdered as heretics during their inquisitions? Of course these behaviors should all be condemned by all civilized people. But only the behavior of those individuals who actually did those things. The sins of the fathers are not to be visited upon the children, no matter what the Bible says. Check our U.S. Constitution.

Combine all of this with the probability that no such person as the Jesus of the Bible ever really lived, and in this sorry movie we have a myth presented not as well as more interesting Greek myths have been portrayed in better movies.

The Passion of the Christ is probably destined to become a BDSM classic. The book is much better than the movie.

Law and Secular Humanism...page 4
 argument depends on a form of radical skepticism, popularized by philosophical postmodernism, which at one time was considered to be an intellectual enemy of the Christian Right. Essentially, they are now embracing the notion that all inquiry, and therefore all history, is a narrative, and no one version has more truth than any other. Thus, they argue, the facts of the fossil records, DNA studies, and other bases for evolutionary theory amount to nothing more than stories made up to describe speciation, not unlike the story in the Bible, which explains it another way. That argument is easy to counter with even a basic knowledge of the scientific method and the role of theory, observation, and experiment.

Armed as you now are with some case law, however, you might well respond in

Creationism in the schools...page 8
 the church."

OBE member Sam Schloemer agreed. "When you compare the lesson plan with [intelligent design] websites, it's almost verbatim." Steven Gey, a Florida State constitutional law professor and ABC legal news analysts, added, "It's not only bad science, it's illegal."

Although the references to creationist books in the lesson plan have been removed, prompting allegations of plagiarism, the creationist websites listed as research resources are still there. However, the words "creationism" and "intelligent design" are not in the document at all.

Another issue with the lesson plan is the way it was created. According to Schloemer, the selection for the writing committee was closed and "controlled by the pro-creationist chair Mike Cochran." Martha Wise, another OBE member, said that the lesson plan itself was "written by an [intelligent design] ideologist with limited stature as a scientist." According to Princehouse, "writing committee members could not take home documents from the meeting. They collected and counted every piece of paper they gave out before they let anybody go home."

Such secrecy, Elfner believes, has "subverted" the quality of the plan. "The process to develop the model lessons was controlled concealed, especially from scientists. The result is we have a fatally flawed model lesson that is riddled with errors both in pedagogy and scientific content," he said.

----- See <<http://www.cwru.edu/orgs/observer/index/Head00.html>>

Friday, 20 February 2004

Political Science: Scientific Integrity in the Administration.

A statement issued Wednesday by a group of prominent scientists charged the administration with manipulating the science advisory process to support its political objectives: advisory panels are stacked; those that can't be stacked are disbanded; reports that don't reach the right conclusion are suppressed; and questionable policies are shielded from scientific review. Specific examples are in a report from the Union of Concerned Scientists, released at the same time, "Scientific Integrity in Policymaking: An Investigation into the Bush Administration's Misuse of Science." The statement was signed by more than 60 prominent scientists, including 20 Nobel laureates. The administration response was to trivialize the issue. "I think there are incidents where people have got their feathers ruffled," sniffed John Marburger, science advisor to the President, quoted by the New York Times.

Friday 5 March 2004

Political Science: the Administration Answers the Scientists.

Barely a week after 60 prominent scientists issued a statement charging the Bush administration with manipulating the science advisory process, the White House delivered an eloquent response. Two advocates of stem cell research were abruptly ejected from the Council on Bioethics, and replaced on the panel by three appointees whose opposition to stem cell research is solidly faith-based. Anybody else want to speak up? John Marburger, Director of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, has apparently been assigned the task of belittling the scientist's statement, but the 60 prominent scientists who signed aren't backing



BOOK REVIEW

Ultimate Punishment: A Lawyer's Reflections on Dealing with the Death Penalty
by Scott Turow
(New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003)

The author of this volume is mostly known for quality mystery crime novels. That is *Who Done It* with reasonable plots and believable characters who don't seem cardboard cut outs. In fact he is a licensed lawyer with wide experience as Assistant U.S. Attorney, in private practice and in appellate pleas. It is in his professional capacity that he was invited to serve on the Illinois Governor's Commission on Capital Punishment. The Commission was asked to consider and advise after 17 men condemned to death by Illinois courts had been exonerated, most of them found not guilty by DNA evidence. So this is a very careful consideration of all sides of the death penalty.

Turow explains quite a bit about his life and past work. Among other things he reports that before he joined the Commission, and despite his wide experience, he "still hung in a sort of ethical equilibrium" (p. 13) uncertain if he supported the death penalty or whether the community needed that ultimate punishment. He recognizes that many opponents of capital punishment base their thinking on religious or spiritual convictions. He never mentions his own religion, if any. He respects the idea of religious persons who hold life sacred, but he does not accept that state action should be predicated on anybody's religion.

Turow speaks of realities you learn as a criminal lawyer. Some persons are truly evil and nasty. "They lie for laughs and do violence, either as a business or because they are angry and it gratifies them. In a normative sense, they are bad people — and they are going to stay that way, in most instances." (p. 13) So when you consider abolishing the death penalty, an overwhelming reality remains: what can the community do with the people who are truly evil, incorrigible, and dangerous?

Turow introduces us to a few true monsters, who have to be held in a special facility built for the Illinois prison

system. For these few killers the issue of the death penalty is prevention, so that they can never kill again. No court, not even the harshest life sentence or three one-hundred year sentences running consecutively can make absolutely certain the murderer will never again walk the streets. Turow sees the purpose of incarceration itself as mainly for getting the bad person out of the community. Prison is not for revenge and not for rehabilitation, but simply confinement so he or she can not commit another crime. On the whole Turow accepts the research that shows the death penalty is not a deterrence to future murderers.

Another issue is the question of the role of the victims. Should the survivors of the murdered person be heard and what role may they play in the sentencing and parole of a criminal. Turow explores the recently enhanced role of relatives, and what they seek from the criminal justice system. It is interesting that they generally do not want revenge so much as restitution, to be made whole. Turow has to conclude, this aim is impossible to achieve and survivors can not find what they are seeking.

A major insight of Turow's thinking is that criminal

Quote

- A Spiritual Offender
- One of the commandments in the Bible is to know that God exists. But I am an agnostic. I don't know if God exists or not. It's a real problem for me, a Catch-22, because if I knew God existed I wouldn't be an agnostic, and I wouldn't be in doubt. But if I wasn't in doubt, then where would I be? I must be in doubt, which means that God doesn't exist, which means I am in doubt. Right? Does any of this make sense to you?

Unquote

cases are rarely clear cut. Even when it is clear the accused committed the crime, the question which action is so evil it deserves the death penalty has no reasoned answer. The system simply can not accurately or consistently decide among guilty defendants who deserves to live and who to die. On top of that, the emotional impact of major crimes and the strong feelings aroused by the death penalty make capital cases uniquely prone to error. There is a reason for the long and contentious appellate process, which is obligatory after a death sentence. In addition, prosecutors use their unfettered power to make a record for a run at a higher elective office. "In my practice, I've seen federal jury investigations turn law-and-order conservatives into dues paying members of the ACLU." (p. 94) The system can be tinkered with but it can't be fixed, is one conclusion. If the community is determined to keep the death penalty an occasional innocent will be convicted. More generally, many deserving of the ultimate penalty will draw a lesser sentence, while a few who do not deserve this punishment will wind up on death row.

Turow himself along with most of the members of the Commission would like to abolish the death penalty, but



March Meeting: SUNDAY 21th 7 PM

April Potluck: Tuesday 13th 6:30 PM



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FIG

Our Purpose

The Free Inquiry Group, Inc. 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. Our members are mostly secular humanists. However, we welcome to our meetings anyone interested in learning about or furthering our

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 figleaves@fuse.net, or leave a message at (513) 557-3836. Visit our web site at gofigger.org