

Atheists and Other Freethinkers Newsletter

December 2000

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December 10 Meeting--Potluck Party!

The speaker whom we had scheduled for December has graciously agreed to postpone so that we can all party together in December. See the enclosed flier. We look forward to hearing Alvin Bernstein speak to us in January! November Speaker
A review of the November speaker was not available at press time.

More Freethinkers Staff Table on Campus

Mynga Futrell

During Halloween week, members of both AOF and HAGSA joined forces in staffing some additional "freethought tabling" at CSUS. Thinking that the "spirituality" might be kind of high at Sac State that particular week, I had coordinated a three-day blitz. But rain on Monday meant that our tabling volunteers Steve Lomeli and Paul Storey had to stay home. Tuesday was a bit windy, and our tablers-JoAnn Anglin, Anna Andrews, and Hank Kocol-resourcefully battled the breezes and kept everything "nailed down." Paul Geisert and Betty Simonsma, our Wednesday tablers, had the best of it. Wednesday was just gorgeous.

I appreciate all those volunteers who did such a magnificent "conversational" job. Secular folks of "varied stripes" can cooperate in community endeavors on behalf of freethought (such as outreach, and Darwin Day) and have a bang up time in the process! Join the "outreach bureau."

We've learned a bit about how to do this outreach efficiently so we'll want to continue doing some more outreach tables. Of course, it's getting colder! Still, we can perhaps have a table on a dry and very mild day. I continue to welcome any hardy self-organized "freethinker team" that exhibits a desire to spend several mid-day hours together outdoors on campus. I can facilitate by getting together all appropriate materials in readiness (you must pick up, carry, set up, take down, drop off).

If interested, find your own "partner" and phone me at 443-5448 (email instrnsys@aol.com) with your "hoped for" calendar date. I will get you all necessary details on outreach location, guidelines, weather decisions, etc. It may be that on the day you choose I can arrange to shuttle you to and from campus. I will both drop off and pick up you and the materials at a very convenient spot. You won't have to surmount the notorious parking challenges or even load your own car!

A Fond Fairwell

Dear Fellow Members, Nov 7, 2000

I will be moving back to my hometown, Jackson MS, the second week in December. It was a rather sudden turn of events, but family and business call me back, and I must go. I wanted to thank everyone for your friendship and camaraderie, There will certainly be no group like you in the heart of the Bible Belt and I will miss our shared philosophies on the subject of atheism. Please continue your fine work. Perhaps one day I can tell you that I have been able to establish an AOF in Jackson. That would be a fine accomplishment.

Regards, Mary Jo Brooks, animaliberation@prodigy.net

Goodbye Mary Jo, We will certainly miss you but wish you all the best.

Darwin Birthday Speaker

Eric Meikle, NCSE has been selected as our speaker for this year's Darwin Birthday Celebration. Proposed Title: Darwin in the 21st Century: New Challenges and Old

As we enter the 21st century, Charles Darwin's intellectual legacy persists as one of the bedrock elements of modern science. This is true despite almost 150 years of fierce and constant challenges from opponents (both scientific and otherwise) of Darwin's specific ideas and concepts. In historical perspective, scientific challenges to evolution changed and ultimately diminished dramatically as new knowledge accumulated. How have developments in biology, and especially in genetics, affected scientific interpretations of evolution? What are the implications of recent work on the genome project for understanding evolution? What aspects of evolution are still subject to scientific debate? By contrast, extra-scientific challenges to evolution have changed surprisingly little in well over a century. Some philosophical or

theological disputes with evolutionary implications continue to recur over more than two centuries. Concerns about morality, human nature and our place in the universe persist very strongly among the American public, markedly coloring views of evolution. What is the current situation regarding evolution education in the United States, and what is the future likely to hold?

Highway Cleanup

Don Knutson AOF will once again hit the pavement Saturday, Dec. 14 @ 9a.m. to do our bimonthly cleanup of Highway 99 north of Elkhorn Blvd.(we meet and strategize at the Park & Ride). We had 10 AOF members turn out in October for our fifth anniversary of highway cleansing and everyone had more than enough to keep them busy. The dedication showed by the crew to do a thorough job was a real inspiration. Join the winning team!

Motto

"In God We Trust" was not on our early currency. In fact it didn't appear until 1864, on the short-lived 2-cent coin, then later, starting in 1908, on other coinage and bills. Before that the official nat'l motto, used on most money, was the highly secular E Pluribus Unum ("From many, one").

That other motto you see on the Great Seal, Novus Ordo Seclorum, might also translate as "A new secular order" or "New age of the world" (actually it is from Virgil). Also pretty secular. Charles Thomson, secretary of the Continental Congress, designed it in 1782. Why the change? Intense lobbying from a group called the National Reform Association, sort of the Christian Coalition of its day, that's why. Unhappy with a secular Constitution, NRA members wanted to amend it to add a preamble declaring "this is a Christian nation." They failed. But the Secretary of the Treasury, Samuel P. Chase, was a sympathizer; he tossed them the new coinage motto apparently as a sort of bone.

Other statesmen of the day tolerated the motto with mild embarrassment, seeing it as a slightly vulgar if benign bit of religious jingoism, which is why it did not really stick. But sentiments change. A century later, political tensions between the Soviet and western blocks were being painted as a struggle between Christian civilization and godless communism. In 1956, near the height of the Cold War, Eisenhower signed a law making "In God We Trust" the new national motto. (Just two years earlier, Congress had inserted "Under God" into the Pledge of Allegiance.)

Assuming your eyes aren't glazed over by now, there is some of the real history behind our national motto.

Ken Nahigian

Madalyn Murray

(later O'Hair), wrote in the preamble to the court case *Murray v. Curlett*, 1961-APR-27: "An Atheist loves himself and his fellow man instead of a god. An Atheist knows that heaven is something for which we should work now - here on earth - for all men together to enjoy. An Atheist thinks that he can get no help through prayer but that he must find in himself the inner conviction and strength to meet life, to grapple with it, to subdue, and enjoy it. An Atheist thinks that only in a knowledge of himself and a knowledge of his fellow man can he find the understanding that will help to a life of fulfillment. Therefore, he seeks to know himself and his fellow man rather than to know a god. An Atheist knows that a hospital should be built instead of a church. An Atheist knows that a deed must be done instead of a prayer said. An Atheist strives for involvement in life and not escape into death. He wants disease conquered, poverty vanquished, war eliminated. He wants man to understand and love man. He wants an ethical way of life. He knows that we cannot rely on a god nor channel action into prayer nor hope for an end to troubles in the hereafter. He knows that we are our brother's keeper and keepers of our lives; that we are responsible persons, that the job is here and the time is now."
<http://www.religioustolerance.org/atheist.htm> -----

Real Heroes

by Cleo Kocol May, 1994

We do our damndest to keep society from identifying the real heroes among us. Teddy Roosevelt carried a big stick. Rockefeller bulldozed his way through Wall Street. Other models of bravery and the American way wore side arms or toted guns. Still others bashed one another's heads on a playing field. These men, and sometimes women, were tough and strong, and we looked up to them. We made them our heroes and still do. We call them courageous.

But few school children recognize the names Robert Ingersoll and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. They should. Ingersoll spoke out against religion, racism, and sexism at a time when most people hadn't yet identified the problems. Stanton did the same. With a houseful of kids and a husband to cook for, she still managed to defy societal norms and be heard. Ingersoll and Stanton showed real courage.

American history has many such heroes, most of them never acknowledged. Their bravery is phenomenal. They say, "I am not religious," when it's considered anti-American not to be. They integrate schools, befriend those of other ethnic backgrounds, and take unpopular positions. Whether their actions are covert or overt, they at times put themselves in physical danger and/or mental duress for their beliefs. They suffer economic loss and societal shunning, and we should salute them. They--not screen and rock stars, military leaders, and sports jocks with sex-goddess cheerleaders--are the real leaders, the ones with real courage. They are the true heroes.

Add Some Reason to Your Season

Order any of these freethought items on the next page for yourself or for gifting someone you cherish.

"Did Jesus Rise from the Dead?"

The video tape from this year's Atheist Alliance Convention in April is now ready and available for \$15. It features the debate between Dan Barker and John Moorehead on the topic: Did Jesus Rise from the Dead? Two hours.

Clearance Sale Price! ----- 2000 Atheist Alliance Convention T-SHIRTS

Shirts are 99% cotton, 1% other fiber, short sleeved, light gray, with red lettering.

Front: AOF~AAI Back: Freethought Across the Millennia Only \$7 At this

price we can't guarantee we'll have your size when we get your order. If we do not have the size you ordered, the next larger size will be mailed. Adult sizes S, M, L, XL

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Walk toward the light--of freethought that is! Treat yourself or a loved one to the writings of these great thinkers. Five different titles are available:

1. **The Works of Robert G. Ingersoll:**
 - o 12 volumes of lectures, discussions, interviews, etc including: The Gods
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 - o The Liberty of Man, Woman and Child
 - o About Farming in Illinois
 - o What Must We Do to Be Saved?
 - o Some Mistakes of Moses
 - o Some Reasons Why
 - o Orthodoxy
 - o Myth and Miracle
 - o Shakespeare
 - o Robert Burns
 - o Abraham Lincoln
 - o Voltaire
 - o The Great Infidels and more.
2. **An Introduction to Freethought, the religion of freedom. including these authors:**
 - o 400 Years of Freethought, Samuel P. Putnam
 - o A Biographical Dictionary of Freethinkers, J. M. Wheeler
 - o The Age of Reason, Thomas Paine
 - o My Belief, Luther Burbank
 - o Analysis of Religious Belief (2 Volumes), Viscount Amberley

- The Bible, A Dangerous Guide, Marshall J. Gauvin. And other great Freethought writings by John E. Remsburg
 - J. M. Robertson
 - George Jacob Holyoake
 - L. K. Washburn
 - Marie Jean Gavau
 - D. M. Bennett
 - Kersey Graves
 - G. W. Foote
 - Ross E. Browne
 - Ludwig Feuerbach
 - Maria M. Ricker
 - and others.
3. **An Appreciation of Thomas Paine:**
- 10+ volumes of the Life and Writings of Thomas Paine including The Age of Reason, Rights of Man, Common Sense, and more.
4. **Facts of Freethought:**
- Freethinkers' Pictorial (2 Vols.), Watson Heston
 - A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom (2 Vols.), Andrew D. White
 - History of Sacerdotal Celibacy in the Christian Church (2 Vols.), Henry Charles Lea
 - Censorship of the Church of Rome (2 Vols.), George Haven Putnam
 - The Massacre of St. Bartholomew, Henry White
 - Henry of Navarre and the Religious Wars, Edward T. Blair
 - Autobiography of Andrew D. White (2 Vols.)
 - The Future Prospects of Christianity, Francis William Newman
 - Thumbscrew and Rack, George E. Macdonald.
5. **Freethought and the Bible:**
- The Bible-Comically Illustrated, Watson Heston
 - The Jefferson Bible-An Exact Reproduction, Thomas Jefferson
 - The Bible, John E. Remsburg
 - The Bible Unveiled, M. M. Mangasarian
 - Bible Myths and Their Parallels in Other Religions, T. W. Doane
 - Evenings with the Skeptics (2 Volumes), John Owen
 - What is the Bible?, J. T. Sunderland
 - Is the Bible Worth Reading?, L. K. Washburn
 - A Few Words about the Devil, Charles Bradlaugh
 - Chapters From the Bible of the Ages by G. B. Stebbins
 - and many more!

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