

Video of September AOF Meeting now available

The September 27 presentation by Candace Gorham on Secular Mental Health is now available at this lengthy link:
https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/SXURX0lNjGFQJygDGj5fSAkdM0GoJ5bnZluCUvomo6V96qeODO3afk6L_gO2RGiO-.e5CXiZRBQtwfvlue
Passcode: **UB8uE*WG**
Just click. It will be there for about a month, so click soon. As usual, the moderator is the vivacious Susan McLean.

Bonus Video: Margaret Downey Birthday Party

AOF members may enjoy the recorded Virtual 70th Birthday Party of Margaret Downey, freethought maven and founder of the Freethought Society of Pocopson, PA. The online party occurred August 16, 2020, with shout-outs from Tom Flynn, Dan Barker, Ann Druyan, Julia Sweeney, and stage magicians Penn & Teller (the latter assisted in a speaking role by his trusty sock puppet). The full video is almost 4 hours, but you can fast forward for the good parts, which are many.

Link: <https://youtu.be/r0XAqNo3Fuw>

✧ ✧ **Upcoming AOF Events** ✧ ✧

➤ **Free Movie Nights!**

Friday, Oct 2 & Oct 16, 2020, 7pm – 10pm

Twice a month, [Reason Center](#) (RC) and AOF host a **Free Movie Night** under an excellent [MPLC License](#). We can't name the movies, but we can hint.

The first is a 2015 comedy/adventure/drama about a self-professed biblical archaeologist who falls on hard times and starts to bend the truth in order to continue inspiring the faithful. Stars are Sam Rockwell, Amy Ryan, and Jemaine Clement. The second is the classic 1975 British comedy film about King Arthur, written and performed by the Monty Python comedy group, and oft-cited as the second-best comedy of all time.



Alas, our regular movie venue is still closed due to the Coronavirus lockdown. To attend, you will need a [personal Netflix account](#) + the [Google Chrome web browser](#). If you don't have these we apologize; please be patient until RC can open its doors. Else, here's how to join us:

1. Open your Chrome web browser right now and install the Netflix Party Extension. Get it at: <https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/netflix-party/oocalimimngaihdkbihfgmpkcpnmlaoa?hl=en>. (Really, do it *now*, don't wait till movie night!)
2. Just before show time, fire up the Chrome browser again and go to the very special Netflix Movie Party link, which will appear on the AOF website for this event about a half hour before showtime.
3. *Click that link*. The Netflix Movie Party page will open. Log into Netflix (if not logged in already). At the top right of the browser frame, under your "Extensions" list, see the letters **NP** in red. Look closely. You may need to click on the "**NP**".
4. The Netflix movie party should begin. You'll be watching it along with the rest of us. As it plays we can chat on the side of the screen and make silly, snarky comments.

Free Movie Night is especially for Reason Center members, though non-members are welcome too. How can you become a Reason Center member? Sign up at <http://reasoncenter.com/donate/>. Membership is a measly \$5 a month, is tax deductible if you itemize, and the perks (like this one) are a blast.

Location: A Netflix Party link, see above.

Contact: Email "programs (at) aofonline (dot) org" or visit <https://reasoncenter.org/contact/>.

Free Movie Nights generally occur two Friday evenings each month. And you can suggest your own fave film for next time.

➤ **California Freethought Day**

Sunday, Oct 11, 2020, 12 noon – 1:30pm

[California Freethought Day](#), the **Nineteenth Annual Freethought Day Festival**, is a day when the whole community of freethinkers, including AOF, join hands to bring you a party of free minds, along with music, speakers, awards and much more.



AOF founded the Festival in 2002 as a local gathering on the Sacramento Courthouse steps. Since then it has grown and taken wings. Today "CFD" is an annual public jubilee hosted by the independent [Freethought Day Committee](#), a statewide celebration of secularism and independent thought, encouraging free speech and thought, civic engagement, enthusiasm for science, social justice, and the separation of church and state. It combines "the fun and festivity of a fair with the education and activism of a conference," as the event chair fondly explains. Meanwhile AOF continues to promote it, because we couldn't be more proud.

The committee has packed the day with events to entertain you and uplift you. So far, projected speakers, entertainers & panelists include political scientist [Juhem Navarro-Rivera](#), organizer [Sean Omar Rivera](#), authors [Seth Andrews](#), [Thomas Westbrook](#) and [Erin Louis](#), congresswoman [Zoe Lofgren](#), juggler [Andy Swan](#), and musician [Shelley Segal](#). The Master of Ceremonies will be science journalist [Kavin Senapathy](#). The lineup grows as you read this. This year's event theme is: *Reason in the Voting Booth*.

As ever, attendance is open to all and *free*. Due to public health concerns, this year's event will be a streaming videoconference via digital media. In other words, you can attend from the comfort and safety of your home and the tasty proximity of your pantry. For details how, see <http://freethoughtday.org/>.

Note, please sign up now at <http://freethoughtday.org/registration.html>. But, sign up *why*? It's free, isn't it? Yes, the event is free to attend, but advance registration (just as free) guarantees you a link to the videostream, and also makes you eligible for awards and toothsome prizes. To learn more, visit the [event website](#) or see the [Facebook Page](#).

By the way, if you'd like to volunteer, sponsor, donate, help promote or help plan - or if you just have ideas - then please do visit the [event website](#) now, and contact the chairman (see below). Sooner = better. The team will love to have you, because hands that help ... are beautiful hands.

Contact for details: 209-610-0651, or email "Chair (at) FreethoughtDay (dot) org".

➤ Evangelicals and Donald Trump

Sunday, Oct 25, 2020, 2pm – 4pm

Submitted to you: a conundrum. Just why would devout evangelicals support a politician who has had three wives, cheated on all of them, punched his children to the floor, ripped off hundreds of businesses (including banks), is racist without apology, and has cozied up to the world's worst dictators?

The loyalty to Trump is deep, vast and strong, and baffling to many liberals, who gaze agog at the parade of scandals, corruption and palpable lies. But for Trump partisans, the investigations, the news stories, the fact-checks are not evidence of evil, but rather of the venality of the Democratic Party, the mainstream media, or other of Trump's supposed enemies. He is never wrong, never fibs; data to the contrary are fake news.

In fact, it's God's plan.

That's the view of our speaker, Sarah Posner, American journalist and author. In her book [Unholy](#), she suggests that the ambitions of the President and his base are a white Christian grab at power, and they are using every available tool, including the nation's election infrastructure, Congress, federal agencies, and the courts.

Posner argues that Trump won over white evangelical voters by claiming to be an anointed figure sent by God to rescue them from the excesses of liberalism. His supporters insist that sometimes God sends a morally flawed leader, and that is just part of the plan. Further, that what motivated evangelical activists in the early to mid-1970s, and led to the mobilization of the modern religious right, was opposition to the government's attempts to revoke the tax-exempt status of private schools that had discriminatory policies. The government did not want to give these private schools—many of which were Christian private schools, like Bob Jones University—a tax exemption if they were using their private school status to evade school desegregation that was required in the wake of the Supreme Court's 1954 decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*.

Join us for this provocative, well researched presentation, another smashing event of the AOF Speaker Series. AOF remains infuriatingly politically neutral, and would never tell you how to vote. Never.

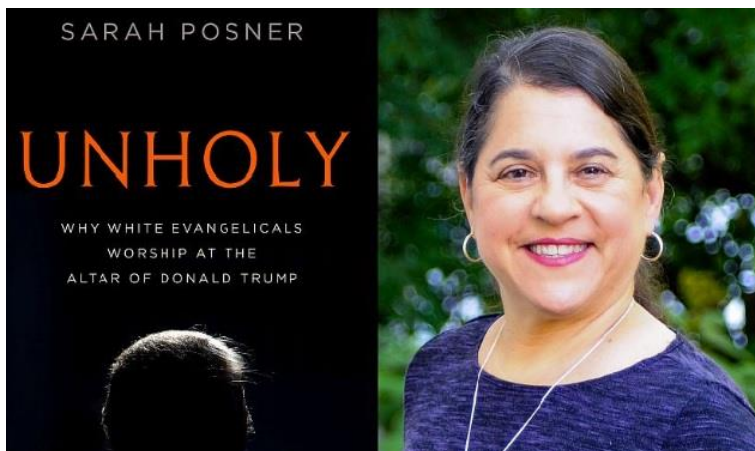
How to attend:

Reason Center is still closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, so this meeting will be online only.

Any time before the event: Go to <https://zoom.us/download>. Download & install the "Zoom videoconference tool" if you haven't already. (Do it just once; it will be good for all future online Zoom meetings.)

Moments before the meeting: Go to this Zoom Page:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86012575670?pwd=M1VmRjkrb3NlVU1rcFJBdnZ0cjYvZz09>.



If it asks you to sign in: If you have a Facebook or Google (Gmail) account, or even an SSO account, just click one of the buttons for those, then sign in with your Facebook or Google info. Or create your own free Zoom account, but this is not necessary.

If it wants a Meeting ID (it probably won't), the ID is **860 1257 5670**.

If it wants a passcode (it probably won't), the passcode is **262666**.

The videoconference should begin. Speakers on, please! Sit back and enjoy.

Or listen in by phone at 1-669-900-6833. Same meeting ID (860 1257 5670) and same passcode (262666).

Location: Online videoconference via Zoom – see the link above.

Contact: Email "programs (at) aofonline.org", or see <https://www.meetup.com/SacFAN/events/273381228/>.

✧ ✧ Other Upcoming Events ✧ ✧

➤ Sac-area Online Meetings

Other groups in the local community of reason now meet via online videoconference. Join these meetings of marvelous minds and share your wisdom. For details on most see <https://www.meetup.com/SacFAN/events/calendar/>.

- **Sundays, Oct 4 & 18, 10:30am - 12 noon, Online Coffee and Community.** BYO beverage & snacks! The video link for both events is: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85735020087?pwd=WlI5WHRiTVc3SDNZRjBpNCs2M3k0UT09>.
- **Monday, Oct 5, 5pm – 7pm, Personal Growth Post Religion.** Janice Selbie speaks to Recovering from Religion Sacramento. Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/186729414>. (See <https://www.meetup.com/RfR-Sacramento-CA/events/273541535/> for details.)
- **Tuesdays, Oct 6, 13 & 20, 7pm – 9pm, Black Lives Matter and Me.** Talk, read, see videos and discuss social justice in America. Use this link for all meetings: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82590278514?pwd=K1pzaXA0dGVESzlvS1lUcEs4RnE2UT09>.
- **Wednesdays, Oct 7, 14, 21 & 28, 7pm – 9pm, What's your story?** Meet other local freethinkers to discuss beliefs, philosophy and what led you here. Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85489607519?pwd=a1V2eEVKb3hnWXhZMVZRMm04Wk5BQT09>.
- **Friday, Oct 23, 6:30pm – 9:30pm, Virtual Skeptics in the Pub.** Devoted to skepticism, rational thought and good beer, a gathering to promote fellowship and camaraderie among skeptics of all sort. For details email "sacskeptics (at) gmail (dot) com" or "sbaker81 (at) comcast (dot) net", or see <https://www.meetup.com/sacskeptics/events/tsvpxyrbcnbfc/>.
- **Wednesday, Oct 28, 7pm – 9pm, Recovering from Religion Support Group.** Providing ongoing and personal support to those letting go of religious faith. Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82268955990>. (For details see <https://www.meetup.com/RfR-Sacramento-CA/events/bbhsxyrbcnblc/>.)

➤ Secular Day of the Dead

Thursday, Nov 1, 2020, 11:45am – 1pm (Pacific Time)

The [Secular Day of the Dead](#) (*Día de los Muertos*) is a freethought celebration of life. Nontheist Hispanics view this day as a perfect way to remember departed loved ones in a way that does not require prayer, church, or religious dogma. To nontheists, our legacies are our afterlife.

This Secular Day of the Dead will be a videoconference event with special attention to Spanish speaking participants, co-sponsored by The Freethought Society, Hispanic American Freethinkers, American Atheists, Center for Inquiry, and the Freedom From Religion Foundation. It will begin at 11:45am (Pacific Time) with music & chatting; the main program begins at noon.

Note, planners are taking reservations for any who wish to celebrate the life of a dead loved one. To reserve a 3-5 minute time slot, email "**SecularDayoftheDead (at) FtSociety (dot) org**". (Actor John de Lancie, writer Sasha Sagan and sculptor Zenos Frudakis have already reserved time.) You will be able to share images of the person honored.

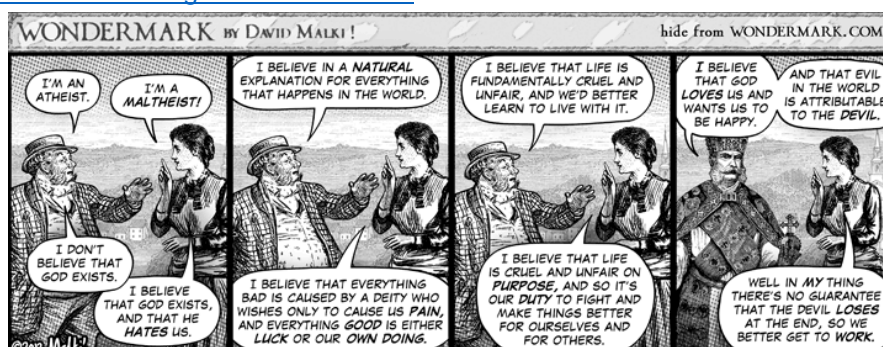
To register to participate, visit: https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJYoduGs9z8sEtdDY5T3-q64A_EvVQYz5jS7.

For details see <https://www.ftsociety.org/secular-day-of-the-dead/>, email "info (at) ftsociety (dot) org", or call 610-793-2737.



➤ Coalition of Reason – Sacramento Area Events

Whew. We're tired already. But for still more freethought events in the area, please see the Sacramento Coalition of Reason calendar at <https://unitedcor.org/event-calendar-2/>.



You can help. Here's how.

Support Reason Center

Reason Center opened in July 2014, and since then has hosted hundreds of events and accrued twelve partner organizations. Its mission: to support a social and intellectual community for freethinkers, contribute to society through education and community service, advance the civic understanding and acceptance of freethinkers, and uphold the separation of religion and government. All good work.

To continue, "RC" relies on support from members and donors. Please stand up for Reason Center, because it stands up for you. To set up a monthly or one-time donation, visit ReasonCenter.org.

Support AOF

You can support AOF *without spending a dime*. How? When you purchase goods at Amazon.com, simply use this link: <https://smile.amazon.com/ch/68-0325762>. Bookmark it now! Prices & service will be the same, but AOF will receive a small kickback for whatever you purchase. Sweet!

Suggest a Meeting

Know a compelling speaker, have a great meeting idea? Tell the AOF Program Committee! Go to <http://www.aofonline.org/contact.html>, click "Program Committee" in the drop-down line, and enter your thoughtful suggestion. (Reasonable honorariums paid to speakers.)

Volunteer?

We're just saying. See <http://www.aofonline.org/learn/committees.html>, and think about it.

✧ ✧ **Secular Holiday** ✧ ✧

➤ **Freethought Day**

Monday, October 12, 2020

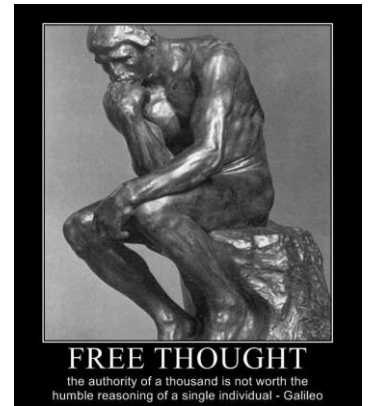
[Freethought Day](#), or "Freethought Coming-Out Day," is a day to give closeted freethinkers a platform from which to declare themselves. The formal day is October 12, but many groups plan celebrations for the closest weekend. Some recognize the whole week as **Freethought Week** or the entire month of October as **Freethought Month**. In this time, newly declared freethinkers can garner strength and support from their fellow.

Why October 12? Because on the day in 1692, Colonial Massachusetts Governor William Phips wrote to the Privy Council of the British monarchs to take a stand against the legal use of "spectral evidence," that is, evidence of a non-objective nature, such as dreams and visions. His decision that evidence should be objective and verifiable essentially brought an end to the Salem Witch Trials, saving scores of lives. (Click [here](#) to read Phips's two letters.) In the modern United States, discrimination, hatred and bias against freethinkers continues.

The freethought community lacks a powerful voice and activist population for ending such treatment. Reactions often stem from a misunderstanding of what it is to be a freethinker, or that freethought is a mindset often set in motion in childhood, like sexual preference, not something to change on a whim or with the right "religion." Others should not try to change it with bullying, ridicule or intimidation. Freethinkers must be allowed to declare themselves openly. The intent of Freethought Day is to change this situation for the better of all freethinkers, especially the young.

Today's world sees the emergence of younger and younger freethinkers who are often alone and isolated in their communities. The [Secular Student Alliance](#) and the [Campus Freethought Alliance](#) attempt through their projects to give voice to college and university freethinkers in the US and across the globe, while programs such as [Camp Quest](#), the country's first secular humanist summer camp, and the [SSA's High School Program](#) provide young freethinkers with a place to gain a sense of community and understand that there is a proud and illustrious history to their philosophy. However these programs are few, and without a united voice and a united commitment to change this situation, they may not be enough.

Every "nonchurched" citizen in every community should feel comfortable with his or her ideals, and part of that is a connection to like-minded individuals. Freethought Day gives our friends a chance to understand who we freethinkers are, what we believe, that freethought exists in every community, and that they should not view freethought with fear, but with respect as a positive, compassionate way to live life.



In Memoriam: Philip Appleman (1926-2020)

(from *The Humanist*, 11 Sept 2020, condensed. See original [here](#).)

Philip Appleman, novelist, editor, humanist, and perhaps the most celebrated modern atheist poet, died April 11, 2020.

Appleman earned degrees from Northwestern University, the University of Michigan, and the University of Lyon. During World War II he served in the US Army Air Corps and was a merchant marine after. At his death he was professor emeritus in the Department of English at Indiana University, Bloomington.

A lifelong writer, he producing numerous volumes of poetry, three novels, and many collections of prose. He was well known for his social commentary on politics, sex, and morality and was a recognized expert on Charles Darwin, editing the critical anthology *Darwin* and penning two books of poems on the theme of evolution. Bette Chambers wrote in the *Humanist* of the second edition of *Darwin*: "Laypersons and scientists alike will treasure this new edition as an essential reference work. Appleman's own lucid style emerges in 'Darwin Among the Moralists' and 'Darwin: On Changing the Mind.'"

Daniel Thomas Moran, the *Humanist* magazine's arts editor, recalls meeting Appleman at a poetry reading in 1985: "He read several things, including his humorous and insightful retellings of stories from the Old Testament. I was astounded to meet a man who was, at once, a poet, a scientist, and also an atheist." He described Appleman as humble, distinguished, soft-spoken, and generous to a fault. Moran cited courage as his most remarkable quality.

Through many years of his life, when atheists were forced into the dark corners of our society, Philip Appleman was bold, unafraid, and, yes, unrepentant as a voice for reason, for humanity, and for the transcendent joys of being able to think and speak thoughts openly. More importantly, he encouraged and empowered others to do the same. And Phil was a true romantic. His love poems to his wife Margie are among the most beautiful poems I know.

His writings appeared in dozens of publications, including the *Nation*, the *New York Times*, the *New Republic*, the *Paris Review*, *Poetry*, and the *Yale Review*. He was a founding member of the Poets Advisory Committee of Poets House, New York; a former member of the governing board of the Poetry Society of America; and a member of the Academy of American Poets, PEN American Center, Friends of Poets & Writers, Inc., and the Authors Guild of America.

He was also a longtime member of the American Humanist Association. He received the Humanist Arts Award in 1994 and was a signer of the third Humanist Manifesto. His contributions to humanism have made a lasting impact on the AHA's work.

"Phil Appleman wanted the world to be a better place," said Moran, "and I can say, without hesitation, that the world is a better place because of Phil Appleman." He is survived by his wife Marjorie Appleman, a playwright.

Read more of Philip Appleman's poetry [here](#).



Not yet an AOF member? Please join us!

Atheists and Other Freethinkers is a 501(c)(3) non-profit association, FEIN 68-0325762, incorporated in 1993. Meetings are free and open to the public. AOF also hosts civic service projects, dinners, movies and parties! See what awaits you at www.aofonline.org.

AOF President & Editor: Fantastic Fran Evanisko
Vice-president: Marvelous Mynga Futrell
Secretary: Rapid Ruth Rezos
Treasurer & Registrar: Kinetic Ken Nahigian
Webmistress: Palpable Pat Kelley
Program chair: Super Susan McLean
Facebook page: Keen Kaeleigh Pontif
Directors at large:

Roger Zabkie, Pamella Rivers, Ben Tuason,
Linda Ostrofsky (Jetta), Kaeleigh Pontif

How to Contact AOF:

- Call 916-304-3796 (voicemail)
 - Write to PO Box 15182, Sacramento, CA 95851-0182
- Or visit <http://www.aofonline.org/contact> to e-message us

How to Join AOF:

Visit <http://www.aofonline.org/join>, or come to a meeting. We have forms.

AOF's Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Atheists-and-Other-Freethinkers/533365556831322>

AOF Mission Statement:

"The purpose of Atheists and Other Freethinkers (AOF) is to promote the civic understanding of atheism and the acceptance of atheists in our community. Through educational programs, projects, and publications, AOF will extend secular perspectives, including the separation of religion and government and the right to think and speak freely on these perspectives."

What is a Freethinker? One striving to form opinions of life, religion, politics and philosophy on the grounds of reason and experience, rather than tradition, authority or custom. He or she need not be an atheist, though in a religious society most atheists do tend to be freethinkers.

AOF supports a benign separation of Church and State as the best means to protect the liberty and intellectual commerce of citizens. "... to keep forever from these shores the ceaseless strife that has soaked the soil of Europe in blood for centuries" (James Madison, 1803).

Our vision: to be a venue where secular and unchurched citizens can socialize, dialog, develop friendships and enjoy shared company. AOF does not discriminate on such grounds as race, sexual orientation, age, gender, class, physical debility or (*cough*) religion. We welcome the fair-minded of all political persuasions and preferences. Be respectful, and you may join.

Donations to AOF are tax deductible, and the newsletter is free by email. Please share with sympathetic friends.

Letters, submissions? We love them! See:

<http://www.aofonline.org/read/submission-guide.html>.

A Quora post by [Gaylene Levesque](#), Oct 4, 2019:

... Our neighbours had been raised as Mennonites but felt that that religion wasn't strict enough for them, so they became Southern Baptists. They removed their children from the public schools and put them into their own "school" that used only lessons sent to them from Texas. They were not allowed to listen to music, sing, wear makeup, take part in Hallowe'en, etc. Fine...I don't really care what people do with their lives as long as they aren't breaking laws. Anyway, their kids came over to play at our house, and felt happily "wicked" because I played children's songs for my son. They loved those sweet innocent songs "If you're happy and you know it clap your hands", "Who built the arc? Noah, Noah," etc.

One day my son went to their house to play. When he came home, he asked, "Mommy, what does" (here he closed his eyes and tried to remember the exact words), "burn in the fires of eternal damnation mean?" I said "What? Where did you hear that?" Oh, Jonathan's mother said you and daddy are going to (*eyes closed again*) burn in the fires of eternal damnation. What does that mean? "Oh," I said, "it means that daddy and mommy are going to have lots of fun." His reply? "Oh!" and he ran off to play. What kind of people tell a little child that his parents (if you knew how boringly ordinary we are, you would have been shocked as well) are going to burn in the fires of eternal damnation and make sure he repeated the exact words? I was horrified.

Interestingly, their very obedient daughter ended up leaving home at 16 to live with her boyfriend! Yay! I guess there is a God after all!

No eggs, no milk, no sex... yes, it's the Cathars!

by Stephen Tomkins, from [ShipOfFools.com](#), only slightly condensed, add broth

THE CATHAR SECT brought a refreshing breath of negativity and paranoia to the Middle Ages that's hard to beat.

They decided that if God created the soul for heaven, then the material world must be the creation of the Devil. "You want proof?" they asked. "How could a good God create a world with worms and frogs in it?" QED. Yeah.

So how do you get saved from the world? Apart from avoiding all the more traditional sins, you have to be celibate (so married people get divorced) and also vegan – because eggs and milk come from animals, and animals come from sex, and sex comes straight from Satan's nastiest cauldron. (They weren't sure where Satan came from, but sex was a strong contender.) And even then you have to fast three days a week.

The problem was that people were inexplicably unsure about signing up for this liberating lifestyle. So the Cathars invented a two-tier system: there were the *perfecti*, who took the initiation rite and lived the so-called life, and then there were the *credentes*, who thought it would be a good idea one day.

The *credentes* were still on line for eternal damnation, unfortunately, but the idea was that on their deathbed they would take the initiation rite and become *perfecti*. Predictably, some of those who followed this course of action were horrified to find themselves recovering and having to spend the rest of their days on Linda McCartney sausages for one.

It was swings and roundabouts. The good news was that the Cathars understood human frailty, and offered a get-out for those who thought they couldn't hack it. The bad news is that it was asphyxiation.

