



AOF News & Views – Newsletter for April 2022

Apologies to all for the last-minute cancellation of the AOF General Meeting on Mar 27 – the one-man Robert Ingersoll show by Sean O'Brien. The venue had closed that day due to plumbing problems. AOF hopes to host the show at a later time, possibly in May.

✧ ✧ Upcoming AOF Events ✧ ✧

➤ Free Movie Night

Friday, April 15, 7pm – 9pm

Location: A Netflix TeleParty link.

Twice a month, [Reason Center](#) (RC) and AOF host a **Free Movie Night** under an [MPLC License](#). We've not yet selected a movie for April 15, which means the suggestion box is open. Please tell the Programs team (see below) about your favorite flick.

How do you attend? You'll need a personal Netflix account + a laptop or desktop computer with the [Google Chrome web browser](#). If you don't have these, please be patient until we can have an in-person movie venue. Else, here's how to join us:

1. Open your Chrome web browser right now and install the "Netflix TeleParty Extension." Get it at: <https://www.netflixparty.com/>. (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 TeleParty link, which will appear on the AOF events calendar for this event.
3. **Click that link.** The Movie TeleParty page will open. Log into Netflix (if not logged in already). At the top right of the browser frame check your "Extensions" list. Find the letters **Tp** in red. You may need to click on the letters.
4. The 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 was made for Reason Center members, but non-members are welcome too. It would be nice if you could support Reason Center though. How can you do that? Just sign up at <http://reasoncenter.com/donate/>. It's a measly \$5 a month and tax deductible if you itemize. And the perks (like this one) are almost cinematic!

Contact: See <https://reasoncenter.com/contact/> or email the program team at "programs (at) aofonline (dot) org".

Details: See <https://www.meetup.com/SacFAN/events/qmnjtsydcqbtb/>.



➤ AOF at Sacramento Earth Day

Sunday, April 24, 2022, 11:00 am - 4:00 pm

Location: Southside Park, Sacramento, map at <https://goo.gl/maps/uzgMquB1abSvZbRb7>.

It's April, and that means Sunday mornings when the Bible-people hammer at your door to assault you with their Bible eye-beams. It also means a time to celebrate the planet. Which do you prefer?

Slip out early on Sunday, April 24, before the evangelists come calling, to join your AOF besties at the Sacramento Earth Day Festival at pastoral Southside Park, all day, 11am to 4pm. Sac Earth Day is a delight -- a textured phantasmagoria of art, live music, vegan-friendly food trucks, cute dogs, assorted cults, earnest screeds, tables piled with free swag, and a showcase of electric vehicles. Find the AOF table in the NW portion near the picnic area. Come and say hi and hang with us for a respite and chat. We will be there all day and get lonely.



Note, this is AOF's hasty alternative to a General Meeting in April. Otherwise we'd be watching Davey and Goliath reruns on Lutheran Cable, and who wants that?

Contact: See the AOF Contact Page at <https://www.aofonline.org/contact.html>

Earth Day details at <https://www.ecosacramento.net/our-work/events/sacearthday/about-sacramento-earth-day/>

✧ ✧ This month's Secular Holidays ✧ ✧

➤ April Fools Day

Friday, April 1, 2022

You gotta be kidding me ...

For decades it has been a celebration of nonsense. Practical jokes and foolish activities mark the morning hours of April 1st. But by one tradition, all such behavior must cease by noon, or roles will be reversed, and the joke will be on you!

Foolery abounds in our 21st Century culture; April Fools Day offers to groups, organizations and individuals committed to minimizing the nonsense and gobbledygook in our world, a chance to educate and enlighten the public through fun events and activity. It also gives us an opportunity to commemorate Steve Allen by officially recognizing [*Dumbth*](#) as the Book of the Month.



Activity Suggestions ...

A Parody of the Paranormal:

Though shunned by some, ridicule can be a powerful tool and April Fools Day offers an outlet to employ parody and satire in a constructive way. Through skit, fun activity and wacky presentations, consider how your group can mimic the nonsensical ideas that circulate within the paranormal communities and accompanying the activity with hand-outs and informational materials thereby serving to educate others about many of the pseudosciences and other unsupported ideas.

Blunder Expo:

"To err is human" wrote Shakespeare and yes indeed, we humans can often make silly mistakes and do stupid things! Politicians, the media, celebrities and other people living in the public eye are especially prone to blunders. Blunders have even changed the course of history. A Blunder Expo can help draw attention to the mistakes and foolishness that have plagued our kind and possibly work to minimize such behavior in the future. It also provides an opportunity to promote critical thought - one of our many tools in helping to avoid mistakes and stupidity.

Monty Python Film Festival:

What better way to celebrate April Fools Day than to sit and watch those masters of the absurd and foolish tweak the noses of society, religion, and politics, and still have room for a fish dance or two! With today's abundance of videocassettes and DVDs that showcase the best of Monty Python on film and television, take a few days or a weekend out as a group to gather in front of the television, serve up your favorite snacks, and watch the unofficial comedy troupe of the freethought movement.

➤ Yuri's Night or Cosmonaut's Day

Tuesday, April 12, 2022

Yuri's Night, also called **Cosmonauts Day**, is a day in honor of Yuri Gagarin, who became the first human in space on April 12, 1961. Twenty years later on the same day the U.S. launched the first space shuttle.

The Soviet Union first celebrated Cosmonauts Day in 1962, on the first anniversary of Gagarin successful flight into space. It was celebrated annually in the USSR and then Russia. The idea for a worldwide celebration of space and technology sprang into existence at the United Nations' Space Generation Advisory Council Conference in September of 2000. The new, worldwide Yuri's Night was first celebrated on April 12, 2001 and has since become an annual international celebration.



Yuri's Night not only celebrates space and technology, but also the principles of freethinking. Once people thought that the other planets travelled around Earth. It took courage as well as intelligence for people to argue against the religiously-ordained view of the Earth as the center of the universe. Celebrating Yuri's Night not only is about celebrating his historic achievement, but all accomplishments of science that have overturned dogma and advanced our knowledge of our universe.

Yuri's Night has become an international phenomenon since its introduction in 2001. Every year coordinators and participants look to broaden the spectrum of events held. The range of events is as diverse as the people who hold them; even residents of the International Space Station have been known to join in the fun. Whether in someone's living room, a nightclub or a world-class science museum, Cosmonauts Day events all have one thing in common: people who are excited about space exploration, science, freethought, and want to join together to celebrate it. Participating in Cosmonauts Day isn't difficult: if finding an already existing party near is hard, then get your friends together call it a Yuri's Night party. Getting people to think about space, science, and freethought is the focus no matter the venue.

"Circling the earth in my orbital spaceship I marveled at its beauty. People of the world, let us safeguard and enhance this beauty, not destroy it!" -- Yuri Gagarin

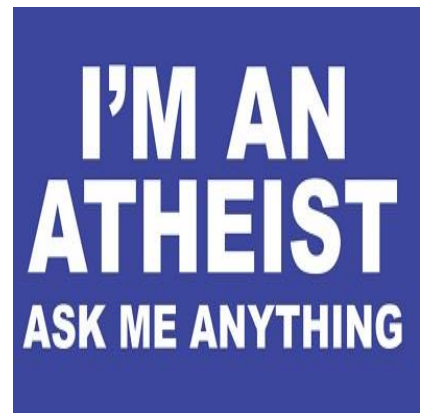
➤ Ask an Atheist Day

Friday, April 15, 2022

[National Ask an Atheist Day](#) is a movable secular holiday occurring twice each year -- on the 3rd Thursday of April (April 15 - April 21), and on the 3rd Thursday of September (Sept 15 - Sep 21). As if atheists don't have enough to do already.

"NAaA Day" is a time for secular groups across the country to dispel stereotypes about atheism and to encourage constructive, courteous dialogue between believers and nonbelievers; and an opportunity for the general public—particularly people of faith—to approach non-theists and ask questions about secular life. Please don't be afraid to spark up a discussion with us, we won't bite. Most don't, anyway.

The first NAaA Day was in February of 2011, when members of [the Secular Student Alliance](#) (SSA) at the University of Illinois set up a table with a sign that said "Ask an Atheist." The next month an article appeared in the *Friendly Atheist website*, written by a "Guest Contributor" (probably an SSA member), saying the event was a smashing success and the Illinois group hoped to take the day nationally. "The SSA is ready to help," it added. Since then NAaA Day has occurred across the nation each April since, and soon in September as well.



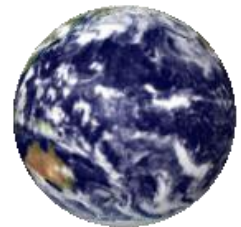
Today it is challenging to estimate how many atheists are in the world. A 2015 poll claimed about 11% of the world's population are atheists, and a 2012 poll claimed the number to be 13% (both WIN/Gallup International polls). A BBC poll from 2004 put the number at 8%. Europe and Asia seem to have the largest number of atheists. In 2015, 61% of Chinese citizens identified as atheists.

How to observe the day. If you call yourself an atheist, you can celebrate the day in a variety of ways. For example, set up a table where believers and others can come up to you and ask you questions about atheism, secular living, and your beliefs (or nonbeliefs). You can [email](#) the SSA for supplies for your table, such as brochures, [stickers](#), posters, and flyers. You could also wear the stickers and put flyers up on campus (flyers could be put up before the day as well). You could organize an "ask an atheist" panel event, or go on a radio station and have an "ask an atheist" segment where listeners are able to call in and ask you questions about atheism. When posting on social media, use the hashtag #askanatheist. For more about the day and how to participate, take a look at the [Ask An Atheist Day Activity Guide](#). But what if you aren't an atheist? Celebrate NAaA Day by asking an atheist about atheism! The day is meant to be filled with respectful dialogue, so make sure to participate in such a way, no matter if you are an atheist or the person asking questions.

➤ Earth Day

Friday, April 22, 2022

Earth Day is a day to grow and diversify the environmental movement, and to mobilize our resources to promote a healthy, sustainable planet. Earth Day is the only Secular Holiday celebrated simultaneously around the globe by people of all backgrounds, faiths and nationalities. More than a half billion people participate in Earth Day campaigns every year.



U.S. Senator Gaylord Nelson founded Earth Day in 1970 to push the environment onto the national agenda. It is an inclusive event, attracting people of all religions and beliefs. Non-religious groups have many reasons to celebrate Earth Day: those who don't believe in heaven or divine intervention realize that this world is all we have and that it is in our hands to protect it. Those who believe that the scientific method is the best way to gain understanding of our world, can also use Earth Day to promote the best available science about environmental issues. Secular groups can use this annual event to network with environmental groups and other organizations.

You can celebrate Earth Day in many different ways. Events across the globe are often designed to bring notice of the environment to lawmakers. Events also take place on college and school campuses. Meetings intended for the sole purpose of attracting attention to the cause are the most common; these meetings often employ music, speakers, and other attractions to generate attention.

You can help us. Here's how!

- **Join or Support Reason Center**

Remember Reason Center? It opened in July 2014, hosted hundreds of events, then closed in November 2020. In its day it created a social and intellectual community for local freethinkers, contributed to society through education and community service, advanced the civic understanding and acceptance, and upheld the separation of religion and government. Will "RC" return? That depends on you. Please stand up for Reason Center. To donate or join, 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! (AOF pays honorariums.) Go to <http://www.aofonline.org/contact.html>, click "Program Committee" in the drop-down line, and enter your thoughts.

- **Volunteer?**

We suggest it meekly. See

<http://www.aofonline.org/learn/committees.html> for opportunities.



✧ Other (non-AOF) Events ✧

Remember the Sacramento Coalition of Reason events calendar (SacCoR)? It was a global calendar for *all* the local skeptic/freethought/humanist groups. It's gone now, probably forever, due to a merger of CoR with the American Humanists. Sad, because it was a great tool. But you can still learn of other events in the area if by browsing these individual calendars.

- Reason Center calendar: <https://www.meetup.com/ReasonCenterEvents/events/calendar/>
- Sacramento Freethinkers, Atheists and Nonbelievers, <https://www.meetup.com/SacFAN/events/calendar/>
- Black Humanists of Sacramento, <https://www.meetup.com/bhnb-sacramento/events/calendar/>
- Recovery from Religion Sacramento, <https://www.meetup.com/RfR-Sacramento-CA/events/calendar/>
- Sacramento Skeptics, <https://www.meetup.com/sacskeptics/events/calendar/>
- Sacramento Brights Action Meetup, <https://www.meetup.com/Brights-Action-Sacramento/events/calendar/>

For example:

➤ Tuesdays, April 5 and 19, 7pm

Porch Talk hosted by Becky Mark

A social gathering on a virtual front porch, a chat about topics of the day. To join, simply visit this link at the time:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81116895135?pwd=VDVYWHJMQUIJL3R5K1V0VmxBQWVNdz09>

➤ Saturday, April 9, and Sunday, April 17

Blasphemy Breakfasts

Want to hang out with like-minded folk? Come to the "Blasphemy Breakfasts" at Original Mel's Diners in Folsom and Rocklin. Great food, but RSVP advised.

Saturday, April at 10am: 13399 Folsom Blvd, Folsom. For details, see <https://www.meetup.com/SacFAN/events/hkdftsycdqbmb/>.

Sunday, April 17 at 9:30am: 6708 Lonetree Blvd, Rocklin. Details, see <https://www.meetup.com/SacFAN/events/pwnssydcgbwb/>.

➤ Thursday, April 21

Escape the Daily Chatter

An interactive teleconference with fellow Humanists/Agnostics/Atheists/Skeptics/Freethinkers. On the day & time, simply click:

<https://zoom.us/j/93640958377?pwd=QSt4SEZJbHR2dWJYR2RvUmNkQlg5Zz09>



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: Prolific Pamela Rivers
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, Fran Evanisko, Christine Tweet, Rae Howard, Kaeleigh Pontif

How to Contact AOF:

- Call 916-304-3796 (voicemail)
 - Or 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 pages (two):

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1525411971087089/>
<https://www.facebook.com/Atheists-and-Other-Freethinkers-AOF-104763721971742>

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>.

Two Appreciations, condensed and excerpted

Richard Leakey, 1944–2022

by Virginia McKenna of the [Born Free Foundation](#)

There will be many millions of words written about the life and work of the late, great Dr. Richard Leakey, a paleontologist, conservationist, civil servant and civil society leader without compare. I had the good fortune to meet him a number of times, when he worked at the Kenya Wildlife Service (two terms), when he was Head of the Civil Service in Kenya, as the founder of Wildlife Direct, and when he was the Founder, Chair, and guiding light at the Turkana Basin Institute.

One memory stands out: As President of the Species Survival Network, the global coalition of non-government organisations that work as the precautionary wing of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (better known as CITES), I had taken my courage in both hands and asked Richard if he would give the Keynote Address at the Reception we were hosting at the Conference of the Parties to CITES being held in Harare, Zimbabwe, in 1997. I was thrilled when he agreed!

Richard's speech was sensational. The audience of 500 or more hung on his every word – even those who clearly did not share his views, or the stance taken by SSN, were held in his oratorical grip as he seamlessly charted a narrative course which touched on corruption, transparency, the role of civil society, the need for bravery, the compelling arc of history that leads, inevitably, to the triumph of the good. On wildlife trade specifically he took no prisoners, explaining that these species we so willingly bartered and sold and collected and shot, were not the birth right of the few, but the natural heritage of us all.

As he came to the climax of his speech, he commented: "There will be some here tonight who think that because of the importance I place in the individual animal, the respect and indeed affection I have for an individual elephant who can guide her family to safety through thick and thin... they will think that I am some sort of bunny hugger....." Richard paused... and then, reaching inside his jacket, he declared... "well I am!" At that exact moment he pulled out a child's toy rabbit, which he held aloft in triumph. We laughed and cheered to the rafters – even his strongest critics smiled.

He met my mother and father several times but, lastly, in 1989 when he attended the burial of George Adamson in Kora National Reserve. George had been brutally murdered by bandits or, perhaps, by those who wished to see an end to his work in the area. Thanks to Richard, it had the opposite effect. Kora National Reserve was upgraded to Kora National Park and, today, is part of the Meru Conservation Area, an important stronghold for wild lions in an increasingly human dominated.

It seems sad but fitting that in the year – 2022 – that Born Free Foundation has designated as The 'Year of the Lion', we now remember two great men. My father Bill, who would have been 100 on the 3rd of January, and Dr Richard Leakey, who died the day earlier, on the 2nd. They are the giants on whose shoulders we stand.

Edward Osborne Wilson (1929–2021)

by Jim McClintock PhD, from the [Biodiversity Foundation](#)

Alabama arguably lost its most famous son on 26 December, 2021. E.O. Wilson, a once-in-a-generation biologist and gentleman-scientist passed away in Burlington, Massachusetts, at age ninety-two. Others might argue that Truman Capote, Harper Lee, or Hank Aaron are more famous Alabamians. Yet, I believe if we survive what Wilson coined "the bottleneck," wrought by anthropogenic habitat loss, air and water pollution, and global climate change, his life's teachings will have played a role in the very survival of humanity. Hard to top that on an Alabamian résumé. Ed Wilson loved Alabama. I know because he reminded me of his love affair with Alabama each time we crossed paths. It was evident every time he gleefully kicked over a fire ant mound or smugly smiled as he dug in to his BBQ sandwich. Ed said he was a southerner that went north to work. I know as an academic that when Harvard calls, you go—few arguments there. Nonetheless, despite his fondness of a particular table in the back of a restaurant in Cambridge where he went to write, if anyone appreciated the intrinsic value of Alabama's people and natural resources, its diverse geology, plants, invertebrates, fish, and yes, marine and terrestrial birds, it was Ed Wilson.

Ever the mentor, whether I was visiting Ed at Harvard or in Birmingham, he would remind me that my career as a biologist studying the biological impacts of climate change, and as an author of popular books (Thank you, Ed, for greasing those skids) and a public lecturer, was best spent in Alabama. Nowhere else, he would say, was there a fiercer call to enrich a public understanding and appreciation of nature. ... The seeds he planted have taken root in Alabama's students, teachers, scientists, corporate leaders, politicians, and laypersons alike.

A gifted spokesperson for global science and a prolific author, Ed published over thirty books, sixteen of which were published after he turned seventy and two of which received the Pulitzer Prize for non-fiction. A fishing accident rendered him blind in one eye, and so with limited vision he focused on what he called "the little things." In addition to becoming the world's authority on the biology of ants, Ed's lifetime contributions to conservation biology and evolution included the fields of Island Biogeography and Sociobiology He received an astounding 150 or more national and international awards including the Crafoord Prize awarded by the Royal Swedish Academy of Science, the equivalent of a Nobel Prize if awarded in the field of Biology. These awards will be housed in Tuscaloosa at the University of Alabama, his alma mater, while his life's writings are to reside in the Library of Congress. Members of Alabama Audubon have much to admire in the legacy of a tall, skinny kid, born in Birmingham, raised in Mobile, Alabama, and despite heading north, a southerner at heart. E.O. Wilson catalyzed a global appreciation for the fragility and life-sustaining nature of earth's biota. Let us heed his call to action and ensure that Alabama, Ed's spiritual home, becomes a shining example of nature's sustenance.

A little-known Freethought Martyr

By James Haught of <https://freethoughtnow.org/>

Many freethinkers opposed to supernatural religion are also political and social rebels who renounce militarism, capitalist greed, government oppression and cultural taboos.

A classic example from history is Francisco Ferrer, an atheist reformer who was executed in what some call a “new Spanish Inquisition.” The anniversary of his execution occurred a few days ago (Oct. 13), and so here’s his story.

Ferrer was born in 1859 on a farm near Barcelona into a pious Catholic family. But his freethinker uncle and atheist first employer helped him reject magical religion. He became involved in left-wing causes, including Republican efforts to end Spain’s monarchy.

As a conductor on a train between Barcelona and France, Ferrer secretly sent messages for an exiled Republican leader and helped political refugees escape to safety. After a Spanish Republican uprising failed in 1895, Ferrer fled with his wife and three daughters to Paris, where they stayed 16 years. He joined various socialist and anarchist causes.

A wealthy woman he had tutored left him a million gold francs, so Ferrer returned to Barcelona and launched a secular “Modern School,” openly defying the monarchy and Catholic dogmatic education that saturated Spain. At that time, about half of Spaniards were illiterate. His pupils were taught freely, without tests or grades. One report says his classes “championed traits of reason, dignity, self-reliance and scientific observation over that of piety and obedience.” The school soared in popularity. Branches were opened in several cities and then internationally.

Ferrer’s school had a printing press that produced his dogma-free textbooks and also printed radical tracts. In 1906, a wealthy young zealot who operated the press attempted to assassinate King Alfonso XIII, but failed, then committed suicide. Ferrer was charged as a conspirator, and his schools were closed. In his jail cell, he wrote on the wall: “When their god and his exploiters cease to be adored and served, we shall live like comrades in mutual respect and affection.”

Eventually, Ferrer was freed, because no evidence tied him to the crime. He toured Europe, giving speeches, and founded the International League for the Rational Education of Children.

In 1909, when the Spanish government ordered military reservists to fight a renewed colonial war in Morocco, wives led public protests in Barcelona. A general strike triggered riots, which brought a government crackdown, and hundreds were killed. Ferrer, known for his radical activism, was accused of causing the uprising. He protested that he had little to do with the spontaneous public revolt. He was convicted in a kangaroo “show trial” and sentenced to death by firing squad. Historian Paul Avrich has called the case “judicial murder.”

In his cell, awaiting death, Ferrer wrote on the wall: “Let no more gods or exploiters be served. Let us learn rather to love each other.” Before the firing squad, his last words were: “Aim well, my friends. You are not responsible. I am innocent. Long live the Modern School.”

After Ferrer’s death, Pope Pius X sent a gold-handled sword engraved with felicitations to the Spanish military prosecutor who railroaded the atheist reformer.

Ferrer’s execution triggered protests as far away as Asia. One report says: “A 15,000-person throng descended on Paris’ Spanish Embassy, and the anarchist black flag draped from the Milan Cathedral. British luminaries spoke in outrage, including George Bernard Shaw, H.G. Wells and Arthur Conan Doyle.” The uproar forced Spain’s Premier Antonio Maura to resign.

Historian Avrich quotes Ferrer as saying: “Science has shown that the story of the creation is a myth and the gods legendary.” The Encyclopedia of Unbelief quotes him: “The need for religion will end when man becomes sensible enough to govern himself.”

Today, few remember Francisco Ferrer, but he’s a freethought martyr. You might say he was the last significant European executed for heresy.

