

# **Atheists and Other Freethinkers Newsletter**

**November 1999**

## **A Non-theistic Party**

Cleo & Hank Kocol have rented a hall and are inviting like-minded people to a MILLENNIUM CELEBRATION, New Year's Eve, December 31, 1999, 8PM TO 1AM, Sierra Pines, Sun City, Roseville. Give a swat to the past, predict the future, eat, drink, dance, and make merry. Open mike for comments, observations, enlightenment and entertainment. BYOB & finger food. RSVP by December 24 so they can have an appropriate number of tables & chairs set up.

E-MAIL: [hkocol@hotmail.com](mailto:hkocol@hotmail.com) for directions

## **The AAI Convention Committee Needs Your Help**

If you are adept at performing numbers crunching and developing cost estimates, the Convention Committee has need for your short-term help. We need to determine a registration fee for the Convention. The fee must cover all costs of the Convention: printing, advertising, hotel, audio-visual equipment rental, postage, name tags, complementary rooms for some speakers, telephone, etc., etc., etc. (Banquet meals will come under a separate category and will be self-supporting.)

The registration fee must be set within the next couple of months, so this analysis is something which must be done soon. If you have expertise in this area, please contact any AOF Board member or Hank Kocol (771-5231, [hkocol@hotmail.com](mailto:hkocol@hotmail.com)).

## **Thoughts on Creationism**

Geology shows that fossils are of different ages.  
Paleontology shows a fossil sequence; the list of represented species changes through time.  
Taxonomy shows biological relationships among species.  
Evolution is the explanation that threads it all together.  
Creationism is the practice of squeezing one's eyes shut and wailing, "Does not!"

"Skeptic X" on the Sagan Society Member List at the University of Georgia. Reprinted in the Atlanta Freethought News, Sept 1999.

## **Investment Advice**

I have little confidence in any enterprise or business or investment that promises dividends only after the death of the stockholders.

Robert G. Ingersoll

## **Internet site of the month**

The Internet site this month is:

<http://www.berkshire.net/~ifas/wa/index.html>

This site has several "testimonies" of former fundamentalists who walked away from their religious background.

## **Highway cleanup**

Only 6 AOF members appeared Sept. 18 for the annual California Coastal Cleanup Day to cleanse our Adopt-A-Highway segment of Highway 99. Richard Daniels, Dave Flanders, Paul Geisert, Don Knutson, Hank Kocol and Peggy Lucas experienced the majestic wonder of nature as we were joined by a flock of snowy egrets who seemed appreciative of our efforts. Once again we were unable to temporarily rid the area of trash due to the small numbers. Our AOF sign appears on both sides of 99 and an unclean roadside is an embarrassment to our organization and freethought everywhere. If you wish to see AOF discontinue our Adopt-A-Highway participation you can vote without registering and make that vote ring loud-and-clear by NOT showing up for the next cleanup at 9:00 Sunday morning, November 7 west of 99 at Elkhorn Blvd.

Submitted by Don Knutson

## **Freethinkers' Forum**

The October discussion group meets at 5 pm on Saturday, October 23, at Peggy's place in Fair Oaks. The topic is "Halloween, a Religious Holiday?"

Costumes are optional, and the Sierra Club Party and Dance is also optional (after the discussion ends). Call (916) 965-8227 for info/directions.

## **Survey question for AOF singles**

Are you sick of all the "Christian Singles", "Equally Yoked" and other religious-based singles groups?

Would you be interested in forming a "Secular Singles Group" for group social activities? Or would a strictly secular dating service be better?

In either case, perhaps including a cable television program to have fun while finding others of like minds? I would call it the "YEARNING EXCHANGE for Secular Singles" or Y. E. S. S.! "YESS!" sounds positive and apt.

LET ME KNOW YOUR VOTE (and suggestions, please) by calling (916) 863-6760 and leaving a message. Or E-mail me at SkepticalFriends@webtv.net.

Results will be in next month's newsletter.

Peggy Lucas

## **Defining morality**

A letter appeared in the Sacramento Bee July 18 suggesting that atheists could not have morality because they do not have any "god-authority" for morals. This (slightly edited) response was provided by former AOF president Paul Geisert:

Re "The morals of atheists," letter, July 18: The logic lesson to atheists is deficient. The writer chooses two premises to argue - there is either supernatural moral authority or none -and ignored what freethinkers know to be the basis of morality. Most freethinkers and many religious individuals understand that the rules of morality came about naturalistically during the process of the development of human societies.

There is no contradiction between the two ideas "there is no God" and "morality exists." Naturalistic morality in general, rests on three social and biological foundations. Genetics, the selection over time of genes that foster certain group values (for example tribalism, which divides social groups into "us" and "them"; written law, the codification of human rules to

regulate living in groups (for example, it is illegal to kill or steal); and ethical values, customs and mores that naturally arise to lower the social friction of people living together (for example, the rules provided to *The Bee* by Miss Manners).

Moral authority is of the people, by the people and for the people, and this fact shall not perish just because religionists lay claim to it.

## **Book Review:**

### **GOD ON TRIAL 2000: The Indictment of God for Crimes Against Job, by Stuart C. Goldberg**

Hardcover, 666 pages (did he plan that), incl. citations, concordance, index and bibliography

Stuart Goldberg, J.D., LL.M., was an Assistant United States Attorney for 30-plus years, and is the author of seventeen books on law, morality and ethics. In this study, he addresses two questions: Does the Biblical God exist, and is the Bible an effective guide to morality?

As a federal attorney, Goldberg often encountered canards that the Bible is the foundation of all law and that we need religious faith to distinguish right from wrong. Now he turns the sharp eye of legal philosophy on the Bible itself, and neatly deconstructs those claims.

His article of evidence is the Book of Job, a key scripture often lauded as one of the Bible's most spiritual and philosophical books. Great choice. In fact, it is the only book where an "ordinary" man (not a prophet) has an extensive dialog with God, and the only book where God tries to explain or justify himself in any details.

It is also a ripping story. Haven't read it? OK, here's the spoiler.

Consider Job, wealthy chieftain, pious, upright and loyal to the Lord. One day Satan calls on God, and the latter brags about His servant Job. Satan begs to test Job's piety. God consents. Suddenly things turn quite bad for our hero. He loses his property, his children die, and disease wracks his body. Still Job does not complain against God. Neighbors visit to condole with him, but end up accusing Job of some secret sin. In the ensuing debate (three cycles of speeches), Job stresses his innocence. He curses himself, curses the day of his birth, curses his faithless neighbors, but still will not curse God. Finally he cries out for an answer from God himself. God appears in a whirlwind. But instead of addressing Job's questions, He simply overwhelms Job with poetic descriptions of omniscience and power. Job is oddly content with this. His humility and piety becomes deeper than ever. God then rewards Job by restoring his health and his wealth, and giving him a new set of sons.

The argumentative jab and parry between Job and his accusative neighbors, Job's plea to God and God's somewhat evasive reply, all lend themselves well to legal analysis. Also, to take the Job story literally (admittedly not all Jews or Christians do that), a believer commits himself to a rather narrow and tangible view of God: the stern, perhaps bearded patriarch holding court on his heavenly

throne, judging men, commanding servants and receiving courtiers, hobnobbing even with the Devil. This lets Goldberg get a much firmer "grip" on the question of God's existence.

As an attorney, he takes a legal perspective, of course. That may seem constrained to the layman, and fine points and minutia somewhat dense in places. Even so he nudges us steadily toward an indictment of God and the (im)morality of the Bible. Note, though Goldberg tries his best to persuade us (that is his duty as prosecutor), he leaves the final decision to the jury -- us.

It's a unique idea, and a fascinating book. Of course Goldberg barely scratches the mountain of possible litigious complaints against God. Outside of Job, there is white slavery (Ex 21:7-8, Lev 25:44-46), theft (Ex 3:21-22), murder and child rape (Deut 21:11-14), infanticide (II Sam 12:14-18, II Kings 2:23-24, Psalms 137:9), pandering (Isaiah 23:17-18), kidnapping (Jonah 1:17), perjury and prevarication (Mark 4:11-12), sedition (Matt 10:34-36, Luke 12:49 & 51), cruelty to animals (Josh 11:6), and a tissue of other torts \_ including assault and battery, wrongful death, mayhem, extortion, racketeering, infliction of emotional distress, and alienation of affection. And more. The jurisprudence would be interesting. How do statutes of limitations apply to a defendant living outside of time? If the defendant is omnipresent, is He within the court's jurisdiction? Could the Jews begin a class action on grounds that the Babylonian captivity breached the Abramic covenant? What about false advertising?

Perhaps it's time we take up these other cases, too.

Reviewed by Kenneth Nahigian

**HOW TO ORDER:** To sell-out the first edition of this book prior to December 31, 1999, the price is merely \$10.00. Add \$3.95 for S&H, and mail to:

Poe Specialty Books  
P.O. Box 346  
Somis, CA 93066

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Contact Cleo or Hank Kocol by E-MAIL: [hkocol@hotmail.com](mailto:hkocol@hotmail.com) for directions

## **Internet site of the month**

The Internet site this month is:

<http://www.infidels.org/library/magazines/tsr/>

This is the site of The Skeptical Review, a publication that challenges the proposition of Biblical inerrancy. The editor and publisher, Farrell Till, is a former minister and retired college writing instructor. The articles by Till are extremely logical and well written. Articles from defenders of Bible inerrancy are welcomed and closely analyzed, and logical or factual flaws highlighted.

## **Highway cleanup**

Sunday, the 7th of November at 9 a.m., marks another AOF Highway Cleanup Day. Our last two efforts have resulted in only six members turning out each time. Both sides of a two-mile stretch of Highway 99 north of Elkhorn Blvd in addition to two cloverleaf ramps is too much for six to do any sort of thorough cleaning. Six is only a group scavenging to pick up as much as they can in two hours while ten or eleven is a community working toward a common goal of doing justice to our two AOF Adopt-A-Highway signs on Highway 99.

## **Sunday School Story**

Nine-year-old Joey was asked by his mother what he had learned in Sunday School. "Well, Mom, our teacher told us how God sent Moses behind enemy lines on a rescue mission to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. When he got to the Red Sea, he had his engineers build a pontoon bridge and all the people walked across safely. He used his walkie-talkie to radio headquarters and call in an air strike. They sent in bombers to blow up the bridge and all the Israelites were saved." "Now, Joey, is that REALLY what your teacher taught you?" his mother asked. "Well no, Mom, but if I told it the way the teacher did, you'd never believe it!"

From Secular Subjects, Newsletter of the Rationalist Society of St. Louis, November 1999.

## **Classic Works of Freethought on CDs**

AOF has a limited number of compact disks from the Bank of Wisdom with classic works of freethought. Each CD has several selections (books or other works), created so that the pages look as they did in the original volume. The CDs are:

- Volume 1 - The Works of Robert G. Ingersoll (18 selections)
- Volume 2 - An Introduction to Freethought: The Religion of Freedom (22 selections)
- Volume 3 - An Appreciation of Thomas Paine (25 selections)
- Volume 4 - Facts of Freethought (16 selections)
- Volume 5 - Freethought and the Bible (25 selections)

They are being sold for \$30 per CD. They will be sold on a first come, first served basis. If there is a sufficient demand, more can be ordered from the Bank of Wisdom.