

**Upcoming Events** ✧

➤ **Rob Boston: What Do You People Want?**

**Sunday, December 11, 2 pm – 4 pm**

“Advocates of separation of church and state are often challenged by followers of the Religious Right to explain what they want or what aspects of U.S. society they would change in both legal and cultural contexts. In this talk, Rob Boston of [Americans United](#) will discuss the ideal secular society that many supporters of church-state separation are working toward. The speech will cover topics such as government endorsement of religion, the role of religion in public education, LGBT rights, tax-payer support for religious projects and how to define religious freedom claims in a multi-faith, multi-philosophy society.

“The talk will include a discussion of the challenges we face under the incoming Trump administration.”

The Sacramento Chapter of [Americans United for the Separation of Church and State](#) graciously brings you this speaker, with co-sponsoring by AOF, [HAGSA](#) and other local groups. For more details, see <https://www.au.org/get-involved/events/sacramento-chapter-hosts-rob-boston>. (Text above is from the event flyer.)



**Americans United for Separation of Church and State**  
1310 L Street NW, Suite 200 - Washington, DC 20005  
(202) 466-3234 - [au.org](#) - [protectthyneighbor.org](#) - [americansunited@au.org](mailto:americansunited@au.org)

**Americans United** is the only national organization that devotes one-hundred percent of its time and resources to church/state separation. Through public education and advocacy, Americans United works to preserve religious liberty and freedom of conscience as guaranteed by our Constitution.

**Location:** Reason Center, 1824 Tribute Rd, Suite A, Sacramento. Map: <https://goo.gl/iVQL8z>.

➤ **HumanLight/Solstice Party**

**Sunday, December 18, 12:30 pm – 3 pm**

Each year AOF joins hands with [HAGSA](#) to host the annual HumanLight / Winter Solstice celebration, and invite all our jolly friends in the secular community to party with us. No membership required, just come help us express positive humanist ideals and values, the *real* reasons for the season: reason, compassion, hope, humanity. The turn of the year. The tidal return of precious light. And maybe a bit of gluttony too.

At minimum, festivities will include a potluck feast, with music and general reverie, games, camaraderie, a charity drive for pets and people, and a raffle with delightful prizes, the revenue to benefit our community of reason. *Bring a few spare dollars for the raffle*, as tickets are a scant \$1 each, the cause is good, and prizes will be amazing. You'll be amazed at how amazing. We will have more. In particular, a humanist-of-the-year award. Plans coalesce as you read this, so this is but a sketch. We are thinking, thinking. If you can help or have ideas, please contact the event planner (email below)!



**For the charity drive**, if you can, bring a bit of people- or pet-food (or supplies) to donate. Volunteers will convey it to the appropriate pantry, and your Grinch-heart will grow three sizes.

**For the Luncheon** (potluck style), please bring something tasty, prepared, well-presented, ready to serve, with your own favorite beverage. The hall has one small microwave, a sink and a refrigerator, that is all, no oven and no stove. Have a serving dish and utensil please, but we will provide plates, bowls, utensils, napkins and cups. *Eating will begin at 1 pm.*

**Location:** Reason Center, 1824 Tribute Rd, Suite A, Sacramento. Map: <https://goo.gl/iVQL8z>.

**Contact:** [reneinsac \(at\) gmail \(dot\) com](mailto:reneinsac@gmail.com), [rae \(dot\) howard \(at\) gmail \(dot\) com](mailto:rae@howard.com), or call AOF (916-304-3796).

➤ **Philosophers' Table: A secular Christmas?**  
**Sunday, December 25, 12 pm – 1 pm**

No plans today? Don't just sit, don't just mope, because you're far from alone. Join your fellow Grinches to discuss Christmas as a secular holiday. Business and the buying public have secularized it already, we know, but what of the next step: claiming the day explicitly as our own? The word for it is *syncretism*, and we just need to do it.

Yes, it is the War on Christmas, and we are the Fifth Columnists, ready literally to seize the day. Come help us plot. Mwa-ha-ha ...

Afterward, hang fast, because another fun Meetup event will follow this one immediately.

AOF's monthly Philosophers' Table talks are trending. The singular rule: be open to questions, and listen as well as speak.

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➤ **Sanctuary!: Rational Refugees from Religious Relatives** **Sunday, December 25, 1 – 3:30 pm**

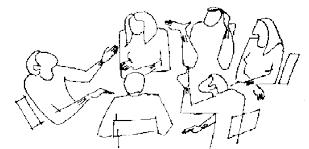
If the holiday hectors you, if religious relatives have driven you have half mad, you might want to climb a water tower with a rifle ... but *don't*, please don't! Rather, take your squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old heart to Reason Center to relax and commiserate with your fellow refugees. Our sound system will play non-holiday music as we share snacks, stories and true camaraderie. In the words of old Scrooge's nephew, this really can be a kind, forgiving, charitable and pleasant time, "the only time in the long calendar of the year when men and women seem by one consent to open their shut-up hearts freely, and to think of people below them as if they really were fellow-passengers to the grave, and not another race of creatures bound on other journeys." You need not be religious to believe in that. Simply, and beautifully, human.

We encourage you to bring: friends, goodies, games, your favorite CD of secular music.

**Location :** Reason Center, 1824 Tribute Rd, Suite A, Sacramento. Map: <https://goo.gl/IVQL8z>.

➤ **Board of Directors Meeting** **Tuesday, January 10, 2017, 07pm - 9pm**

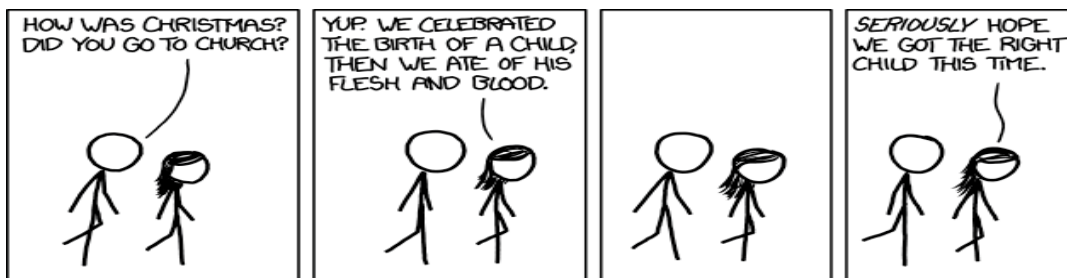
An AOF planning meeting for AOF Directors & officers, but open to *all* interested friends and members. These happen every other month, more or less. And as always, we welcome you to join us and meet the Board. *Bring your ideas for AOF, your strategies, your suggestions for events and activities -- most of all, volunteerism! Helping hands are wonderful.*



**Location:** Reason Center, 1824 Tribute Rd, Suite A, Sacramento. Map: <https://goo.gl/IVQL8z>.

**Revision of AOF Bylaws**

Voting on the revisions to the AOF Bylaws ended November 30, 2016. Seventeen members voted unanimously to approve the proposed amendments. Thanks to all who participated.



(And thanks to xkcd.com)

## Book Review:

**THE MAGICIAN'S BOOK: A SKEPTIC'S ADVENTURES IN NARNIA** by Laura Miller  
(320 pgs, hcv, Little , Brown and Company, Dec 2008. Reviewed by Ken Nahigian.)

I am a freethinker, and I am a CS Lewis fan. That seems odd but it's true. I don't always agree with him, but to me, Lewis was a good man with a poignant life story, a kind of heartfelt seeking, humor, some wisdom, much sincerity, and a method with words—a music of language so affable, so persuasive, and often so lucid, even this crusty old nonbeliever falls into it at times. And I just enjoy falling in.

Also of course, Lewis was fast friends with a writer I like even more, JRR Tolkien—at least till their friendship soured later.

Lewis is best known for his Christian evangelism, but I also enjoy his science fiction and fantasy, starting with Narnia. Yet even in my early fannish days, when I was a religious believer myself, some Narnia stories seemed heavy-handed, parts irked and disturbed me. Especially at the end: when Aslan the Lion forces about half of the Narnia creatures—the ones who didn't follow him—to march off into a “huge black shadow,” where they vanish forever. Lewis adds slyly, “I don't know what became of them,” but you can almost see him winking. Sure he knew. So did I. And it left a bad feeling.

So I just had to read this one: *The Magician's Book: A Skeptic's Adventures in Narnia* by Laura Miller. Miller is a fun, dazzling writer—and like me a religious skeptic who loved Narnia. After lapsing from her childhood Catholicism, she decided to revisit Narnia with adult eyes, and deconstruct it, and see what still worked for her, what didn't, and why. It is just what I always wanted to do.

The result is a mix of reader's diary, biography and literary criticism. Her book has three sections. First is “Songs of Innocence.” Miller explores why Narnia charms children and many adults, even nonbelievers like her. In part two, “Trouble in Paradise,” she digs into Lewis's life, turning up some startling scuttlebutt: a miserable childhood, prejudices, latent sexism, some typical British blind spots and snobbery, a few surprising kinks, and a possible illicit affair with a domineering older woman (can you say “White Witch?”).

In part 3, “Songs of Experience,” she puts it together to explain why Narnia still resonates for her and others. Like Tolkien, Lewis saw himself as a stranger in our time, seeking the myths he loved as a child. All those wonderful old tales that once thrilled him, he decided, “were really like echoes moving backward and sideways and sometimes even forward in time, reverberations of the occasion when God actually sacrificed himself for mankind.” We can disagree of course. But as Miller points out, a first love shapes us forever. Lewis's love of the old magic helped him keep it and return it to us. In the end, it was the bond between listener, story and teller, which as Miller observes, is older than the memory of our race.



## Donating blood?

Please consider donating blood at the BloodSource, and if you do, use AOF BloodSource ID# **4857**.

Numerous BloodSource Donation Centers exist -- find them listed at: <http://www.bloodsource.org/Locations>.

AOF gets no perks when members donate, but it saves lives, and is good for public relations. And what can be more Humanistic than donating blood?

## Support the Reason Center for the Holidays!

Reason Center opened in July 2014. Since then this facility has hosted well over 200 freethought events. Currently the Center has twelve partner organizations. Its mission is 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.

Lately Reason Center has begun hosting events of groups outside our secular community. This is progress, but to continue its good work, it relies on for its members and donors. Please consider making a contribution to the Reason Center. To set up a monthly, or one-time donation visit the website, [ReasonCenter.org](http://ReasonCenter.org).



## Not yet a member of Atheists and Other Freethinkers? Be nice, not naughty. Join us!

AOF is a 501(c)(3) non-profit association, FEIN 68-0325762. General Meetings are free and open to the public. AOF also hosts civic service projects, dinners, movie outings, parties! To see what awaits you, visit the website, [www.aofonline.org](http://www.aofonline.org); or contact AOF at our 24/7 voice-mail: 916-447-3589; or write to PO Box 15182, Sacramento, CA 95851-0182. *Or read this newsletter!*

AOF Acting President: Kristi Craven. Vice-president: Mynga Futrell. Editor: Fran Evanisko. And all the rest of us, their minions.

# Subscription / Membership Form

Mail to: AOF, PO Box 15182, Sacramento CA 95851-0182 (Attn: Membership)

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Street \_\_\_\_\_ Apt. # \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP + 4 \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address (please print!) \_\_\_\_\_

*E-mail is required for newsletter delivery.*

Questions, concerns? Call AOF, 916-304-3796.

## Your Membership Level (annual, please circle):

Patron (\$50) Family (\$30) Individual (\$20) Low-income (\$10)

Basic Dues : \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Donation : \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Total enclosed : \$ \_\_\_\_\_

*AOF is a 501(c)(3) Educational Association, EIN 68-0325762. Dues & Donations are tax-deductible as permitted by law. Non-members may receive the AOF Newsletter for free on request (email only).*

Please check here if you do NOT want your name on lists occasionally provided to groups similar to AOF.

Please check here if you DO want to be an AOF Activist (e-mail address required).

"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."



## Free Will

(from *80 Poems for Atheists* by John Rodwell)

"Excuse me God,"  
Said the little man from the earlier poem,  
"Have I got free will?"

"Of course," said God,  
"It was my gift to all Mankind."

"Then I can do as I choose,  
Is that right?" asked the little man.  
"Yes," said God.

"Then you can't be omniscient,  
Can you?" said the little man,  
"I might choose to do something ...  
Unexpected."

"But I know what you are going to choose,"  
Said God.

"Then I don't have free will then,  
Do I?" said the little man,  
"It's just an illusion."

"Look" said God, angrily,  
"Stop being such an irritating little man,  
Will you?"

"I don't know," said the little man.  
"Will I?"