



The snake oil was flowing at AOF's January 26 meeting, courtesy of Dr R Snick. Thanks, doc! (Photo by Roger Zabkie)

## ✧ ✧ This Month's AOF Headliner Event ✧ ✧

➤ **Freedom From Religion Foundation: Anecdotes and More with Judy Saint**  
**Sunday, February 23, 2025, 2 pm – 4 pm** (doors open 1:45 pm)

**Location:** Reason Center, 1300 Ethan Way, Rm 675, Sacramento, map at <https://goo.gl/maps/RwiUgEJ5ESHRhrPu8>.

**Judy Saint** says she looks forward to sharing behind-the-scenes tales and other inspirations from the eleven years as founder and president of the Greater Sacramento Chapter of Freedom From Religion Foundation, from beginning through today, with mention of what we can do tomorrow.

For local information see: [Sac.ffrf.org](http://Sac.ffrf.org).

The **Freedom From Religion Foundation** is a national organization whose purposes are to promote the constitutional principle of separation of state and church, and to educate the public on matters relating to nontheism. **FFRF** is the largest freethought organization in the United States. For national information see: [ffrf.org](http://ffrf.org).

**Contact for details:** See <https://www.aofonline.org/contact.html>.

*Event is open to the public. Free parking in the lot. OK to BYO snack/beverage -- or to share if you wish. AOF will provide cool, clear water.*



## ✧ ✧ Other Upcoming AOF Events ✧ ✧

➤ **Free Movie and Discussion**  
**Friday, February 14, 2025, 7 pm – 9 pm**

**Location:** Reason Center, 1300 Ethan Way, Rm 675, Sacramento, map at <https://goo.gl/maps/RwiUgEJ5ESHRhrPu8>.

It's a fabulous free **in-person Movie Night** at Sacramento's [Reason Center](http://Reason Center), in a quiet room with cozy seating and a huge screen and refreshments right at hand. The movie name is a secret because of our [MPLC License](http://MPLC License) and certain legal folderol -- but we can slip hints. From 1976, it's a musical comedy gangster film with an all-child cast, starring young Jody Foster, with music by Paul Williams. A cult classic, it has an IMBb rating of 8.9/10. Some consider it a bit creepy - you'll have to decide.

AOF and Reason Center co-sponsor. The team provides popcorn and other munchies - feel free to bring your own snacks as well. We also encourage a post-film discussion, which makes this educational if you stretch the word a bit. No fee to attend. But we always appreciate donations.

**Contact for details:** See <http://reasoncenter.com/contact/>

*Free Movie Night is a joint venture of AOF and Reason Center. Suggest your own fave film for next time!*



## ➤ Adopt-A-Highway Cleanup

**Saturday, February 22, 2025, 9 am – 11 am**

**Location:** Near W. Elkhorn Blvd & Hwy 99, map at <https://goo.gl/maps/zw3Rwct9yR52>.

Out on Highway 99, for two miles from Elkhorn Boulevard to Elverta Road, runs a lonely stretch -- *our* stretch! Sac-area freethinkers "adopted" it in July 1995. We have cared for it, nurtured it, lovingly rescued it from litter and debris, and received recognition for our work. One of our successful civic efforts, it proves freethinkers can also serve the community.

So, join us! Enjoy a morning commune with nature, and do a deed for the environment and local area wildlife. The refuse we collect would otherwise ultimately be swept by the rain into tributaries and into the ocean, degrading habitat, and leading to a slow death for many sea creatures.

As usual, the stalwart activity captain will provide all safety equipment, including comfortable, natty hard-hats and gloves, stylish safety vests, collection bags, and handy trash pickers. The cleanup takes a scant two hours. Please dress for the season. It may be a good idea to bring a backpack or fanny-pack to carry 3 or 4 trash bags.

To get there, travel north from Sacramento on I-5 past the Natomas area. Take the "Highway 99 - Yuba City, Marysville" exit. Exit at Elkhorn Boulevard less than a mile north. Turn left, cross the overpass. Park in the park-&-ride lot if possible, or somewhere near it.

**Contact for details:** 916-805-9337 (Don Knutson), or see <https://www.aofonline.org/contact.html>.

Note, this is a great event for older children, but please leave smalls safe at home. Please review the CalTrans Highway Cleanup guidelines at <https://dot.ca.gov/programs/maintenance/adopt-a-highway/covid19>.

*In case of rain, fog, excessive mud, rapture or locust plague, the Cleanup will be rescheduled. If unsure, call the Activity Captain (Don).*



## ✧ ✧ Other Upcoming non-AOF Events ✧ ✧

Some local *non*-AOF events worthy of your attention. We won't list them all, just highlights. For more, much more, please check the calendar links below (where it says "More Events").

### ➤ Sacramento Darwin Day ☆☆

**Saturday, February 08, 2025, 6:30 PM – 9:30 pm**

**Location:** MOSAC Science Museum, 400 Jibboom St, Sacramento, see map at

<https://goo.gl/maps/EXQanKuf138h2F5m6>.

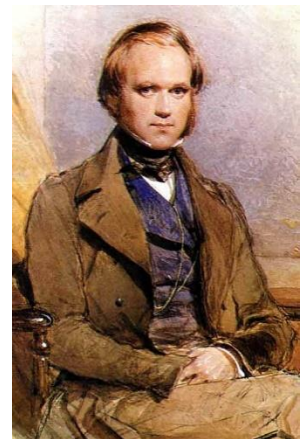
• It's the 28th fabulous year of the **Darwin Day Birthday Gala**, Sacramento's coolest, most singular, most go-to event of science and humanity, brought to you by area science advocates, civic groups and nerds on too much coffee. An in-person event at the MOSAC Science Museum, marking "Chuck" Darwin's 216<sup>th</sup> birthday. Open to all (but you'll need a ticket).

**Darwin Day** is a science-rush like no other, a celebration of scientific inquiry honoring of the life and work of the great Charles Darwin (b. 12 February 1809), sponsored worldwide by community and educational groups. It's not an AOF event, to be honest, but AOF helped found the local gala, and continues to support it and commend it to all our friends in the Sacramento community of reason. Because science! And what's science but reason in the trenches?

The main speaker will be **Jeff Rodgers**, Manager of the UC Davis Multiverse Theater at MOSAC, an accomplished science communicator with three decades of experience exploring the intersectionality of the natural sciences. His topic: "On Becoming Human".

For background on this mind-growing event, visit <https://darwinday.org/>, the international website.

**How to attend:** *Please get a ticket.* It's not pricey, and this is no time to grinch. Price is just \$25 general, \$20 for museum members, or \$10 if you have a Student ID. Ticket link: <https://72342.blackbaudhosting.com/72342/Darwin-Day>. Yes, you'll get sweet, sweet birthday cake.



For more on this event, see <https://www.sacdarwinday.org/>. Entertainment, snacks and parking are included.

### ➤ **Blasphemy Breakfasts and a Brunch**

**Saturday, February 8, 2025, 10 am – 11:30 am**, at Mel's Diner, 13399 Folsom Blvd, Folsom, CA, map at <https://goo.gl/maps/ri6JvaBoSZVHTdnU6>, details at <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/305704713/>.

**Sunday, February 9, 2025, 9:30 am – 11:30 am**, at Mel's Diner, 3000 J Street, Sacramento, CA, map at <https://goo.gl/maps/toijMkseMwMtanVP7>, details at <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/305723067/>.

**Sunday, February 16, 2025, 9:30 am – 11 am**, at Mel's Diner, 6708 Lonetree Blvd, Rocklin, CA, map at <https://goo.gl/maps/ZUY2gg72KkmcC4bU6>, details at <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/305741281/>.

• Like to hang with like-minded people? Want to meet freethinkers in smaller groups? Or do you just get the morning munchies? Join us for a "Blasphemy Breakfast." We don't blaspheme all that much, but dark mutterings may emerge ... be warned. A great place to speak your mind, and a good starter if you are new to meetups. Please RSVP (see the links).



### ➤ **Sunday Assembly & Potluck**

**Sunday, February 9, 2025, 11 am – 1 pm (doors open 10:30am, presentation at 11)**

**Location:** Reason Center, 1300 Ethan Way, Suite 675, Sacramento, map at <https://goo.gl/maps/S5MR1e8ZodBzb4TG8>.

• Sunday Assembly is a secular celebration of *you*, with music, readings, food and speakers, plus entertainment for children. Featured presenter this time is **Emily Autenrieth**, who spent 32 years in Alaska before settling in California, saw a need for a space where people of all ages and identities could be themselves and learn about others. Bring a food dish to share if you can – it's a potluck too!

**Details:** see <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/305722440/>.

### ➤ **LiteraCheer at Reason Center**

**Saturday, February 15, 2025, 2:00 PM**

**Location:** Reason Center, 1300 Ethan Way, Rm 675, Sac, map at <https://goo.gl/maps/S5MR1e8ZodBzb4TG8>.

• Reason Center is excited to continue our in-person "Literacheer" discussions! We will conduct these in the library seating areas. Come and enjoy the weekend afternoon by discussing books with fellow thinkers. Your host will be Ryan Drew.

Everyone will get a chance to share their ideas about any book of their choice—any genre, fiction or nonfiction. It's a great way to keep abreast of what like-minded people are reading.

📖 **Note! Follow common sense decency in choice of books, avoid marketing pitches, and generally be nice. Focus on the "cheer" part of the event.**



**Details:** see <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/305579901/>.

*Optional to bring your snacks to add to our complementary treats. Enough to share is all we ask.*

### ➤ **Ancient Christian Study Group**

**Sunday, February 16, 2025, 12 pm – 11:30 am**

**Location:** Mast Coffee, 1430 28<sup>th</sup> Street, Sacramento, CA, map at <https://maps.app.goo.gl/ngQJLoXkR7YzBtCZ9>.

• The history of ancient Christianity is endlessly fascinating. Don Fox and Steve Thoreson are facilitating this meet up to review the history of Rome, religions of the Roman Empire, Gnosticism, Mystery cults, history of Christian persecutions, biographies of major Christians, the history of the Bible and many other related topics. If you ever wanted to sort out Eusebius from Clement, or Constantine from Diocletian, or the Vulgate from the Septuagint, then this group is for you. Previous biblical knowledge not required to participate.

**Details:** see <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/305254174/>.

### ➤ **Saturday Night Hangout**

**Saturday, February 22, 2025, 6 pm – 9 pm**

**Location:** Online events! Meet by teleconference. To attend, just click the attendance link at the event time:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83092441353?pwd=Wmp6RVIUR1Q0dFZZMIFQUIVodTN0dz09>.

• An online meetup on various Saturdays. The first half hour is for greeting friends, catching up, welcoming newcomers and having fun. No politics please! Then games, trivia, movies. Options may grow.

**Details:** <https://www.meetup.com/reasoncenterevents/events/305964998/>.

### ➤ **Coffee and Community at Reason Center**

**Sunday, February 23, 2025, 11 am – 12:30 pm**

**Location:** Reason Center, 1300 Ethan Way, Rm 675, map at <https://maps.app.goo.gl/ngQJLoXkR7YzBtCZ9>.

• Come to the Reason Center Library for coffee, tea and treats. This event is just a casual conversation on topics of the day, and newcomers are welcome. Hope to see you soon!

Details: see <https://www.meetup.com/reasoncenterevents/events/305980192/>.

## ➤ Sacramento Skeptics in the Pub

Sunday, March 2, 2025, 6 pm – 8 pm

Location: Duke's Pints & Plates, 510 La Sierra Dr, Sacramento; map at <https://goo.gl/maps/aNzV4j33cnizW9j77>.

• A social meetup for the skeptical minds, a community of people, friends, and families that champion the methods of science and critical thinking. Visitors and new skeptics most welcome!

Details: see <https://www.meetup.com/sacskeptics/events/drcrkyhcfbdb/>.

## ➤ More Events – So many Calendars!

Really, there's more. And plans change, because we're human. So don't trust the list above. To learn of all those other events, please bookmark & follow these links:

- Sacramento Freethinkers, Atheists and Nonbelievers, <https://www.meetup.com/SacFAN/events/calendar/>
- The Reason Center calendar, <https://www.meetup.com/ReasonCenterEvents/events/calendar/>
- Black Humanists of Sacramento events, <https://www.meetup.com/bhnb-sacramento/events/calendar/>
- Recovery from Religion Sacramento, <https://www.meetup.com/RfR-Sacramento-CA/events/calendar/>
- Sacramento Skeptics events, <https://www.meetup.com/sacskeptics/events/calendar/>
- Compassionate Humanists of Roseville, <https://www.meetup.com/compassionate-humanists/events/calendar/>
- Sunday Assembly Sacramento events, <https://www.meetup.com/sunday-assembly-sacramento/events/calendar/>
- Central Valley Alliance of Atheists & Skeptics, <https://www.meetup.com/fresno-cvaas/events/calendar/>

## *You can help. Here's how.*

### Support Reason Center

Since Reason Center opened in July 2014, it 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.

But to continue, "RC" relies on support from members and donors. Please stand up for Reason Center, because it stands up for you. To join or donate, visit [ReasonCenter.org](http://ReasonCenter.org).

### 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 suggest it meekly. See <http://www.aofonline.org/learn/committees.html> for opportunities.

## ✧ ✧ Secular Holidays ✧ ✧

### ➤ Darwin Day

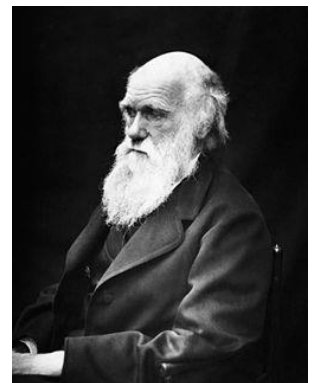
Wednesday, February 12, 2025

International [Darwin Day](#) celebrates the life and work of Charles Darwin, a secular holiday widely celebrated within the global community with participation from all sectors of society. Even mainline churches have participated, celebrating the day as [Evolution Sunday or Evolution Weekend](#) (see the [Clergy Letter Project](#)).

Under any of these names, this day celebrates the wonder and beauty of both science and humanity, and serve to recognize and celebrate the achievements of a man who cast a bright, explanatory light on reality, our self-knowledge, and on the world of which we are part.

Charles Darwin contributed to our understanding at the deepest level, forever changed how we see ourselves within this vast, impersonal universe, and brought us a paradigm shift of seismic proportions. He symbolizes the brave, human enterprise of science in confronting the mystery of existence. His life and work exemplify the spirit of wonder, curiosity and adventure along with the excitement that the quest for knowledge and understanding can provide.

[The Darwin Day Program](#), an educational non-profit organization, encourages interested groups and individuals throughout the world to participate in the annual celebration of Darwin Day by coordinating events and activities in their area on or around February 12. The program also offers a year-round educational outreach project.



Darwin Day, Evolution Sunday and Evolution Weekend encourage us to come together to champion science and humanity throughout our global community. They let us celebrate the astonishing engagement of our common intelligence with the wonder and excitement of life in the universe. If you agree, visit the [National Darwin Day](#) site and sign the petition calling for national recognition of this day. Then, visit [Epic of Evolution](#) for a great adventure.



**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](http://www.aofonline.org).

AOF President: Redoubtable Roger Zabkie  
 Vice-president: Marvelous Mynga Futrell  
 Secretary: Rapid Ruth Rezos  
 Treasurer & Registrar: Kinetic Ken Nahigian  
 Event Coordinator: Prolific Pamela Rivera  
 Webmistress: Palpable Pat Kelley  
 Program chair: Super Susan McLean  
 Facebook page: Keen Kaeleigh Pontif  
 Directors at large:  
 Fran Evanisko, Kaeleigh Pontif, David Herbert

**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 is affiliated with the Alliance of Secular Humanist Societies (ASHS), Atheist Alliance of America (AAA), American Atheists (AA), American Humanist Association (AHA) and the Sacramento Coalition of Reason (SCoR).

**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.

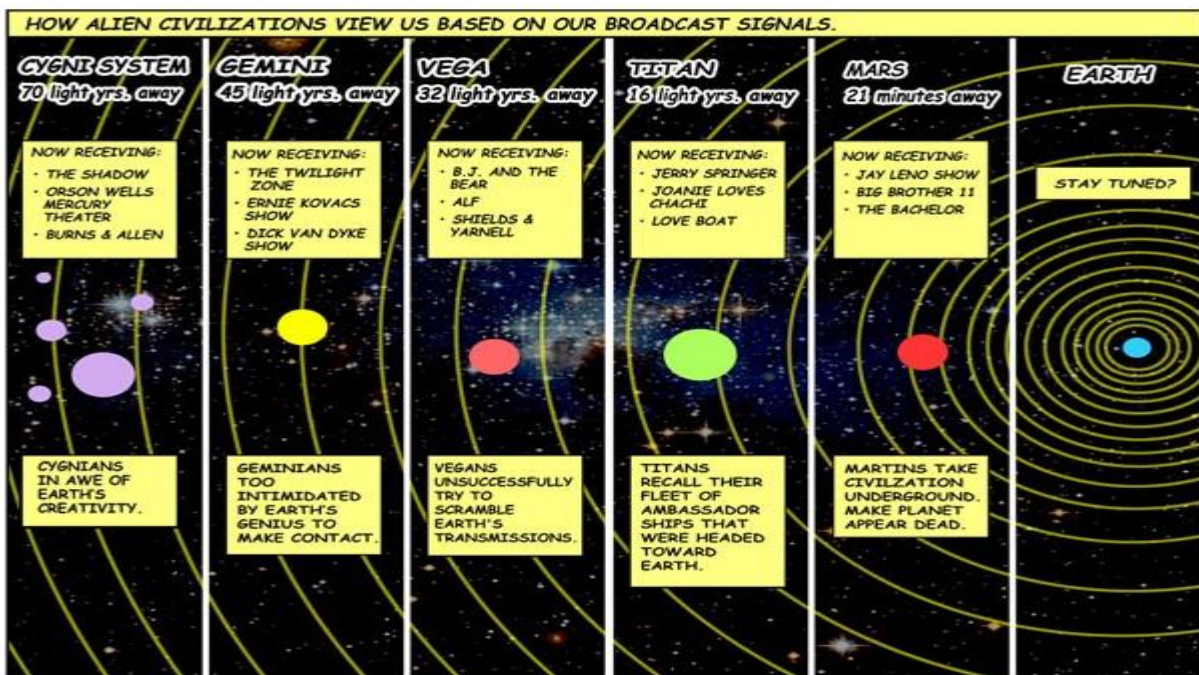
AOF supports a benign separation of Church and State as the best means to protect the liberty and intellectual commerce of citizens. "... to keep forever from these shores the ceaseless strife that has soaked the soil of Europe in blood for centuries" (James Madison, 1803).

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. Any who will treat others with respect and dignity may join.

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

Your humble editor is Fran Evanisko.

Letters, submissions? We love them! See: <http://www.aofonline.org/read/submission-guide.html>.



## God and Science by Herb Silverman [guest editorial]

Some God believers say they don't believe in science even though they frequently use science when they engage in the use of technology or rely on antibiotics, for instance.

I cannot say that I "believe" in science because science is based on evidence, not belief. Scientists try to disprove their own theories or the theories of others before they submit their findings to peer-reviewed journals. Eventually there is a consensus among scientists, which might change with new scientific evidence. There are no peer reviews for gods because there are no gods to do the reviewing, and no actual "theories" of gods to review.

Many theists believe that science does more harm than good. They see conflicts with forms of science that disavow "God's role" in the world, and the value and "sacredness" of humanity, including our special human nature. Religion also differs from science in coming to conclusions based on faith, not evidence.

Is science or religion a better tool to understand the world? Science and religion disagree about the origin of the Earth and humans. Unfortunately, to the extent that some religious people view science as invalid, irrelevant, or morally suspect, they will be less interested in learning science, both formally and informally. You don't have to be an atheist to support science, but it helps.

While science has had success after success understanding the universe, the "method" of using faith has led to no proofs of the divine. How many gods are there? What are their natures and moral creeds? Is there an afterlife? Why is there moral and physical evil? For theists there is no one answer to any of these questions. All is a mystery.

Religion relies on dogma, scripture, and authority that requires faith as expressed in Hebrews 11. Faith is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." In science, faith without evidence is a vice, while in religion it's a virtue.

If you are a believer who doesn't want to seem anti-science, what can you do? You must argue that your faith is compatible with science. Let's look at how God believers try to accept some science and relate it to their religious beliefs. Here are the main beliefs about God, with a smattering of science:

- God has existed forever — for no apparent reason. I'm not sure what "forever" even means. God eventually got bored doing nothing forever, so he created matter. He touched off a Big Bang that started our universe approximately 13.8 billion years ago. God then did nothing for over 9 billion years.
- Next, he created Earth 4.5 billion years ago. After doing nothing again for another half billion years, God started the process of evolution, which some God believers are willing to accept as long as they can find a way to avoid its conflicting with their god beliefs.
- The fossil record places the earliest animal life on Earth about 600 million years ago. Similarities among all presentday organisms imply a common ancestor from which all known species, living and extinct, have diverged. Apparently, God disliked just about all species he created because more than 99 percent of the species that ever lived (over five billion) are now extinct. More than 10 million animal species now live on Earth. Two different religious points of view say that either God created all species or he just allowed nature to take its course through (non-human) evolution.
- Dinosaurs are a diverse group of reptiles that first appeared about 240 million years ago and went extinct about 65 million years ago. God apparently wanted to get rid of the dinosaurs he had created because many believe God brought an asteroid to collide with Earth, and the intense heat and subsequent lack of adequate food killed the dinosaurs. Fortunately for mammals, they were able to live in burrows or aquatic environments that shielded them from the heat and provided some food.
- Once the heat was no longer a serious threat, mammals emerged in safety and made the most of remaining food resources. I guess God once preferred dinosaurs to humans because dinosaurs were around for at least 230 million years, while so far modern humans have been around for less than 100,000 years.
- God seemed to do nothing for another 94,000 years. About 6,000 years ago, the God of Genesis showed that he loves mankind more than any other creatures because he created mankind in his own image — whatever that means. Then God gave humans dominion over all other species. However, nobody has seen this God, who prefers to remain hidden.
- God then meddled wildly in the affairs of humans in a small part of the Earth for about 1,500 years. He gave one tribal society some strange rules to live by, and helped them defeat their (and God's) enemies in many battles.
- God later returned to Earth in human form to preach for 33 years. This God is also his own son (Jesus), as well as being the Holy Ghost (also called the Holy Spirit). God, or his son, died a bloody death, which is the reason he came to Earth to begin with. His blood served as atonement for the flaws in humans (whom God created with many flaws).
- Why were humans so bad? Well, God made a first couple who were told not to eat a certain fruit. God never gave this couple knowledge of good and evil. So, this naïve couple was tempted by a talking snake to taste the forbidden fruit, which they did. That tasting, known as the "original sin," somehow put a stain on all subsequent humans, which could only be removed by eating the body and drinking the blood of the dead Jesus. Some Christians today continue to do this. Who knew how much blood God's son had in him? And I won't even get into the cannibalism of eating Jesus's body.
- God then ceased all manifestation and direct contact with humans for the next 2,000 years, leaving people with only a book to figure it all out.

This arbitrary, cobbled-together collection of metaphorical and contradictory revelations are the rules that tell humans how to live and achieve eternal bliss with God after they die. Meanwhile, many humans continue to die when they fight each other over different interpretations of this ambiguous and contradictory "holy" book. Wow! Science or religion. Tough choice?

Herb Silverman is a regular contributor to *The Freethought Society News*. For past submissions see <https://www.ftsociety.org/herb-silverman-articles/>.

Silverman is the author of two books, *Candidate Without a Prayer* and *An Atheist Stranger in a Strange Religious Land*.

He welcomes communication from readers, and is also available for worldwide speaking engagements.

Contact him at [silvermanh@cofc.edu](mailto:silvermanh@cofc.edu).