

The Secular Gazette

Supporting Science, Reason and the Separation of Church and State

Issue #22 October 18, 2011

I'm fascinated and somewhat mystified how some of our fellow beings can wholeheartedly accept a statement which another person has presumably proclaimed as a fact. I know we as humans are prone to confirmation bias, and how we more than often accept reports without investigation. One who discovers he or she is wrong because of better evidence is an experience that might blossom into the world of skepticism. This is one reason why Backyard Skeptics will be placing a billboard concerning one of our Founding Fathers on Newport Blvd. in Orange County on October 25th. (see the article attached)

Everyone is busy and we have other things to attend to. We have to pick our battles. But it's not to often that a battle comes along that one might be persuaded that it is worthwhile to join. The cause might be as simple as donating to an organization or as radical as picketing a religious or political event. But in any case most 'personal' battles seem to come from the heart. Most people (IMHO) join causes to make this a better world, to alleviate suffering or to improve the human condition for our children. Often it takes event, such as 9-11 in my case, to spark the incentive to *Do Something About It*. I just hope that others might feel the same way I do without the need for another 9-11 to improve the well-being of others in future generations

Bruce Gleason, editor

Skeptics Corner

From [SKEPTIC'S CAFÉ](#)

October 13, 2011

Critical Thinker Explains Skepticism vs. Cynicism

Several [Skeptic's Café columns](#) have invoked the work of MacArthur Foundation "genius" James Randi and his James Randi Educational Foundation, or [JREF](#). This nonprofit "promotes critical thinking by reaching out to the public and media with reliable information about paranormal and supernatural ideas," and is one of the key players in the world of skeptical and critical thinking.

In honor of [International Skeptics Day](#) (October 13), we turn the tables on the president of JREF, D.J. Grothe, who routinely interviews skeptical thinkers for his podcast series "[For Good Reason](#)," by interviewing him for Skeptic's Café.

Miller-McCune: Who is D.J. Grothe and what is the James Randi Educational Foundation?

D.J. Grothe: I'm formerly a professional magician, so I have strong interests in deception and self-deception, and in what magicians may have to say about how easy it is to believe nonsense, especially harmful nonsense like psychics and other pseudoscientific and paranormal claims.

JREF was created in 1996 by the famous social critic and magician [James Randi](#). He has single-handedly exposed some of the most egregious frauds in our society, like the TV faith healer [Peter Popoff](#) and the Israeli magician-turned-

Contents:

[Skeptics Corner](#)

[Science News](#)

[Sam Harris' Blog](#)

[Church & State](#)

[Skeptoid.com](#)

[Born Atheist](#)

[Evo Education](#)

[God is Imaginary](#)

[Backyard Skeptics News and Meetings](#)

[Opinions](#)

[DVDs](#)

[Funny Stuff](#)

[Local Groups](#)

[National Groups](#)

fake-psychic [Uri Geller](#), among many others. Inspired by Randi's work, our foundation provides educational resources to teachers to bring skepticism and critical thinking into classrooms, supports skeptical grassroots campaigns on topics like homeopathy and vaccines, and provides programming about skepticism online, at workshops, and at conferences for the general public.

M-M: People use the word “skeptical” in everyday talk, but often don’t really use it correctly. How do you define “skepticism”?

DJG: To me, the word is best understood by looking at its roots: it comes from the Greek word “*skeptikos*,” which just means to inquire or to find out. We say that skepticism is the best way of finding out the truth and is precisely the opposite of just saying “no” to others’ beliefs. On the other hand, a knee-jerk rejection of others’ beliefs is more akin to cynicism, not skepticism, and is rather closed-minded.

Skeptics who work with JREF are quite open-minded, but after decades of looking into various claims, we have found no evidence that any of these supernatural, paranormal or pseudoscientific beliefs hold up under scrutiny. In my experience, skeptics are critical thinkers who have a real desire to learn the truth about these sorts of questions.

M-M: As an educator, I feel that “critical thinking” is something we are in desperate need of developing in our society and educational institutions. What does “critical thinking” mean to you?

DJG: Critical thinking is continuous with skepticism – and with science, for that matter. It is simply thinking critically about claims and issues. As an example, think of going car shopping. Smart and savvy people will get a mechanic to take a look at a used car before they buy it, or lift the hood and kick the tires themselves to make sure it is a good deal. So why not also take a very close, skeptical look before buying someone else’s opinion, to make sure that it is worth it and holds up under scrutiny? This is skepticism and critical thinking — believing only those claims for which there is good evidence. Skepticism should be widely applied in one’s life to all the claims heard on a daily basis, not just in one specific area like the paranormal, even though at JREF we focus on paranormal and pseudo-scientific claims.

M-M: I’m an amateur magician and see how misdirection is a technique used frequently by politicians, the media, advertisers, and many others in everyday life. What role do you see misdirection playing in today’s cultural climate?

DJG: Very important question — I think it is used quite extensively. The magician and the skeptic have a lot of say when they see the “smoke and mirrors” used in

politics or the media, especially when it comes to emotional issues like taxes, social welfare and national security. People get distracted from the important issues of the day by being placated by mass culture, as well as being scared by things like terrorism or disasters. This is not to say that things like terrorism are not real threats, but I think these issues are often used by politicians to keep the electorate from focusing on other important issues.

M-M: Debunking psychics, scam artists, and urban legends may sound trivial to some people, given the scope of these other social problems in today’s society. How do you respond to these critics?

DJG: Some people think the skeptic’s work is trivial, but we think beliefs matter very much. If the majority of people believe in the claimed supernatural ability of a TV preacher to heal their illnesses, there are real-world effects: the believers won’t go to real medical doctors. The same is true for [belief in homeopathy](#), or the belief that [vaccines are dangerous](#) — there is absolutely no scientific evidence for these harmful beliefs. If military officials believe that the [ADE 651](#), which is nothing more than a glorified dowsing rod, actually detects bombs and then the device is used in theaters of war, it isn’t only that some fraudster gets rich by selling a fake product that enrages us as skeptics, but that real people could die as a result of putting faith in these phony bomb detectors. Skepticism is like a beautiful marriage of consumer protection and science education, and all for the public good.

M-M Often I find that skeptical thinking ends up being about [placebo effects](#), unscientific methodologies, and faulty sampling. So how do you respond to people who say that the traditional scientific method is just one way of seeing the world and a method that may not be suitable to other ways of knowing and understanding reality?

DJG: We hear this a lot. Of course, one doesn’t conduct a scientific experiment to see if he or she is actually in love with a partner, for instance. But the methods and content of science are the best ways of knowing how the world really is. So if someone says, “Throw out the science, I have new truth — but unfortunately it cannot be proven, you’ll just have to take my word for it on faith,” that is a very good reason to be skeptical. And we are even more interested when people say they have demonstrable evidence that their way of knowing or that their supernatural claim is real. If it holds up under scrutiny and proper evaluation, they’ll change the world and win a Nobel Prize. And if it doesn’t hold up, I don’t want people to be hornswoggled into believing harmful nonsense.

From the Blog of Sam Harris

(re-printed with permission)

Steven Pinker is a Professor of Psychology at Harvard University, the author of several magnificent books about the human mind, and one of the most influential scientists on earth. He is also my friend, an occasional mentor, and an advisor to my nonprofit foundation, [Project Reason](#).

Steve's new book is [The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined](#). Reviewing it for the *New York Times Book Review*, the philosopher Peter Singer called it "a supremely important book." I have no doubt that it is, and I very much look forward to reading it. In the meantime, Steve was kind enough to help produce a written interview for this blog.

I suspect that when most people hear the thesis of your book—that human violence has steadily declined—they are skeptical: Wasn't the 20th century the most violent in history?

Probably not. Data from previous centuries are far less complete, but the existing estimates of death tolls, when calculated as a proportion of the world's population at the time, show at least nine atrocities before the 20th century (that we know of) which may have been worse than World War II. They arose from collapsing empires, horse tribe invasions, the slave trade, and the annihilation of native peoples, with wars of religion close behind. World War I doesn't even make the top ten.

Also, a century comprises a hundred years, not just fifty, and the second half of the 20th century was host to a Long Peace among great powers and developed nations (the subject of one of the book's chapters) and more recently, to a New Peace in the rest of the world (the subject of another chapter), with unusually low rates of warfare.

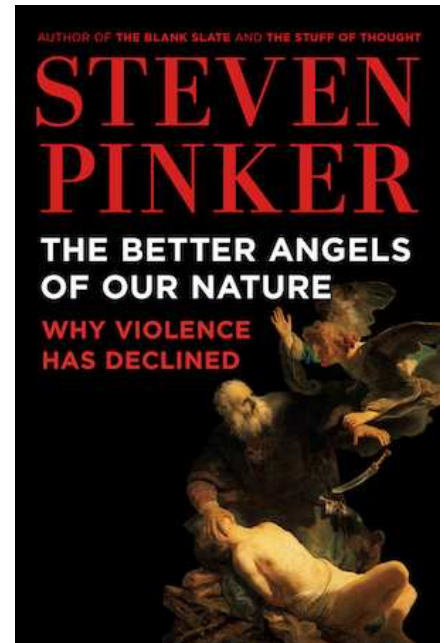
Need I remind you that the "atheist regimes" of the 20th century killed tens of millions of people?

This is a popular argument among the conservatives and critics of the new atheism, but for many reasons it is historically inaccurate.

First, the premise that Nazism and Communism were "atheist" ideologies makes sense only within a religiocentric worldview that divides political systems into those that are based on Judaeo-Christian ideology and those that are not. In fact, 20th-century totalitarian movements were no more defined by a rejection of Judaeo-Christianity than they were defined by a rejection of astrology, alchemy, Confucianism, Scientology, or any of hundreds of other belief systems. They were based on the ideas of Hitler and Marx, not David Hume and Bertrand Russell, and the horrors they inflicted are no more a vindication of Judaeo-Christianity than they are of astrology or alchemy or Scientology. Second, Nazism and Fascism were not atheistic in the first place. Hitler thought he was carrying out a divine plan. Nazism received extensive support from many German churches, and no opposition from the Vatican. Fascism happily coexisted with Catholicism in Spain, Italy, Portugal, and Croatia.

Third, according to the most recent compendium of history's worst atrocities, Matthew White's [Great Big Book of Horrible Things](#) (Norton, 2011), religions have been responsible for 13 of the 100 worst mass killings in history, resulting in 47 million deaths. Communism has been responsible for 6 mass killings and 67 million deaths. If defenders of religion want to crow, "We were only responsible for 47 million murders—Communism was worse!", they are welcome to do so, but it is not an impressive argument.

Read the rest of this blog [HERE](#)





Science News

How Science Can Lead the Way

What we lose when we put faith over logic

By Lisa Randall

Today's politicians seem more comfortable invoking God and religion than they do presenting facts or numbers. Of course, everyone is entitled to his or her own religious beliefs. But when science and reason get shortchanged, so does America's future. With science, we put together observations with explanatory frameworks whose predictions can be tested and ultimately agreed on. Empirically based logic and the revelatory nature of faith are very different methods for seeking answers, and only logic can be systematically improved and applied. As we head toward the next election, it's important to keep an eye on how our political leaders view science and its advances, because their attitudes frequently mirror their approaches toward rational decision making itself.

When Rick Perry, who defends teaching creationism in school, says evolution is merely "a theory that's out there, it's got some gaps in it," he's demonstrating a fundamental misunderstanding of scientific theory. And when he chooses to pray for the end of a drought rather than critically evaluate climate science, he is displaying the danger of replacing rational approaches with religion in matters of public policy. Logic tries to resolve paradoxes, whereas much of religious thought thrives on them. Adherents who want to accept both religious influences on the world and scientific explanations for its workings are obliged to confront the chasm between tangible effects and unseen, imperceptible influences that is unbridgeable by logical thought. They have no choice but to admit the inconsistency--or simply overlook the contradiction.

What we are seeing in the current presidential race is not so much a clash between religion and science as a fundamental disregard for rational and scientific thinking. All but two of the Republican front runners won't even consider that man-made global warming might be causing climate change, despite a great deal of evidence that it is. We know CO₂ warms the planet through the greenhouse effect, and we know humans have created a huge increase in CO₂ in the atmosphere by burning coal and oil. That man-made climate change is not proved with 100% certainty does not justify its dismissal.

In fact, an important part of science is understanding uncertainty. When scientists say we know something, we mean we have tested our ideas with a degree of accuracy over a range of scales. Scientists also address the limitations of their theories and define and try to extend the range of applicability. When the method is applied properly, the right results emerge over time.

Public policy is more complicated than clean and controlled experiments, but considering the large and serious issues we face--in the economy, in the environment, in our health and well-being--it's our responsibility to push reason as far as we can. Far from being isolating, a rational, scientific way of thinking could be unifying. Evaluating alternative strategies; reading data, when available, either in the U.S. or other countries, about the relative effectiveness of various policies; and understanding uncertainties--all features of the scientific method--can help us find the right way forward.

Looking for a good tax write-off?

Freethought Alliance is a 501C3 organization and will gladly use your tax-deductible donation to promote secular values and the public education of non-belief. Use the DONATION button at freethoughtalliance.org to make your donation of any amount.

[Ala. town's criminals get choice: Jail or church](#)

(CBS/AP)

BAY MINETTE, Ala. - Authorities say non-violent offenders in southern Alabama will have a new choice: Go to jail, or go to church every Sunday for a year.



CBS News affiliate WKRG-TV in Mobile [reports](#) that

Operation Restore Our Community begins next week.

(Scroll down to watch a report WKRG-TV)



from

The city judge in Bay Minette will let misdemeanor offenders choose to work off their sentences in jail and pay a fine; or go to church every Sunday for a year.

If offenders select church, they'll be allowed to pick the place of worship but must check in weekly with the pastor and police.

If the one-year church attendance program is completed, the offender's case will be dismissed.

Bay Minette Police Chief Mike Rowland says the program could change the lives of people heading down the wrong path. So far, 56 churches are participating.

[Ala. town tells offenders: Go to jail, or go to church](#)

AP

BAY MINETTE, Ala. (AP) — A civil liberties group said Friday that an Alabama town should not start an alternative sentencing program that would give non-violent offenders a new choice: Go to jail, or go to church.

Starting next week, the program will allow a city judge to sentence misdemeanor offenders to work off their sentences in jail and pay a fine, or go to church every Sunday for a year. Offenders who select church can pick the place of worship but must check in weekly with the pastor and the police department. If the one-year church attendance program is completed successfully, the offender's case will be dismissed.

"It's an easy choice for me," Bay Minette Police Chief Michael Rowland told WKRG-TV (<http://bit.ly/pxO8VN>). "If I was given the choice of going to jail and paying a heavy fine or just going to church, I'd certainly select church."

The Alabama branch of the American Civil Liberties Union plans to send Bay Minette officials a letter demanding that they suspend the program. While the group says it supports alternative sentencing programs that save money, it believes the plan in Bay Minette violates the Constitution, state ACLU Executive Director Olivia Turner said in a statement.

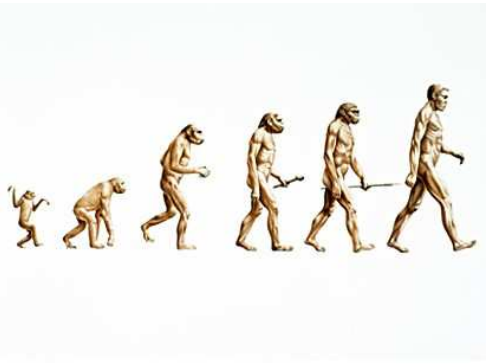
"But it is a fundamental principle of the Establishment Clause that the government cannot force someone to attend church," she said. "When the alternative to going to church is going to jail, the so-called 'choice' available to offenders is no choice at all."

City officials did not immediately return calls from The Associated Press.

Pastor Robert Gates of Christian Life Church leads one of 56 congregations participating in the effort. He predicted it would succeed.

"You show me somebody who falls in love with Jesus, and I'll show you a person who won't be a problem to society but that will be an influence and a help to those around them," he told the television station.

Evo Education



A CALL TO BAN CREATIONISM IN BRITISH SCHOOLS

A group of scientists in the United Kingdom is calling for a "statutory and enforceable" ban on teaching creationism in Britain's publicly funded schools, as well as for evolution to be included "at both primary and secondary levels in the National Curriculum and in all schools." Among the signatories to the statement are David Attenborough, Richard Dawkins, Steve Jones, Harold Kroto, Paul Nurse (the president of the Royal Society of London), Michael Reiss, and Lewis Wolpert, as well as the Association for Science Education, the British Humanist Association, the British Science Association, the Campaign for Science and Engineering, and Ekklesia.

In 2007, after a series of controversies about the place of creationism in the science classroom in Britain, the Department for Children, Schools, and Families issued "Guidance on the place of creationism and intelligent design in science lessons," which stated, "Creationism and intelligent design are sometimes claimed to be scientific theories. This is not the case as they have no underpinning scientific principles, or explanations, and are not accepted by the science community as a whole. Creationism and intelligent design therefore do not form part of the science National Curriculum programs of study."

But not all concerns were allayed. Creationist organizations such as Truth in Science and Creation Ministries International continued to circulate material to teachers and to present their views at schools. And according to the Guardian (September 19, 2011), "There is no definitive data on the number of UK schools which teach creationism. ... A 2006 survey by Opinion panel found that nearly 20% of UK students said they had been taught creationism as fact by their main school." (Creationism was defined in the Opinion panel report as the view that "God created humans in their present form within the last 10,000 years.")

Moreover, there were concerns that "free schools" -- a relatively new phenomenon, resembling charter schools in the United States -- planned to teach creationism. Although the Department for Children, Education, and Schools promised to reject any free school proposing to teach creationism in the science curriculum, the group of scientists calling for the ban observed that there is no way to keep the department to its promise or to ensure that a free school, once approved, would not change its mind and begin to teach creationism. Since such schools do not need to follow the National Curriculum, they could also neglect the teaching of evolution.

As NCSE reported in May 2011, a new campaign -- Creationism In Schools Isn't Science, or CrISIS -- petitioned the government to enforce its stated position on the teaching of creationism, arguing, "that creationism should not be presented as a valid scientific position, or creationist websites and resources be promoted, in publicly funded schools or in any youth activities run on publicly funded school premises." Endorsed by the National Secular Society, Ekklesia, and the British Centre for Science Education, CrISIS garnered over 5000 signatures to its petition.

Donations needed to make this a more secular America

Freethought Alliance is a 501C3 organization and will gladly use your tax-deductible donation to promote secular values and the public education of non-belief. Use the DONATION button at freethoughtalliance.org to make your donation of any amount.

Skeptoid.com Noah's Ark: Sea Trials

By Brian Dunning

Re-printed with permission



Today we're going to have a bit of fun and shine the light of science on an ancient story. It is said that a gigantic wooden ship once carried a family and two of every kind of animal to safety, when the entire world was flooded. Noah's Ark sailed for five months, then rested aground, sheltering its multitudinous crew for more than a year.

The elephant in the room here is that it's virtually impossible to do an episode on this subject without having it sound like an attack on Christianity. I argue that it's not at all; the majority of Christians, when you combine the numerous denominations, don't insist that the Noah story is a literal true account. And, as has been pointed out many times, the Bible is hardly the only place where various versions of the Noah story are found. The most famous parallel, of course, is the Epic of Gilgamesh, wherein one of the many Babylonian gods charged the man Utnapishtim to build an ark, in a story that parallels Noah's in all the major details and [most](#) of the minor ones. It is perfectly plausible that all such stories stem from an actual event, the details of which are lost to history, but that might well account for the stories we have today of a boat and a flood. But regardless, in this episode I'm not going to address any issues of faith, but only of science. We want to look at the engineering plausibility of Noah's great ship.

Noah's Ark was a great rectangular box of gopherwood, or perhaps some combination of other woods colloquially referred to as gopherwood. Its dimensions are given as 137 meters long, 23 meters wide, and 14 meters high. This is very, very big; it would have been the longest wooden ship ever built. These dimensions rank it as one of history's greatest engineering achievements; but they also mark the start of our sea trials, our test of whether or not it's possible for this ship to have ever sailed, or indeed, been built at all.

Would it have been possible to find enough material to build Noah's Ark? When another early supership was built, the *Great Michael* (completed in Scotland in 1511) it was said to have consumed "all the woods of Fife". Fife was a county in Scotland famous for its shipbuilding. The *Great Michael's* timber had to be purchased and imported not only from other parts of Scotland, but also from France, the Baltic Sea, and from a large number of cargo ships from Norway. Yet at

73 meters, she was only about half the length of Noah's Ark. Clearly a ship twice the length of the *Great Michael*, and larger in all other dimensions, would have required many times as much timber. It's never been clearly stated exactly where Noah's Ark is said to have been built, but it would have been somewhere in Mesopotamia, probably along either the Tigris or Euphrates rivers. This area is now Iraq, which has never been known for its abundance of shipbuilding timber.

In 2003, a doctoral candidate at the Georgia Institute of Technology, Jose Solis, created a proposal to build the Ark for Noah based on sound naval architecture. He proposed a dead weight – the weight of the wooden structure alone minus cargo and ballast – as 3,676 tons. Fully loaded, it would have displaced 13,000 tons, as compared to the *Great Michael's* 1,000 that consumed "all the wood of Fife". Where would all that wood have come from? In his proposal, Solis simply skipped this detail, and assumed the wood was commercially available at a cost of \$16,472,040 in 2003 dollars. Tens of thousands of massive timber-quality trees would have to have been imported into the middle of what's now Iraq. Did Noah have the resources to import from France, Norway, or anywhere else?

But if the Ark did get built, it would be necessary to overcome its extraordinary fragility. If you pick up a toy Hot Wheels car, you can squeeze it as hard as you want but you can't break it. However, if you were a giant and reached down to pick up a normal passenger car, your fingers would crush it before creating sufficient friction to lift it. If you even lifted it by one corner, you would warp its structure noticeably. When we extend this to even larger vessels, their fragility is magnified. Recall that when the *Titanic* sank, that massive steel structure tore completely in half simply because one end was heavier than the other. Just that difference in weight was sufficient to tear open many decks of reinforced steel that had been engineered to the day's toughest standards. Were *Titanic* a wooden box instead of rigid steel, you (as a giant) could destroy it just by swishing your finger in the water next to it.

Read the rest of this article [HERE](#)

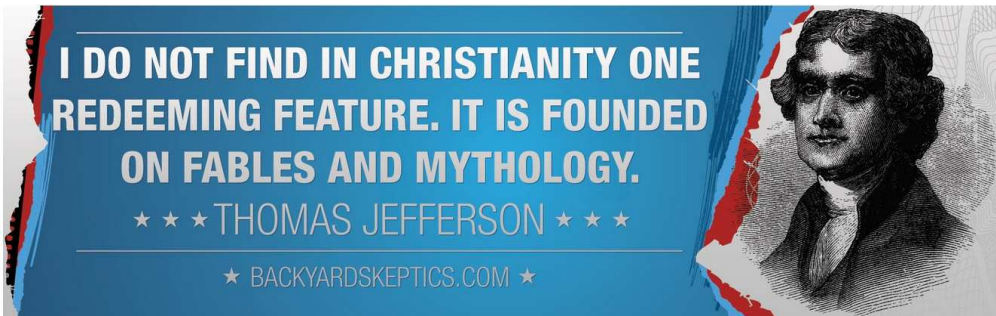
[Backyard Skeptics](#)

Backyard Skeptics is a 501C3 grass-roots organization based in Villa Park, CA which sponsors monthly meetings with interesting secular speakers, dinner-and-a-movie nights, science-oriented field trips, outreach programs at the Huntington Beach Pier and atheist advocacy programs. If you are local to Orange County you are welcome to join our meetup group to receive announcements of upcoming events.

<http://www.backyardskeptics.com>

Why Billboards?

Billboards have 'impressions' – people who drive by and might see the billboard. Our newest billboard, being placed in the influential city of Newport Beach on



October 23rd has a quote from Thomas Jefferson.

Why this particular billboard? Let me tell you a short story.

I visited many city council meetings in Orange County when a proposition came to each of the city's monthly council meeting's to include "In God We Trust" plaque to be displayed predominantly behind the city council members. This is a unconstitutional act of our cities promoting religion. It was started by Mrs. Sullivan from Bakersfield, a well-know bastion of California's heartland Christian community when she sent letters to all of Orange County's city managers to .

I have heard the arguments from community members who have spoken at the meetings – "It is part of our heritage" and "It's on our money" and "our soldiers died for our freedom" and "our Founding Fathers were Christians". All of these arguments are either false or just a fallacy.

Heritage: "In God We Trust" is not part of our heritage, It's part of our history. None of the founding fathers were alive when this motto, promoted by religious zealots, first appeared on our coins in 1862, then on our paper money in 1956 during the tumultuous McCarthy trials. If they were alive today they would no doubt argue against any form of religion being 'stamped' on our money. The 'newer' motto is part of our history, not our heritage.

Soldiers: What about the thousands of Americans who died who were of a different faith than a monotheistic one or with no faith at all? Are we walking on their gravestones because the current popularity of religion has taken over the votes of our politicians?

Founding Fathers: By studying the letters and quotes from our founding Fathers, we can see that although several of them had pro-religious statements in their personal lives, there were very few quotes which

crossed the line into government. In other words – some were deists and believed in the God of Nature – the God which does not have a hand in human dealings, and some were theists – those who believed God was in control of everything on earth.

I have also read the arguments on apologetic websites which are easily debunked if one has the slightest inkling in investigating claims of religious ties with our founding Fathers.

Hopefully, the billboard will educate and maybe influence those who are curious about the subject of our Founding Fathers religiosity.

(Thank you Ryan H. for helping out with the graphics.)

More information about our founding fathers at

BackyardSkeptics.com



[Backyard Skeptics is now on Facebook – if you're a Facebook fan then join our group page by searching for Backyard Skeptics.](#)



[NEWS \(more at backyard skeptics.com\)](#)

[9/27/11 Why young Christians aren't waiting anymore](#)

[10/13/11 Amen To Pastor Jeffress: Why The Dallas Bigot Is Doing Us All A Service](#)

[10/9/11 Richard Dawkins Event Banned by Michigan Country Club](#)

[10/4/11 Greek Orthodox church appears to be exempt from austerity measures](#)

[10/3/11 Worshipper rips out both eyes in Mass with his BARE HANDS](#)

[10/1/11 Rising atheism in America puts 'religious right on the defensive'](#)

[9/30/11 Mother Shayma Ali killed daughter, four, 'as sacrifice' for God](#)

[Also see the "Newsworthy Articles section on the Backyard Skeptics website for interesting and insightful articles.](#)

[Backyard Skeptics Events](#)

Our Next Monthly Meeting: Thursday September 22, 2011 in Villa Park, CA with the author of The Religion Virus, by Craig A. James. Mr James documents how memes progressed through thousands of years to influence human quest for the supernatural explanations of the unknown.

Oct 19th – Our new group Backyard Skeptics South is meeting in Mission Viejo at 7pm

Oct 23 2pm Pasadena Cal Tech Lecture - The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined: Lecture in Pasadena with Stephen Pinker. [See meetup.com.backyard-skeptics](#)

October 27, – Free film – "There's No Dinos In Heaven" at Fullerton State campus. See the flyer [HERE](#) (also has a link to the trailer)

Oct 29th – Backyard Skeptics annual Psychic Night with armature and professional magicians,

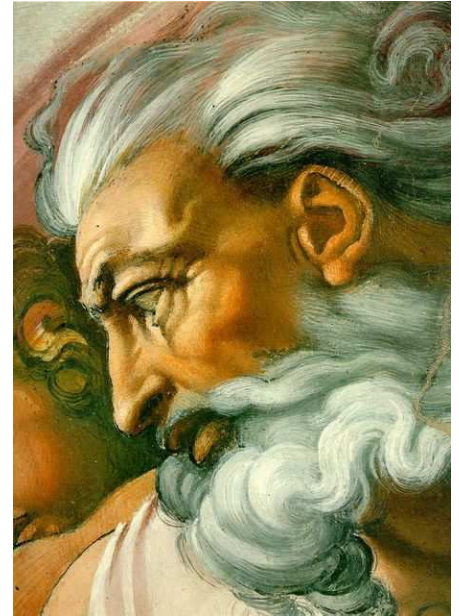
God Is Imaginary - #1 of 50: Try praying

We pray sincerely, knowing that when God answers this completely heartfelt, unselfish, non-materialistic prayer, it will glorify God and help millions of people in remarkable ways.

Will anything happen? No. Of course not. This is very odd. Jesus makes specific promises in the Bible about how prayer is supposed to work. Jesus says in many different places that he and God will answer your prayers. And Christians believe Jesus -- according to [this recent article](#), "54% of American adults believe the Bible is literally true." In some areas of the country the number goes as high as 75%.

If the Bible is literally true, then something is seriously amiss. Simply look at the facts. In Matthew 7:7 Jesus says:

Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For every one who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. Or what man of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!



If "*every one who asks receives*", then if we ask for cancer to be cured, it should be cured. Right? If "*our Father who is in heaven gives good things to those who ask him*", then if we ask him to cure cancer, he should cure it. Right? And yet nothing happens.

In Matthew 17:20 Jesus says:

For truly, I say to you, if you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you.

If "*nothing will be impossible to you*", then if we ask to cure cancer tonight, cancer should disappear. Right? Yet nothing happens. Note that if we take the Bible less-than-literally here, the statement "*nothing will be impossible to you*" becomes "*lots of things will be impossible to you*," and that would mean that Jesus is lying.

In Matthew 21:21:

I tell you the truth, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and it will be done. If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.

If "*you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer*", then if we ask to cure cancer tonight, cancer should disappear. Right? Yet nothing happens. Note again that there is not a non-literal way to interpret "*you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer*", unless you replace "whatever" with "nothing" or "little."

The message is reiterated Mark 11:24:

Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.

If God says, "*believe that you have received it, and it will be yours*," and if we believe in God and his power, then what should happen if we pray to cure cancer tonight? It should be cured. Either that, or God is lying.

In John chapter 14, verses 12 through 14, Jesus tells all of us just how easy prayer can be:

"I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it." [\[ref\]](#)

Look at how direct this statement is: "You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it." This is the "Son of God" speaking. Have we taken him "too literally?" No. This is a simple, unambiguous statement. Have we taken his statement "out of context?" No - Jesus uses the word anyone. Yet Jesus' statement is obviously false. Because when we ask God to cure cancer tonight, nothing happens.

Read the rest of this site [HERE](#)

Born Atheist

A portion of each chapter is included here. See <http://bornatheist.com/index.html> for other chapters

Chapter 17. Faith in action: the ballad of Ted Haggard.

[W]e don't have to debate what we think about homosexual activity. It's written in the Bible. Ted Haggard

Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination. The Bible

Born in 1956, Ted Haggard became one of the most influential evangelical Christians in America. A 2005 Time Magazine article named him one of the 25 most influential evangelicals noting that Haggard led the 30 million strong "National Association of Evangelicals" and spoke weekly with the George W. Bush White House. High on Haggard's agenda was opposition to gay marriage.

Married, Haggard fathered five children and led a 14,000 member church in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Housed in an \$18 million building, Harper's Magazine called Haggard's New Life Church, "the most powerful megachurch in America." In 2006, he earned an annual salary of \$338,000 and lived in a house worth more than \$700,000. In addition, he collected royalties from 12 books and earned fees for speaking and public appearances.

In 2006, Haggard and his church supported "Amendment 43" to the Colorado Constitution. It provided, "Only a union of one man and one woman shall be valid or recognized as a marriage in this state." Although Colorado law already defined marriage as being between a man and a woman, Haggard and other gay rights opponents sought to enshrine the prohibition in the state constitution.

Six days before the election on the anti-gay amendment, a 49-year-old Denver man named Mike Jones came forward and said Haggard, whom he knew as "Art" (Haggard's middle name), had over a period of three years paid him for sex about once a month and also used methamphetamines (meth) in his presence. Jones provided a letter and two answering machine messages in support of his claims. Jones said, "After sitting back and contemplating this issue, the biggest reason is, being a gay man all my life, I have experienced with my friends some sadness. I had two friends that were together 50 years, when one of them would get in a hospital for an

accident or something, their partner could not get in to see them. I saw a lot of sadness. I felt it was my responsibility to my fellow brothers and sisters that I had to take a stand."

Haggard's immediate response was denial. He told a homosexual relationship with a man in Denver . . . I am steady with my wife. I'm faithful to my wife." Haggard also said, "I have never done drugs--ever. Not even in high school. I didn't smoke pot. I didn't do anything like that. I'm not a drug man. We're not a drinking family. I don't smoke cigarettes. I don't socially drink. We don't socially drink. We don't have wine in our house. We don't do that kind of thing." Cornered by his voicemail to Mike Jones requesting meth, Haggard told the press, "I bought it for myself but never used it. I was tempted but I never used it." Haggard claimed he bought the meth but threw it away.

Although well enough versed in Bible lore to write multiple books, he must not have remembered the biblical instruction to tell the truth. He must also have forgotten a quote from his own book Primary Purpose, "As soon as we believe that we can think, say or do secret things, there is a greater opportunity for the enemy to persuade us to violate God's Word. After all, the newspaper's best headlines are accounts of people doing things they thought would remain a secret." But there is some humor in his final New Life Church sermon, where he prayed, "Heavenly Father give us grace and mercy, help us this next week and a half as we go into national elections and Lord we pray for our country. Father we pray lies would be exposed and deception exposed." Despite the revelations about Haggard's misdeeds, anti-gay Amendment 43 passed by a 57% to 43% vote.

Soon after Mike Jones' revelations, New Life Church member Grant Haas came forward with more allegations about which Brady Boyd, Haggard's successor leading the church, said an "overwhelming pool of evidence" pointed to an "inappropriate, consensual sexual relationship" that "went on for a long period of time . . . it wasn't a one-time act." Haas alleged Haggard masturbated in front of him and sent him thousands of sexually explicit text messages including Haggard talking about sexual positions, pornography, masturbation and drugs. Haas estimated Haggard sent 1,000 to 2,000 messages a month and included descriptions of Haggard's sexual experiences and drug use while traveling. Read the entire article [HERE](#)

Medical Abortions

(A potential revolution in women's reproductive health)

Charles L. Rulon

Emeritus, Life & Health Sciences

Long Beach City College

Introduction

In 2000, 12 years after RU-486 (a.k.a. Mifepristone or the abortion pill) became available in France, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration finally approved it (with several restrictions) for the early medical termination of pregnancies. By 2008 medical abortions accounted for about one-fourth of all abortions nationwide.

Why the 12 year delay? Because since the late 1970s there has been a "civil war" of sorts in the U.S. over abortion. There have been bombings, shootings, death threats, clinic destruction and physicians murdered. Anti-choice literature continues to claim that it's no coincidence that RU-486 was produced by the same German company that made the poison gas for the death camps in Nazi Germany.

Yet, comparing the U.S. to Nazi Germany presents a window to the extremist world-view of anti-choice activists. The many pro-choice religious, social and medical groups that endorse a woman's right to choose would never have done so if they had believed for one second that abortion was equivalent to murdering babies.^[1]

The Republicans in Congress and in state legislatures continue to be strongly anti-abortion. In just the first seven months of 2011, some 472 anti-choice state bills had already been introduced. Today, 87% of all counties in the U.S. no longer even do early abortions.

But Mifepristone could potentially diffuse much of America's (and many developing nations) current abortion "civil war". It could do this:

a) By moving abortions out of the easily picketed (and bombed) public clinics into the privacy of a doctor's office and the privacy of one's own home;

b) By encouraging very early abortions (safer, cheaper, less upsetting, more politically tenable than later ones);

c) By causing a miscarriage that is indistinguishable from a natural one (especially important for women in countries where they risk arrest if they seek help in a hospital after a botched abortion); and

d) By greatly increasing the number of physicians willing to do abortions. Over one-third of doctors interviewed in the U.S. have said they would be willing to dispense Mifepristone in the privacy of their offices.

In addition, 5 out of 6 abortions take place in developing countries where abortion is frequently illegal and/or where poor sterilization and training makes surgical abortions quite dangerous. 70,000 women die every year from botched abortions and millions more need hospital care due to hemorrhaging and life-threatening infections. As a result, having a private medical abortion rather than a public or clandestine surgical one potentially represents a major revolution in women's reproductive health. "As word spreads among women worldwide about what a few pills can do, it's hard to see," writes Kristof in the N.Y. Times (8/1/10), "how politicians can stop this gynecological revolution."

Basic information

Q. How does Mifepristone work?^[2]

A. Mifepristone [Mifeprex™] blocks the action of progesterone. Progesterone is a "pro-gestation" hormone necessary for the uterine lining to support a developing embryo. Without progesterone the uterine lining breaks down and is expelled along with the embryo. When used with the drug, misoprostol a day or two later (which brings about uterine contractions), Mifepristone is over 95% effective if taken within 9 weeks of gestation.

Q. How safe is Mifepristone?

A. All drugs carry some risk. But Mifepristone has proved to be much safer than carrying to term and giving birth. In the 1990's over 600,000 women in Europe and millions more in China used Mifepristone to terminate an unwanted pregnancy.^[3] No deaths were reported. In contrast, dozens of men have already died from using Viagra, a drug with far fewer restrictions. According to the FDA there are no known long term risks associated with using mifepristone and misoprostol. Therefore, women may pursue another pregnancy whenever they feel the time is right after having a medical abortion.

Q. What are the side effects and cost of a medical abortion?

A. There's cramping and bleeding similar to an early natural miscarriage. There can also be nausea and diarrhea. It costs about the same in the U.S. as an early surgical abortion (vacuum aspiration). In India, a medical abortion pill kit is sold online for about \$5.

Q. How do women who've had a medical abortion feel about it?

A. In one study of 1,049 women who had already had an earlier surgical abortion such as vacuum aspiration three-fourths said they preferred the medical abortion.^[4] But some women maintain that because of the side effects of a medical abortion they would have preferred a safe, quick abortion via vacuum aspiration . . . except for the "domestic terrorist" activities of the picketing anti-abortionists at clinics where vacuum aspirations are performed.

Q. Could Mifepristone be used as a "morning-after pill"?

A. Yes! In fact, Mifepristone appears to be better than any of our currently available emergency contraceptive pills. Its success rate is much higher (99% vs. 75%) and there appears to be significantly less nausea, vomiting and headaches.

Q. Are there other uses for Mifepristone?

A. The American Medical Association has endorsed testing Mifepristone as a possible treatment for breast and prostate cancer, glaucoma, certain brain tumors, infertility and endometriosis.

Q. Would the easy availability of Mifepristone result in more abortions?

A. It didn't in France or Sweden. But there abortion is viewed as a public health issue instead of a sinful/criminal one. The U.S. is a different story. If all it took were a few pills taken in the privacy of one's home to end an unwanted pregnancy in its very early stages, then who knows? Some have estimated that the abortion rate for early abortions could rise considerably. But pro-choice supporters see such a possible increase as another giant step forward in the ageless quest for women to gain reproductive control over their own bodies and for couples to give birth only to truly wanted children. Besides, if the U.S. and state governments were really interested in significantly lowering the abortion rate, we'd have widespread in-depth sex education and excellent inexpensive contraception, plus emergency contraception readily available for all, including teens. This has been done for decades throughout Western Europe where the teen pregnancy rate varies from one-half to one-tenth of ours.

Q. I've read that Mifepristone can cause wide-spread infant deformities. Is this true?

A. No. You've been reading dishonest propaganda cranked out by the anti-choice activists. After over 600,000 medical abortions in Europe, Mifepristone has yet to be implicated in any fetal abnormalities.

Q. Didn't France initially have trouble marketing RU-486?

A. Yes. RU-486 (Mifepristone) was initially developed in France in 1988. But it was only on the market for a month before being pulled from distribution by Roussel-Uclaf, the drug manufacturer, because of intense pressure from mostly American-inspired anti-abortionists. However within one week the French Minister of Health ordered the drug to once again be distributed, stating that RU-486 was "the moral property of women, not just the property of the drug company." This is in glaring contrast to how the U.S. has acted.

Q. How has our government responded to Mifepristone?

A. Over three decades ago the Republican Party joined forces with the Religious Right and has fought against the right of women to terminate unwanted pregnancies ever since. As a result, under Republican Party leadership Mifepristone studies were banned in the United States up to 1993 when Bill Clinton became President. Clinton immediately issued an executive order lifting the ban and began to exert pressure on Roussel-Uclaf to make this drug available in the United States.

In 1994 Roussel-Uclaf removed itself from this heated controversy by donating the U.S. rights to manufacture RU-486 to the Population Council, a New York-based nonprofit organization that promotes reproductive health.

By 1996, Mifepristone's safety and effectiveness had been confirmed by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. Now all that was needed was a manufacturer. And that's where the whole process bogged down. The anti-abortionists threatened massive boycotts and liability lawsuits against any company seeking to obtain F.D.A. approval to manufacture Mifepristone. They also threatened to target anyone who helped to manufacture, market, sell, or finance its production. As a result, virtually all of the major pharmaceutical companies declined to either produce or distribute Mifepristone.^[5]

Also, a number of state legislatures introduced laws outlawing the use of Mifepristone if it ever became available. In 1998 the House of Representatives voted to bar the FDA from using funds for the testing, development, or manufacture of any drug that could be used for an early medical abortion.

Finally, in September 2000, 12 years after it became available in France, the U.S Food and Drug Administration approved Mifepristone for early termination of pregnancy.

Misoprostol

Misoprostol causes uterine contractions. It is used with Mifepristone in medical abortions. Yet, 5 out of 6 abortions take place in developing countries where abortions are frequently illegal. But misoprostol is not illegal. It has long been widely available for treating gastric ulcers and for saving lives of women with

postpartum hemorrhages. Also, it is cheap, stable at room temperatures, easy to transport, easy to administer, and does not require refrigeration, even in hot climates. It can be found on Internet sites all over the world.

So what? So researchers have discovered that misoprostol all by itself can be 75-85% effective in terminating an early pregnancy. This makes misoprostol potentially much better and safer than the horrible alternatives available to the tens of millions of women who seek out illegal abortions each year. Active research on the optimal dosing and administration strategy of misoprostol is ongoing throughout Latin America and East Asia.^[6] In the roughly 15%-25% of cases where misoprostol administration does not lead to a complete abortion, additional intervention is required.

Some closing thoughts

History has clearly documented that it's the number of maternal deaths and injuries, not the number of abortions, that are most affected by laws attempting to block elective abortions. In poor countries, the risk of death from an illegal abortion is from 25-100 times greater than it would be from having a legal one.

Also, pregnancies in poorer countries can be very dangerous. Over 600,000 women die yearly from pregnancy-related complications. Since half of these pregnancies were never wanted in the first place, the availability of excellent contraception, plus emergency contraception, plus medical abortions and vacuum aspiration as backups, could prove invaluable. Those who oppose such availability are assisting in the reproductive enslavement of women, the disintegration of millions of families, the spread of poverty, and the increase in the number of illegal abortions.

Yet conservative Christians continue to claim they're doing God's will by opposing essentially all abortions. But, since the Bible is silent regarding elective abortions, where is it written that God wants us to force women to stay pregnant against their will—to be unwilling embryo incubators? Where is it written that God wants women to be either celibate or obligatory breeding machines? Furthermore, in spite of biblical interpretations, where is the religious wisdom and social justice today in placing women in a permanently subordinate position to men and essentially in reproductive bondage to the state?

^[1]The Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, represents over 40 different denominations and faith groups in this country and can be reached at www.rcrc.org. Also Physicians for Reproductive Choice and Health, which now has thousands of physician members and speaks for over 130,000 physicians in getting RU-486 released. See www.PRCH.org.

^[2]www.medicationabortion.com - a multi-language website provides accurate information about medication abortion to health service providers including physicians, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, counselors, and office staff as well as educational information for women considering the option of medication abortion. For additional updates on Mifepristone, check www.earlyoption-pill.com, www.popcouncil.org, www.now.org, www.feminist.org, www.PRCH.org.

^[3]As of 2000, Mifepristone was legal in Austria, Belgium, China, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Israel, the Netherlands, Russia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

^[4]Winikoff, B. et al, 1998, "Acceptability and feasibility of early pregnancy termination by mifepristone-misoprostol: Results of a large multi-center trial in the United States," *Archives of Family Medicine*, 7: 360-366.

^[5]*New York Times Magazine*, July 14, 1999.; *Feminist Majority Newsletter*, Sept. 1999.

^[6]Gynuity - <http://www.gynuity.org/> - Instructions for Use of Misoprostol for Women's Health in several languages.

A common criticism of Dawkins' attacks on religion

Collected by C. Rulon

"You can't criticize religion without a detailed analysis of learned books of theology. Theology isn't your field. You're totally out of your area of expertise. So why do you think that you can have anything significant to say about religion at all?"

Response #1 by Dawkins

"Why should theologians think that they have anything significant to say about good and evil, time and eternity, or who "rules" the universe, given that their fundamental ontological premise is worse than vacuous? It is these theology guys, after all, who not only construed a cosmology and a teleology out of their own fancies, but who then go on to tell us, often in the most minatory tone, how we have to behave, what we must and must not do and so on...JUST WHO THE HELL DO THESE BOZOS THINK THEY ARE? When has theology ever said anything that is demonstrably true and is not obvious?

I have listened to theologians, read them, debated against them. I have never heard any of them ever say anything of the smallest use, anything that was not either platitudinously obvious or downright false. If all the achievements of scientists were wiped out tomorrow, there would be no doctors, no transport faster than horses, no computers, no printed books, no agriculture beyond subsistence peasant farming. If all the achievements of theologians were wiped out tomorrow, would anyone notice the smallest difference? Even the bad achievements of scientists work! The achievements of theologians don't do anything, don't affect anything, don't mean anything. What makes anyone think that "theology" is a subject at all?"

Response #2 by Dawkins

"The vast majority of theological writings simply assume that God exists and go on from there. I can't improve upon the splendid "Courtier's Reply," published by P.Z. Myers on his "Pharyngula" web site which compares the theology texts surrounding an imaginary god to the imaginary clothes of the naked emperor:"

"I have considered the impudent accusations of Mr. Dawkins with exasperation at his lack of serious

scholarship. He has apparently not read the detailed discourses of Count Roderigo of Seville on the exquisite and exotic leathers of the Emperor's boots, nor does he give a moment's consideration to Bellini's masterwork, "On the Luminescence of the Emperor's Feathered Hat." We have entire schools dedicated to writing learned treatises on the beauty of the Emperor's raiment, and every major newspaper runs a section dedicated to imperial fashion.....

Dawkins arrogantly ignores all these deep philosophical ponderings to crudely accuse the Emperor of nudity... Until Dawkins has trained in the shops of Paris and Milan, until he has learned to tell the difference between a ruffled flounce and a puffy pantaloon, we should all pretend he has not spoken out against the Emperor's taste. His training in biology may give him the ability to recognize dangling genitalia when he sees it, but it has not taught him the proper appreciation of Imaginary Fabrics."

Response #3 by Edmond Standing

(Standing holds a BA in Theology & Religious Studies and an MA in Critical & Cultural Theory)

"Theology turns the scientific method upon its head. Theology starts with the acceptance of ideas that have no factual basis or for which the evidence is appallingly weak and proudly proclaims acceptance of these ideas on the basis of 'faith' as a virtue. It then goes on to attempt to make these a priori beliefs appear intelligible and rational. The theologian does not approach the basic tenets of Christian faith as possible truths to be tested for logical consistency; he instead begins with the conclusion that a series of internally incoherent, pre-scientific, and fantastic 'beliefs' derived from 'faith' are true, and then attempts to dress these beliefs up in the clothes of intellectual credibility.

Theology is not in this sense a proper academic pursuit, but is instead the attempt to mask superstition in a fog of pseudo-intellectual verbiage.... [It's a] smokescreen of meaningless jargon in an attempt to make superstition appear sophisticated.

Theology is at bottom a matter of faith, not genuine intellectual argument. Theologians can continue to write endless books and articles using dense and 'learned' tones, but there really is no need for atheists to read them as they all boil down to the same ultimate beliefs, beliefs that atheists, quite rightly in my view, reject on the basis that they do not have intellectual or moral credibility."

FreethoughtAlliance.org BackyardSkeptics.com

Both of these sites have one of the largest selections of secular DVDs available anywhere. Most DVDs are only \$10. Make a contribution to your secular organizations by ordering one of our entertaining and educational DVDs

[The 2011 Orange County Freethought Alliance Conference 3-DVD set. !3 wonderful speakers. Enlightening, Educational and inspiring. \\$34](#)

[Magic, Witchcraft, and Religion: An Anthropological Survey of the Supernatural World with Adrian Novotny, Ph.D. \\$10 special](#)

[Thomas Quinn - "God Needs Therapy" \(a comedy\) \\$12](#)

[Dr. Richard Carrier: How Christianity Began Is Proof Enough It's Bunk \\$12](#)

[San Diego Secular Humanist Conference 2011 - Entertaining speakers, engaging insights and thought-provoking lectures. 2 DVDs \\$45](#)

[Ali Ayaan Hirsi Ali is a spokesperson for human rights and a proponent against female mutilation in Muslim countries. Her riveting personal story is told with the help a local journalist, Jill Stewart. \\$10](#)

[Sean McDowell vs. BYS - Commonalities of Christians and Atheists Sean visits Backyard Skeptics, then Bruce Gleason and Mark Smith visit Sean's church in San Juan Capistrano A 2-DVD set. \\$15](#)

[Sarah Dunn - Atheists in Prison: How the law, culture, psychology shape prison pPopulations \\$10](#)

[Dave Richards - Exploring logical fallacies and how to identify them \\$10](#)



[Eugenie Scott - Creationism, evolution, education, and politics, Taped at Chapman University, Orange CA \\$10](#)

[Orange County 2010 Freethought Alliance Conference 2- DVD set Enjoy 12 full-length seminars and an evening discussion panel for only \\$30](#)

[Does God of the Bible Exist? A 6- Person Panel Debate, December 2009 \\$20](#)

["The God Question" - Debate between Shermer & De'Souza \\$10](#)

[Bruce Gleason - "Why Am I Am Atheist" speech at Calvary Church, Costa Mesa, CA \\$10](#)

[Dan Barker 2 DVD set - Jesus Myth or Fiction? and Why I Became An Atheist \\$20](#)

[Chris Mooney - The War on Science: What Have We Learned? CFI lecture \\$10](#)

[John Shook - The God Theory is Dead CFI lecture \\$10](#)

[Edward Tabash - America at the Crossroads \\$10](#)

[Sean Carroll - The Origin of the Universe and the Arrow of Time CFI lecture \\$10](#)

[Ross Blocher - Swaddling Cloth out of Whole Cloth: Problems with the Nativity Story CFI lecture \\$10](#)

Funny Stuff

A priest is in the back yard of the church practicing his golf swing. He takes a swing, takes out a chunk of grass but misses the ball.

"God damn it! I missed again!"

Takes another swing, another miss.

"God damn it! I missed again!"

He takes another swing. He almost bends the club.

"God damn it! I missed again!"

The deacon comes up to him. "Father, you shouldn't take the Lord's name in vain. He might strike you down." Seconds later, out of the blue, a bolt of lightning kills the deacon. A booming voice is heard from the sky:

"God damn it! I missed again!"

National Secular Links

Here are several secular links to other organizations supporting secularism, science and skepticism around the world:

[Americans United for Church and State Separation, National](http://americansunited.org) au.org
[American Humanist Assoc.](http://americanhumanist.org)

americanhumanist.org

[Atheist Alliance International](http://atheistalliance.org) atheistalliance.org

[American Atheists](http://atheists.org/) atheists.org/

[Military Assoc. of Atheists and Freethinkers](http://atheists.org/)
atheists.org

ACLU.org

BERTRAND RUSSELL SOCIETY
www.users.drew.edu/~jlenz/brs.html

CFI centerforinquiry.net

camp-quest.org

Freedom From Religion Foundation ffrf.org

jennymccarthybodycount.com

Meetup.com (search for humanist, agnostic, atheists or church and state in your area)

National Center for Science Education ncse.com

People for the American Way pfaw.org

[Richarddawkinsfoundation.org](http://richarddawkinsfoundation.org)

James Randi Educational Foundation
randi.org/site

[Southern California Secular Humanist Conference.org](http://southernsecularhumanistconference.org) (in San Diego)

Whatstheharm.net

Local Southern California groups and links

Ateos Unidos: The group for Spanish speakers!
3rd Saturdays at 11 a.m. at the Center for Inquiry West, 4773 Hollywood Blvd.
Contact Liliana at 323-466-4223.

Americans United Meets the third Sunday of the month at 1:30pm at the [Irvine Ranch Water District](http://www.au-oc.org/)
15600 Sand Canyon Ave. Irvine, CA 92618
<http://www.au-oc.org/>

AU General Meeting: 4th Sundays, 11:00 a.m. at Center for Inquiry West, 4773 Hollywood Blvd. Presentation followed by lunch and afternoon activity.
Board meets briefly at 10:30 a.m. for members' concerns. Childcare is available.
<http://atheists.meetup.com/705/>

Adopt-a-Highway: Help us keep our roads clean in the name of atheism!

AU hosts the southbound strip of the Glendale Freeway, Hwy 2, south of the 210.

Keeping the road clean allows us to keep our signage there. Good exercise, and fun company! Two Saturdays a month. Dates vary. Contact Steve 310-670-7131

BackyardSkeptics.com – meets once a month in Villa Park (Orange County) also see meetup.com/backyard-skeptics

Center for Inquiry -Lectures 1st and 3rd Sundays, 11a.m. 4773 Hollywood Blvd., Los Angeles.
Free for members of CFI, \$6 for non-members
<http://centerforinquiry.net/la>

FreethoughtAllaince.org – sponsors debates and events in southern California

Free Thinkers for Liberty.org Freethinkers for Liberty is an organization of humanists and others who reject all superstition, in favor of rationality and critical thinking, who also respect the freedoms our forefathers described in the US Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

Freethinkers Toastmasters: Want to improve your speaking abilities in a fun and supportive group? Join FTTM on 2nd & 4th Saturdays at 2 p.m. at the

Center for Inquiry West.
More information: David: 310-479-6318.
<http://www.freethinkersclub.org>

GALAH: Gay and Lesbian Atheists and Humanists- 2nd
Sundays, 1 p.m.,
Center for Inquiry West, 4773 Hollywood Blvd.
Contact Ken Wolverton 818-554-9858 or
galahla@aol.com

[Generation Atheist](#): A meeting group for atheists in
their 20s and 30s, 3rd Sundays, location changes
monthly. <http://atheists.meetup.com/724/Hollywood/>

East LA: 2nd Tuesdays, 7 p.m. at Atwater Village in
Glendale .Contact Steven Gibson 562-900-2834.
<http://atheists.meetup.com/212/>

[Humanist Association of Orange County](#) Meets the
third Sunday of the month at 1:30pm at the [Irvine
Ranch Water District](#) 15600 Sand Canyon Ave.
Irvine, CA 92618
<http://www.meetup.com/OCHumanists>

Humanist Association of Los Angeles: 2nd Sunday,
11:00 a.m.,
Colorado Center Community Room (same as Yahoo
Center),
2500 Broadway, Santa Monica (near corner of 26th
Avenue and Broadway); Contact: Larry Taylor 310-
479-2236,
larry-a-taylor@att.net

Inland Empire: 1st Wednesday, 7 p.m., Riverside
Unitarian Church 3657 Lemon St., Riverside Contact
JanGoings@aol.com
<http://atheists.meetup.com/499/>

Lancaster "Antelope Valley Freethinkers" 4th Thurs.,
7pm, Camille's Garden Cafe, Lancaster
<http://atheists.meetup.com/615/>

Long Beach: 3rd Fridays, 7 p.m., at Hometown Buffet,
290 E. 4th St.
Meal cost is \$16. Contact Rodney 562-437- 4370 or
Hank Schultz,
whschultz@mac.com.
<http://atheists.meetup.com/487/>

Orange County Atheists, meets one a month at the
IHOP across from OC Airport
<http://www.ocatheists.com/>

Orange County Atheist United Chapter: 2nd Sundays,
10:30 a.m.,
Tee Room, 3100 Irvine Ave Newport Beach

Contact Norman 310-408-8653 (cell).

Atheists United San Fernando Valley: 3rd Thursday,
6:30 p.m., Kountry Folks Restaurant,
on Sepulveda Blvd. and Chase St.
Contact Henry at 818-988-2806, after 5:00 p.m.
<http://atheists.meetup.com/614/>

[San Diego New Atheists and Agnostics](#)
<http://www.meetup.com/atheists-518/>

Atheists United Santa Clarita: 2nd Sundays, 11 a.m.,
at Greenhouse Café, 26586 Bouquet Cyn. Rd., Santa
Clarita <http://atheists.meetup.com/670/>

[Atheists United South Bay/Torrance](#): 3rd Sundays,
7p.m., At Marie Callender's, 2979 Artesia Blvd,
Redondo Beach <http://atheists.meetup.com/729/>

[Atheists United Ventura](#): 4th Mondays, 7pm,
E.P. Foster Library, 651 E Main Street, Ventura.
Contact Brian Parra for info: 805-794-4714,
venturaatheists@yahoo.com
<http://atheists.meetup.com/494/>

[Ventura "Freethought Parents Network"](#):
Kids playgroup meets every Tuesday at 11am,
Locations subject to change
<http://www.meetup.com/freethoughtparents/>

[WestValley Secular Humanists](#): Last Sundays, 2 p.m.,
Daphne's Greek Café, 5780 Canoga Ave. Unit B,
Woodland Hills
<http://secularhumanism.meetup.com/17/>