

The Secular Gazette

Supporting Science, Reason and the Separation of Church and State

Issue #23 October 31, 2011

This has been a wild week. Last Wednesday, October 27th, Backyard Skeptics, a local Orange County atheist group placed a Jefferson quote on a billboard in Costa Mesa, CA. The OC Register called that morning and mentioned that this particular quote was verified by the Monticello.com website that is was not in any of Jefferson's letters or other writings. I was disappointed at myself for not verifying the quote – the only one which had no authorization from the Monticello website. Although Jefferson wrote many other passages against religion and specifically Christianity (see the article enclosed) he did not write "I find in Christianity no redeeming value. It is founded on fables and myths" – but he could have. Many negative quotes were written against Christianity by our third president.

Two television stations from Los Angeles, KABC and KTLA picked up the story, and over 250 websites and blogs picked it up. See the video link in the article. Even the Huffington Post wrote an article. I apologized to the secular community, accepted blame and am ready to move on. Some emails mentioned that I probably did this on purpose to generate press, but this is not the case. I'm not that cunning.

What sparked such an outcry? I believe it's the combination of the majority of Americans believing this is a Christian Nation in combination with a strong Christian belief ingrained into our culture. Fortunately, the point of the billboard – to have others consider how our nation was formed to be secular was made loud and clear.

Bruce Gleason, editor

Skeptics Corner – the Human MRI Machine

Anita Ikonen (aka VisionFromFeeling, formerly Alenara the breatharian), a 26 year old physics student at UNCC who runs the website www.VisionFromFeeling.com, tells us (among other things) that she's a human MRI of sorts. Anita claims to be able to detect medical ailments in people and see their insides, right down to the molecular level (and even DNA). I know what you're thinking: this should be pretty easy to prove.

Many of those who hang out at the James Randi Educational Foundation* [Forums](#) worked very hard to get Anita Ikonen to submit to proper testing, which she has. She has failed. Repeatedly. And yet she continues to spew her outrageous claims to anyone who will listen and force them on those who don't want to listen. For a physics major at UNC-Charlotte, she is sorely lacking in her understanding of the scientific method, which is obvious after just a few minutes of learning about her claims. She says she wants to be a doctor, which is a scary thought considering her wild claims. I'm concerned where this will lead, so I created this site to expose her claims before she got into a position where should could a lot of harm. As it stands now, it's only her friends and family who are in danger of from her misguided medical claims.



Some of us believe she is delusional while others believe she is a deliberate fraud. Still others think she is simply misguided and naive (you can register your opinion below). Regardless, her paranormal claims should be addressed by

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critical thinkers. Far too many people like Anita Ikonen (VisionFromFeeling) are allowed to spew their half-baked ideas unchecked. This site serves to examine her claims with the impartial light of science so that we can stop these fantasies before any harm is done. Too bad someone didn't do this a decade ago when she was touring Poland as Alenara, spreading the gospel of breatharianism (the idiotic notion that humans can live without food).



Science News

Eye movements confirm hypnosis

A true trance can't be faked By [Laura Sanders](#)



Compared with her normal state (top), a woman's "hypnotically induced stare" (bottom) may mark an altered state of consciousness, researchers propose. S. Kallio et al/PLoS One 2011

Though less obvious than giant red swirls in the eyes, a glassy gaze that jumps

around in bizarre patterns may mark a fake-proof hypnotic trance, researchers report.

Though scientists found this ocular giveaway in just one woman, the results suggest that that hypnosis truly is an altered state of consciousness, says study coauthor Sakari Kallio of the University of Skövde in Sweden and the University of Turku in Finland.

Kallio and his colleagues studied a middle-aged, healthy and highly hypnotizable woman. Normally outgoing and chatty, when the woman heard "hypno," she withdrew and fell quiet, says Kallio.

Because one of the most striking changes was the appearance of a diffuse, unblinking stare, the researchers measured a series of involuntary eye features, such as pupil reflexes and quick movements.

Under hypnosis, the woman's pupils were smaller than in normal conditions. What's more, she had an abnormal pattern of small eye movements, called saccades, toward a target. The woman's saccades were shorter and scarcer under hypnosis, the team reports online October 24 in *PLoS ONE*.

"Her eye movements were so strange," Kallio says. And he adds that the woman herself agrees: "She thinks her eyes are scary when she sees the videos later."

A group of 14 people watched videos of the hypnotized woman and tried to copy her strange eye behavior. But they couldn't, suggesting that these eye movements can't be faked.

Because the results are from a single person, larger studies are needed to know what these strange eye movements represent, says Irving Kirsch, a psychologist at Harvard Medical School's Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center in Boston and the University of Plymouth in England. "It's an interesting study," he says, "but we'll have to see if it's generalizable."

Also see Science News site [HERE](#)

http://www.sciencenews.org/view/generic/id/335706/title/Eye_movements_confirm_hypnosis

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<http://freethoughtalliance.org/donate.html>

VICTORY for American Atheists! Supreme Court Declines to Hear Utah Cross Case



AMERICAN ATHEISTS, INC.

<http://www.atheists.org>

<http://www.americanatheist.org>



ATHEIST ACTIVISTS APPLAUD SUPREME COURT DECISION TO NOT HEAR UTAH CROSS CASE

An Atheist civil rights group announced today that it is applauding the United State Supreme Court's decision to not hear the Utah cross case after the Court of Appeal for the 10th Circuit ruled against the state in the case.

American Atheists, along with several Utah plaintiffs sued to remove twelve large steel crosses erected by the State of Utah to honor fallen troopers. Edwin Kagin, the National Legal Director for American Atheists stated, "We have presented this case and won at the 10th Circuit Court of Appeal. The Supreme Court correctly declined to review the case further, therefore the

decision stands. We are looking forward to the state of Utah upholding the opinion of the Court of Appeal and removing the crosses."

Dave Silverman, President of American Atheists noted, "We have no problem with honoring fallen troopers: they should be honored. Erecting divisive religious icons that violate the very constitution the fallen troopers had sworn to uphold is not the way to honor those troopers who gave the ultimate sacrifice for the citizens of their state."

"It is our hope," added Mr. Silverman, "now that the appeals process is over and the courts have found the crosses unconstitutional that the State of Utah will find a more honorable and non-divisive way to honor their fallen troopers. The fallen troopers, their loved ones and the citizens they swore to protect deserve such recognition."

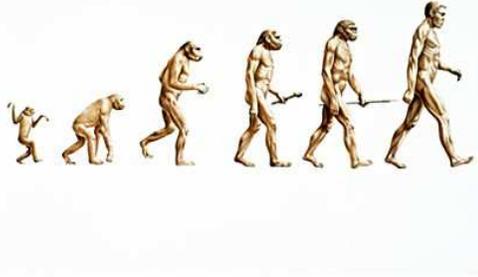
Edwin Kagin, the National Legal Director for American Atheists commented on why Christians should support the decision, "The attitude that the cross is not a Christian symbol should be repugnant to all of those believers who believe it to be a sign of the son of god having died on a cross to save everyone who believed in him and that, as he conquered death, so will those who believe this story conquer death. That is what the crosses are to them."

For more information, please contact:

Dave Silverman, President 732-648-9333, Edwin Kagin, National Legal Director 859-380-3427

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The Creationist Buffoonery and Its Dangerous Implications



by Lee Salisbury / January 29th, 2008

Creationism seems to be gaining credence far beyond its actual influence in the world of science. Even American presidential candidates, lest they offend the religious right, reject evolution in favor of creationism. Mike Huckabee, Fred Thompson and Mit Romney endorse creationism. President George Bush suggests students ought to hear all sides of the argument, as if creationism or its bastard offspring Intelligent Design is a science topic worthy of mention. In spite of the pro-evolution 2006 verdict in Dover, PA, creationists persist seeking to influence and intimidate uninformed school boards in Ohio, Florida, and Texas. This is clearly a culture war with creationist/biblical literalists leading the anti-science, pro-creationist charge.

Creationists usually have two basic assertions: 1) that they are the ones who know true science and 2) that it is they and they alone who are the guardians of true faith in the written and revealed word of their deity. Both are of concern as surely as they are false, but it is the first assertion that we must deal with here.

Creation "science" rejects every fundamental precept upon which actual science functions, from empiricism to falsification. Creationists reject empiricism, the very heart of science, and instead embrace fanciful biblical legends of a 'talking snake' and a 6,000-year-old solar system all in a vain attempt to justify their immutable doctrinal beliefs. They are no different than the Roman Catholic clergy of 500 years ago persecuting Galileo because he declared the sun did not revolve around the earth.

Creationist buffoons know their *a priori* conclusions in advance, independent of any scientific inquiry. They then massage their superficially scientific assertions to justify their desired answers matching their religious doctrine. The circularity and philosophical bankruptcy of this perspective is obvious. They beg the question, presuming to be true the very thing they claim. In other words, they are going to believe what they are going to believe regardless of the facts, i.e. religious fanaticism.

The major creationist concern is they're afraid evolution may prove they're not created in the image of the Bible's

God. It seems these poor folks have never read their Bible objectively. The Bible's God is a serial murderer, He endorses stealing and lying, instigates gang rape, and finally declares that all (virtually 99% of all humanity) who do not believe in his Son will be condemned to Hell to burn forever and ever. But, that's okay cause He really loves you? Tell that to the 6,000,000 Jews who perished under Adolph Hitler.

Over the past 149 years since Charles Darwin's 1859 book *On the Origin of Species*, scientists of relevant disciplines such as cosmology, astronomy, geology, biology, zoology, and paleontology repeatedly confirm evolution a valid theory having the same reliability as the theory of gravity. According to a 1991 Gallup Poll there were about 480,000 scientists working in the relevant fields of earth and life sciences. Of those, only about 700 consider creationism valid. This means 98% of relevant scientists accept evolution and less than 2% of relevant scientists consider creationism good science. In the world of science, creationism does not even qualify for fringe of the fringe.

Scientists arrive at their conclusions by the scientific method of extensive trial and error testing of hypotheses until results produce a verifiably testable theory, in this case the theory of evolution. In contrast to creationist/religious theory, scientific theory is always tentative and subject to change as new evidence dictates.

It is bad enough that creationist churches are freeloaders, taking advantage of the public's good will by skirting their fair share of real estate taxes. But, worse yet, they use creationism as a rhetorical facade, as a lever through which to influence public policy. Creationists exploit the faith of well-meaning Christians (and those of other religions) to further their own purely self-serving goals at the expense of reality. Creationism is nothing more than an ancient regurgitated ideology bereft of merit, and loathsome in its intentions.

America's 29th ranking in science education can, in part, be laid at the feet of our creationist/biblical literalists parading about as those righteous souls who would never "bear false witness." James Madison saw through the charade saying, "During almost fifteen centuries has the legal establishment of Christianity been on trial.

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

<http://dissidentvoice.org/2008/01/the-creationist-buffoonery-and-its-dangerous-implications/>

God is Imaginary

Proof #2 - Statistically analyze prayer

The fact is, God never answers any prayers.
The entire idea that "God answers prayers" is an illusion created by human imagination.

How do we know that "answered prayers" are illusions? We simply perform scientific experiments. We ask a group of believers to pray for something and then we watch what happens. What we find, whenever we test the efficacy of prayer scientifically, is that prayer has zero effect:

- It does not matter who prays.
- It does not matter if we pray to God, Allah, Vishnu, Zeus, Ra or any other human god.
- It does not matter what we pray about.

If we perform scientific, double-blind tests on prayer, and if the prayers involve something concrete and measurable (for example, healing people with cancer), we know that there is zero effect from prayer. Every single "answered prayer" is nothing more than a coincidence. Both scientific experiments and your everyday observations of the world show this to be the case every single time.

For example, [this article](#) says:

One of the most scientifically rigorous studies yet, published earlier this month, found that the prayers of a distant congregation did not reduce the major complications or death rate in patients hospitalized for heart treatments.

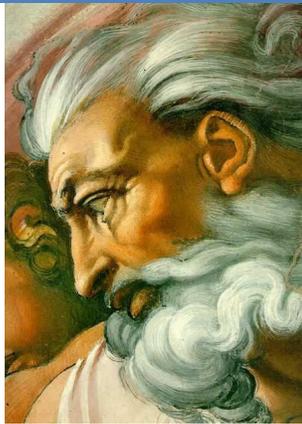
And:

A review of 17 past studies of "distant healing," published in 2003 by a British researcher, found no significant effect for prayer or other healing methods.

[This article](#) from March, 2006 discusses the fact that the same conclusion was reached in another study:

In the largest study of its kind, researchers found that having people pray for heart bypass surgery patients had no effect on their recovery. In fact, patients who knew they were being prayed for had a slightly higher rate of complications.

In [this article](#) we find an amazing quote where [theologians](#) and religious leaders declare that prayer has no actual effect:



Religious leaders will breathe a sigh of relief at the news that so-called intercessory prayer is medically ineffective. In a large and much-touted scientific study, one group of patients was told that strangers would pray for them, a second group was told strangers might or might not pray for them, and a third group was not prayed for at all. The \$2.4 million study found that the strangers' prayers did not help patients' recovery.

This is a remarkable example of "positive spin" -- religious leaders are "breathing a sigh of relief" because prayer has been shown to be meaningless. The fact that prayer is a total waste of time does not matter to them. It does not matter that [all of](#)

[Jesus' promises about prayer](#) in the Bible have been proven completely false.

A peer-reviewed scientific study published in 2001 did indicate that prayer works. According to [this article](#):

"On October 2, 2001, the New York Times reported that researchers at prestigious Columbia University Medical Center in New York had discovered something quite extraordinary. Using virtually foolproof scientific methods the researchers had demonstrated that infertile women who were prayed for by Christian prayer groups became pregnant twice as often as those who did not have people praying for them. The study was published in the Journal of Reproductive Medicine. Even the researchers were shocked. The study's results could only be described as miraculous."

This study was later proven to be completely fraudulent. However, everyone who cut out the original article in the NYTimes and posted it on their refrigerators still has that article as "proof" that prayer works.

This article entitled [A prayer before dying](#) uncovers another case where a "scientific study" of prayer is unmasked as fraudulent.

It's not just prayer that is ineffective. Not even a hopeful attitude helps. According to [this article](#):

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

<http://godisimaginary.com/i2.htm>



The Science of Voting

Are democratic elections actually as free and fair as we think they are?

In the 1969 film *Putney Swope*, members of the board of executives were prohibited from voting for themselves, so they all voted for the one board member they were sure nobody else would vote for. Ergo, this free, democratic election produced a chairman that no voter wanted.

In a perfect democracy, everyone gets an equal opportunity to vote, and equal representation. Therefore, we hold elections to let everyone have their say, to either vote representatives into office, or to enact certain laws. It's a fine idea, and most countries do their level best to implement such systems. Some voters take advantage of it, and some choose apathy and don't vote. Some try to anticipate what other voters might do, and cast a vote in an unexpected direction not to vote for a candidate, but to affect another candidate's chances. This is what went wrong in *Putney Swope*: each voter cast a throwaway vote hoping to improve his own chances. In most elections, everyone has the right to do any of these things; the election is theirs, and theirs to decide. But what many of them might not know is that virtually any electoral process is flawed. Some outcomes are surprising. There are a number of different circumstances in which the candidate most desired does not win.

Democratic voting is only simple if there are just two candidates, or if it's a Yes or No vote. In those cases, any attempt to vote tactically or to create a voting block — casting votes that don't represent your preference — work against you. What we're talking about today are elections where there are three or more candidates. And the idea that all the various systems for running such elections are flawed (subject to results that do not represent the group's preference) is not just a whim or a crazy opinion of mine. It's proven by Arrow's Impossibility Theorem, named for the economist Kenneth Arrow, winner of the 1972 Nobel Prize in economics and the 2004 National Medal of Science. He proved it in 1951 with his Ph.D. thesis at Columbia University.

Arrow's theorem can be simplified into one clear statement: that no fair voting system exists when there are three or more candidates. To this I ask: What do

you mean by fair? That's the key to Arrow's theorem. It holds true, depending on a rigid definition of fair that must satisfy three criteria:

1. If every individual prefers X to Y, then the group prefers X to Y.
2. If every voter's preference of X over Y stays the same, then the group's preference of X to Y stays the same, even if other preferences change: such as Y to Z, or Z to X.
3. There can be no dictator, as Arrow called him; a single voter with the power to dictate the group's preference.

Arrow's theorem applies to election systems that require voters to rank the candidates. This is the case with most voting systems worldwide. Typically, when you vote, you mark an X in the box for one candidate. That's a ranking; you've ranked that candidate first. Arrow's theorem applies to these simple ranking systems, but its richest mathematical complexities come from systems with three or more candidates and the voters rank all candidates in order of preference. This isn't used in many real-world elections, but it's the theoretical basis for social choice theory.

The ideal outcome in any election is to choose what's called the Condorcet winner. A Condorcet winner, named after the French mathematician and political scientist, is the candidate who would beat all other candidates in a simple two-man majority race. There isn't always a Condorcet winner in every election, but there usually is. The most common voting system is plurality voting, where the candidate with the largest number of votes wins. However, there are numerous situations in which the winner of a plurality vote is not the Condorcet winner who should have been elected. This is most often seen in a vote-splitting situation, where there are two similar candidates and one oddball candidate.

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

<http://skeptoid.com/episodes/4281><http://skeptoid.com/episodes/4281>

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 for letting others know about our secular community 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>

Big Billboard Blunder

By Bruce Gleason

Sometimes it pays to check your resources. I admit, I'm not a professional writer, nor researcher. I try my best – but those old brain cells don't have what they used to have (I'm 56). From all the hundreds of writings from Jefferson, I happened to pick the one of two that are common but not verified to be one written by Jefferson. There's no one to blame but myself. I apologize to the secular community and never wished to misrepresent Backyard Skeptics nor the non-theist movement.

Even though it was a misstep on my part, the press went crazy with it. How often can they really come down on a non-believer? When 'those atheists' make a huge mistake – especially when quoting one of our founding fathers! I typed into google "Atheist Billboard Jefferson" and had over 250 hits from different web sites and blogs. My site hits went over 7400 on Oct. 27th alone. (usually around 400) Although 95% of the emails from previous billboard campaigns were positive, 90% were negative on this one. I was expecting some real nut-cases to email, and even though some were badly written, I never felt threatened from any of them.

I was asked by KABC News ([Video HERE](#)) http://abclocal.go.com/kabc/story?section=news/local/orange_county&id=8408874 of what Jefferson would say about the billboard if he were alive today. I responded "he would say – yes I didn't say that, but I could have". And it's true. Here are several *verified* passages from the many letters Jefferson wrote:

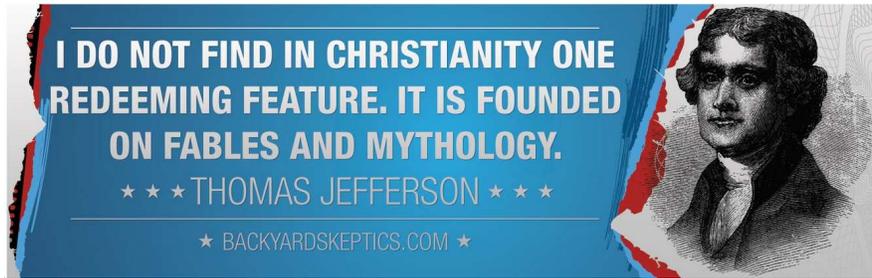
"Christianity neither is, nor ever was, a part of the common law." Letter to Dr. Thomas Cooper, February 10, 1814, responding to the claim that Christianity was part of the Common Law of England

The clergy, by getting themselves established by law and ingrafted into the machine of government, have been a very

formidable engine against the civil and religious rights of man. -- In a letter to Jeremiah Moor, 1800

The day will come when the mystical generation of Jesus, by the Supreme Being as his father, in the womb of a virgin, will be classed with the fable of the generation of Minerva in the brain of Jupiter. – In a letter to John Adams, April 11, 1823

"To talk of immaterial existences is to talk of nothings. To say that the human soul, angels, god, are immaterial, is to say they are nothings, or that there is no god, no angels, no soul. I cannot reason otherwise: but I believe I am supported in my creed of materialism by Locke, Tracy, and Stewart. At what age of the Christian church this heresy of immaterialism, this masked atheism, crept in, I do not know. But heresy it certainly is.



"Millions of innocent men, women and children, since the introduction of Christianity, have been burnt, tortured, fined, imprisoned: yet we have not advanced one inch towards uniformity. What has

been the effect of coercion? To make one half the world fools, and the other half hypocrites. To support roguery and error all over the earth."

"...those who live by mystery & charlatanerie, fearing you would render them useless by simplifying the Christian philosophy, the most sublime & benevolent, but most perverted system that ever shone on man, endeavored to crush your well earned, & well deserved fame."

"Question with boldness even the existence of a god; because, if there be one, he must more approve the homage of reason, than that of blindfolded fear."

Most historians think Jefferson was a deist – believing in a God with no hand in the actions of man. Jefferson also didn't believe in the virgin birth or any of the miracles of Jesus. Some even think of him as a 'closet atheist'

So the billboard has the same message as all these other authorized quotes. So why are people in a huff? Because without researching it for a whopping 3 minutes of their time, they will continue to think this nation was not meant to be a secular, constitutional one.

More information about our founding fathers at

BackyardSkeptics.com

Video:

http://abclocal.go.com/kabc/story?section=news/local/orange_county&id=8408874



[Backyard Skeptics is now on Facebook and twitter – if you're a Facebook fan then join our group page by searching for Backyard Skeptics.](#) Follow us on Twitter at [Backyardskeptic](#) (no 's' at the end)



[NEWS \(more at \[backyardskeptics.com\]\(#\)\)](#)

<http://backyardskeptics.com/wordpress/recent-news/>

[10/13/11 American Cancer Society refuses \\$500,000 from atheists](#)

[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.

[Nov 4 4:30pm Atheists behind the 8 ball IEAA Riverside](#)

[Nov 4 5pm San Diego Atheists 'Horrible' Film Festival](#)

[Nov 5 7pm OC Science Club with Richard Snaders, UCI Anthill Pub](#)

[Nov 5 San Diego Atheists board game night](#)

[Nov 6 8:30am IEAA Rubidoux walk](#)

[Nov 6 10:15 am IEAA Morning Breakfast](#)

[Nov 6 CFI lecture – The History of Water](#)

[Nov 6 San Diego Atheists lecture – Domestic Human Trafficking](#)

[Nov 8 7pm Backyard Skeptics South monthly meeting, Mission Viejo](#)

[Nov 9 7pm CFI – Bookclub for Skeptics](#)

Chapter 18. Gays and religion

If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them. The Bible

Society's understanding of gays has changed dramatically in my lifetime. In the past 50 years, homosexual relations have gone from being illegal in every state, to being legal in all states with domestic partnerships authorized in eight states and gay marriage recognized in five states and the District of Columbia. As recently as 1973, homosexuality was considered a mental illness by the American Psychiatric Association and up until 1975 by the American Psychological Association. Until 1961, every state in the U.S. outlawed gay sex. By 2003, it was only nine states, and after the 2003 U.S. Supreme Court decision in Lawrence v. Texas all laws prohibiting gay sex were overturned. In that case, writing for the majority, Justice Kennedy said gays, "are entitled to respect for their private lives. The State cannot demean their existence or control their destiny by making their private sexual conduct a crime. Their right to liberty under the Due Process Clause gives them the full right to engage in their conduct without intervention of the government. 'It is a promise of the Constitution that there is a realm of personal liberty which the government may not enter.' [Such a law] . . . furthers no legitimate state interest which can justify its intrusion into the personal and private life of the individual." In a short time, gays have moved from being "outlaws" in all states to ever-increasingly becoming "in-laws."

In the past 50 years, science has not clearly established what makes people gay, but it has established that they are born that way. Gay people are born that way, and it is grossly unfair to apply ancient rules to deny them equality in the modern world. Without religion, there is no reason other than prejudice to deny gays equal rights, including the right to marry. As in so many other instances, religious scriptures,

written by men and fixed in time, have been unable to adapt to a changing world.

Religionists have singled out gays for particularly venomous attacks. The battle cry of "god, guns and gays" helped to form a coalition of the rich and stupid, where the rich got tax breaks, pro-business judges and lax enforcement of laws and regulations while the stupid got "protection" from gay marriage and a promise that one day abortion would be outlawed. Hatred against gays has served as a strong fund-raising issue for both the religious right and the Republican party.

Why the majority of religionists hate gays is unclear. Perhaps it springs from the goal of enforcing procreation not recreation when it comes to sexuality. Or perhaps it encourages in-group dedication when a weak minority is singled out for abuse. Having a scapegoat may be useful to religionists. For example, the 9/11 attacks and Hurricane Katrina have been blamed on gays. Or maybe the religionists fear same-sex attractions in themselves and prove they are heterosexual by condemning homosexuals. But perhaps it is just a reliable fund-raising technique. Whatever the reason, the negative approach to gays affects a sizable minority. Studies estimate that between 2-10% of the American population is gay. Working with an intermediate figure of 5%, there are 15 million gays in the U.S., more than all the atheists, Jews and Mormons combined. That is a lot of people who are hurt by the religionists' prejudices.

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

<http://bornatheist.com/18.html>

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.

<http://freethoughtalliance.org/donate.html>

Hitler was a True Christian™

From PZ Myers Bog [HERE](#)

If you tuned in to that local debate on Christian radio, you know that one of the points the Christian fool trotted out was the tired old claim that the Nazis were no true Christians — no True Christian™ would ever commit such horrible acts. It's an annoyingly feeble and unsupportable argument, but it has a lot of life in it, unfortunately.

This same argument has come up in [Faye Flam's Evolution column for the Philly Inquirer](#), and has gone on through several articles thanks to that hack from the Discovery Institute, Richard Weikart. It started with an article titled "[Severing the link between Darwin and Nazism](#)", which cited real scholars like Robert Richards and Daniel Gasman to ably refute Weikart's ridiculous claim that Nazism was inspired by Darwin. The Nazis *banned* Darwin's books and rejected the idea that Aryans could have evolved from the lower orders. Weikart's reply: But Hitler used the word *Entwicklung*, which translates as "evolution". It also translates as "development" — Hitler did not use the language as representative of evolution at all.

So Flam got a contribution from a developmental biologist, the [most excellent Scott Gilbert](#), who pointed out that biology and Darwinism were not factors in Hitler's rise to power: the Lutheran and Catholic churches were. She also gets [Keith Thomson, a biologist and museum director](#), to explain that Darwin did not and would not have approved in any way the Nazi philosophy. Weikart's reply: but Darwin was a racist! Of course he was — he was a fairly conventional Victorian gentleman who thought the English were the greatest people on the planet. But these biases were not significant factors in his theory, and he struggled to overcome them.

Nazism was not science-based. It was pseudo-scientific religious dogma, tightly tied to the German culture of the time, which was almost entirely Catholic and Lutheran. All you have to do is look at [Hitler's own words](#) to see that, even if he were personally a closet Satanist (I don't think he was; he was an idiosyncratic Catholic), he tapped into the faith of the German people to achieve his ends. You cannot blame the horrors of the Third Reich on Darwin, who had negligible influence on the great masses of the German Volk, no political pull, and no appeal to the media. If you wanted a lever to shift public opinion on anything in the 1930s, religion was where you applied your force.

Read the rest of this article [HERE](#) http://scienceblogs.com/pharyngula/2011/10/hitler_was_a_true_christian.php.



FreethoughtAlliance.org BackyardSkeptics.com

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

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

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

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Funny Stuff

Who was the greatest financier in the Bible?

Noah. He was floating his stock while everyone else was in liquidation.

Who was the greatest female financier in the Bible?

Pharaoh's daughter. She went down to the bank of the Nile and drew out little prophet.

What kind of man was Boaz before he got married?

Ruth-less.

Who was the first drug addict in the Bible?

Nebuchadnezzar. He was on grass for seven years.

What did Eve ask Adam during their first argument?

"Adam, is there another woman?"

At what time of day was Adam created?

A little before Eve.

Did Eve never have a date with Adam?

No, it was an apple.

Where is the first math problem mentioned in the Bible?

In Genesis, when God told Adam and Eve to go forth and multiply.

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 au.org
American Humanist Assoc.

americanhumanist.org

Atheist Alliance International atheistalliance.org

American Atheists atheists.org/

Military Assoc. of Atheists and Freethinkers
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

James Randi Educational Foundation
randi.org/site

Southern California Secular Humanist Conference.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
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>

FreethoughtAlliance.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](http://atheists.meetup.com/724/Hollywood/): 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](http://www.meetup.com/OCHumanists) 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/)
<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](http://atheists.meetup.com/729/): 3rd Sundays, 7p.m., At Marie Callender's, 2979 Artesia Blvd, Redondo Beach <http://atheists.meetup.com/729/>

[Atheists United Ventura](http://atheists.meetup.com/494/): 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"](http://www.meetup.com/freethoughtparents/): Kids playgroup meets every Tuesday at 11am, Locations subject to change
<http://www.meetup.com/freethoughtparents/>

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