

# ❧ The Secular Gazette ❧

Supporting Science, Reason and the Separation of Church and State

Issue #26 December 20, 2011

This is the last for the Secular Gazette for 2011 – and what a 2011 it's been. We've seen many great articles and news stories passing through our little newsletter, and our subscriptions has grown by nearly double. I want to thank all those readers who have contributed their \$.99 for each issue. I don't know if I could spend the time to continue publishing if it wasn't for them. Yes – it's all me – no publishing staff here, but I do receive much help from the writers who have been emailing be their stories and research articles. As far as I know there is no other newsletter which combines four different areas of thought and study in to one: science, atheism, skepticism and church/state issues will continue to be covered by the Secular Gazette.

We've had 5 billboard/bus shelter ad campaigns this year, and that's more than conservative Orange County CA has ever had – ever. We've risen the awareness of the existence of secular groups and simply made believers think, as seen from the amount of email under the 'believer's comments' on the BackyardSkeptics.com site.

I wish everyone a great winter solstice and a happy new year!

Bruce Gleason, Editor

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## Skeptic's Corner

### Bachmann suggests intelligent design is a 'scientific fact'

Republican presidential candidate Michele Bachmann says schools should teach children about evolution and intelligent design because "the best thing to do is to allow all scientific facts on the table."

During a question-and-answer session at the University of Northern Iowa Wednesday, Bachmann was asked if intelligent design should be taught as science in public schools.

"I think that all science should be on the table," the candidate explained. "I think the one thing we do not want to have is censorship by government." [More:](#)



[http://www.rawstory.com/rs/2011/11/30/bachmann-suggests-intelligent-design-is-a-scientific-fact/?utm\\_source=feedburner&utm\\_medium=feed&utm\\_campaign=Feed%3A+TheRawStory+%28The+Raw+Story%29&utm\\_content=FaceBook](http://www.rawstory.com/rs/2011/11/30/bachmann-suggests-intelligent-design-is-a-scientific-fact/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+TheRawStory+%28The+Raw+Story%29&utm_content=FaceBook)

## **Skeptic's Corner continued**

### **India government gives up science and announces push for homeopathy**

Homeopathy is an effective alternative to multi drug-resistant diseases such as tuberculosis, claimed homeopathy specialists at the 66th World Homeopathy Congress going on in the Capital on Friday.

The four-day Congress, which will conclude on December 4, is an attempt to bring specialists from across the globe on a single platform to share their expertise. "The Congress is an international forum for homeopaths and researchers for active deliberations, and will also encourage measures to improve the education scenario in the country," said Dr RK Manchanda, organizing secretary of the Congress.

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/India-news/NewDelhi/Homoeopathy-an-alternative-to-treat-TB/Article1-777165.aspx>

### **More and more parents are opting out of vaccinations for their kids.**

In eight states now, more than 1 in 20 public school kindergartners aren't getting all the vaccines required for attendance, an Associated Press analysis found. That growing trend among parents seeking vaccine exemptions has health officials worried about outbreaks of diseases that once were all but stamped out.

"Study after study after study has shown that vaccines are safe, so why are so many parents still convinced it's not right for their children?" TODAY's Matt Lauer asked NBC Chief Medical Editor Dr. Nancy Snyderman.

Snyderman said it's not a lack of resources or education. The "profile" of the non-vax parent is middle-class, college educated and web-savvy, she said. There is also a new generation of parents in their 30s and 40s who "have no memory of polio, whooping cough and measles." More:

[http://moms.today.msnbc.msn.com/\\_news/2011/11/29/9090395-are-opt-out-parents-and-unvaxxed-kids-a-health-threat](http://moms.today.msnbc.msn.com/_news/2011/11/29/9090395-are-opt-out-parents-and-unvaxxed-kids-a-health-threat)

### **'Harry Potter and yoga are evil', says Catholic Church exorcist**

Father Gabriele Amorth, who for years was the Vatican's chief exorcist and claims to have cleansed hundreds of people of evil spirits, said yoga is Satanic because it leads to a worship of Hinduism and "all eastern religions are based on a false belief in reincarnation".

Reading JK Rowling's Harry Potter books is no less dangerous, said the 86-year-old priest, who is the honorary president for life of the International Association of Exorcists, which he founded in 1990, and whose favourite film is the 1973 horror classic, *The Exorcist*.



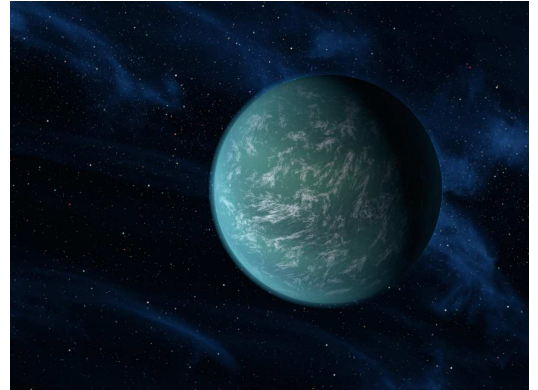


## Science News

### NASA will announce of new planet discovery Dec 20<sup>th</sup>

NASA will unveil its latest discoveries in the search for planets beyond our solar system today (Dec. 20). The new alien planet announcement is based on findings made by NASA's [Kepler planet-hunting spacecraft](#), an observatory that has been orbiting Earth since its launch in March 2009.

The Kepler mission has already found 2,326 potential planets during its first 16 months of operation, with 28 of those confirmed as definite planets. Earlier this month, the Kepler science [team](#) announced the discovery of Kepler-22b, the first potentially habitable alien planet. This distant world, which is located about 600 light-years from Earth, orbits its star in the habitable zone that could support liquid water, and perhaps life. NASA announced the discovery of Kepler-22b on Dec. 5. More: <http://www.space.com/13982-nasa-alien-planets-announcement-tuesday.html>



### Rats to the Rescue in Cage Experiment

A new [study in the journal Science](#) has found that rats can be helpful — the first instance that such behavior has been documented in rodents. The researchers placed a free-roaming rat in an arena with a caged rat. Over the course of several days, the free rats realized they could nudge open a door and release the caged rat.

After figuring this out, they did so repeatedly, day after day.

“They then did what we refer to as a celebration,” said an author of the study, Peggy Mason, a neuroscientist at the University of Chicago. “The trapped rat runs around the arena, and the free rat appears excited and runs after the trapped rat.”

That behavior alone is not enough to show that rats are empathetic, she said. The rats could be releasing their caged cohorts simply for companionship.

So the researchers changed the setup: when the free rat released the caged rat, the caged rat went into a second arena, and the two were unable to interact.

Still, the free rats released the caged rats, day after day.

Then the researchers placed a free rat in an arena with a caged rat and locked-away chocolate.

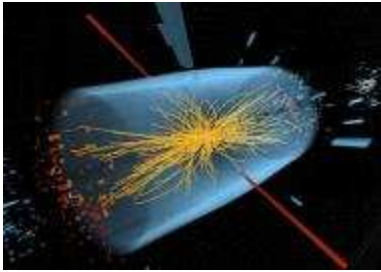
<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/13/science/observatory-rats-have-empathy-study-finds.html>



# Tantalizing hints of long-sought particle

By [Devin Powell](#)

[December 31st, 2011; Vol.180 #14 \(p. 10\)](#)



## HIGGS IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Colliding protons create a splash of particles streaking outward along paths (yellow) reconstructed here from data collected by the CMS detector at CERN's Large Hadron Collider. A pair of photons emerging from this smash-up (red bars) qualify this event as a potential Higgs sighting. CERN

The world's most powerful atom smasher has given physicists a tantalizing — but inconclusive — hint that the long-sought Higgs particle actually exists.

The Higgs is the last undiscovered elementary particle predicted by the standard model, physicists' leading framework for describing the constituents of matter and transmitters of force. Its discovery would confirm the theory that matter particles acquire their mass by interacting with a pervasive Higgs field occupying all space.

Speaking in front of a packed auditorium, two competing teams at the Large Hadron Collider said they've seen showers of particles that match the debris expected when the Higgs particle breaks down.

"It's too early to tell if the success is due to the fluctuations in the background, or if it's due to something more interesting," said Fabiola Gianotti, a spokeswoman for LHC's ATLAS detector, who presented her team's work December 13 at the European laboratory CERN, the home of the LHC, near Geneva.

This subatomic detritus — seen by both the ATLAS and Compact Muon Solenoid detectors at the LHC — is suggestive of a Higgs boson with a mass of about 125 billion electron volts (the mass of a proton is about 1 billion electron volts). That number conforms nicely with requirements of the standard model.

[http://www.sciencenews.org/view/generic/id/336912/title/Tantalizing\\_hints\\_of\\_long-sought\\_particle](http://www.sciencenews.org/view/generic/id/336912/title/Tantalizing_hints_of_long-sought_particle)

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



### [Judge tosses 'Religious Freedom' amendment from 2012 ballot](#)

Judge Terry Lewis today ruled that a proposed amendment to Florida's constitution that would repeal a ban on taxpayer funding for religious institutions is deceptive and must be rewritten before it can appear on the state's 2012 ballot.

<http://floridaindependent.com/60884/religious-freedom-amendment-deceptive>



### [House of Representatives Continues to Fuel the Fake "War on Christmas"](#)

When the White House is filled with Christmas trees, parades and pageants are taking place across the nation, and the U.S. Senate engages in Secret Santa exchanges, who can fairly say Christmas is being repressed?

This month, Rep. Doug Lamborn (R-CO) introduced H. Res. 489, "Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that the symbols and traditions of Christmas should be protected for use by those who celebrate Christmas." Personally I was unaware that Christmas was in a position in need of protection, but of course it is that time of year when the Religious Right launches an endless stream of rhetoric on the "War on Christmas."

<http://au.org/blogs/legislative/house-of-representatives-continues-to-fuel-the-fake-war-on-christmas>

### [Over The Line: Kentucky School Officials Are Wrong About Teaching Evolution](#)

*December 15, 2011 by [Simon Brown](#)*

No one in the scientific community seriously questions the validity of evolution. Just like no one is clinging to the idea that the sun revolves around the Earth.

Just when it looks like a state public school system is making progress in the teaching of evolution, creationism rears its ugly head.

A new standardized biology test scheduled to be administered to Kentucky public school students starting in the spring of 2012 would require that teachers devote significant time to teaching evolution.

Unfortunately, not everyone is on board with that plan. Hart County Schools Superintendent Ricky D. Line is waging a one-man war against emphasizing evolution. According to the Lexington Herald-Leader, Line recently wrote to the Kentucky Board of Education and state education commissioner about the impending test.

"I have a deep concern about the increased emphasis on the evolution content required," Line observed. "I have a very difficult time believing that we have come to a point...that we are teaching evolution...as a factual occurrence, while totally omitting the creation story by a God who is bigger than all of us."

<http://au.org/blogs/wall-of-separation/over-the-line-kentucky-school-officials-are-wrong-about-teaching-evolution>

## [From the Blog of Sam Harris](#)

Reprinted with permission

The moment it was announced that Christopher Hitchens was sick with cancer, eulogies began spilling into print and from the podium. No one wanted to deny the possibility that he would recover, of course, but neither could we let the admiration we felt for him go unexpressed. It is a cliché to say that he was one of a kind and none can fill his shoes—but Hitch was and none can. In his case not even the most effusive tributes ring hollow. There was simply no one like him.

One of the joys of living in a world filled with stupidity and hypocrisy was to see Hitch respond. That pleasure is now denied us. The problems that drew his attention remain—and so does the record of his brilliance, courage, erudition, and good humor in the face of outrage. But his absence will leave an enormous void in the years to come. Hitch lived an extraordinarily large life. (Read his memoir, *Hitch-22*, and marvel.) It was too short, to be sure—and one can only imagine what another two decades might have brought out of him—but Hitch produced more fine work, read more books, met more interesting people, and won more arguments than most of us could in several centuries.

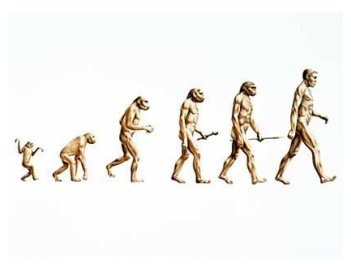


I first met Hitch at a dinner at the end of April 2007, just before the release of his remarkable book *god is not Great*. After a long evening, my wife and I left him standing on the sidewalk in front of his hotel. His book tour was just beginning, and he was scheduled to debate on a panel the next morning. It was well after midnight, but it was evident from his demeanor that his clock had a few hours left to run. I had heard the stories about his ability to burn the candle at both ends, but staggering there alongside him in the glare of a street lamp, I made a mental note of what struck me as a fact of nature—tomorrow’s panel would be a disaster.

I rolled out of bed the following morning, feeling quite wrecked, to see Hitch holding forth on C-SPAN’s *Book TV*, dressed in the same suit he had been wearing the night before. Needless to say, he was effortlessly lucid and witty—and taking no prisoners. There should be a name for the peculiar cocktail of emotion I then enjoyed: one part astonishment, one part relief, two parts envy; stir. It would not be the last time I drank it in his honor.

<http://www.samharris.org/blog/>

## Evo Education



### Creationist abuse of cuttlefish chitin

December 19, 2011

[http://scienceblogs.com/pharyngula/2011/12/creationist\\_abuse\\_of\\_cuttlefis.php](http://scienceblogs.com/pharyngula/2011/12/creationist_abuse_of_cuttlefis.php)

Posted on: December 15, 2011 6:03 PM, by PZ Myers

A few weeks ago, PLoS One published a paper on the observation of preserved chitin in 34 million year old cuttlebones. Now the Institute for Creation Research has twisted the science to support their belief that the earth is less than ten thousand years old. It was all so predictable. It's a game they play, the same game they played with the soft tissue preserved in T. rex bones. Here's how it works.

Compare the two approaches, science vs. creationism. The creationists basically insert one falsehood, generate a ludicrous conflict, and choose the dumbest of the two alternatives. The Scientific Approach ?

find traces of organic material in ancient fossils ?

Cool! We have evidence of ancient biochemistry! ?

Science! The Creationist Approach ?

declare it impossible for organic material to be ancient ?

steal other people's discovery of organic material in ancient fossils ?

Cool! Declare that organic material must not be ancient, because of step 1, which we invented ?

Throw out geology, chemistry, and physics because they say the material is old ?

Profit! Souls for my Lord Arioeh!

You see, the scientists are aware of the fact that organic materials degrade over time, but recognize that we don't always know the rate of decay under all possible conditions. When we find stuff that hasn't rotted away or been fully replaced by minerals, we're happy because we've got new information about ancient organisms, and we may also be able to figure out what mechanisms promoted the preservation of the material.

The creationists start with dogma — in this case, a false statement. They declare

Chitin is a biological material found in the cuttlebones, or internal shells, of cuttlefish. It has a maximum shelf life of thousands of years...

and

Because of observed bacterial and biochemical degradation rates, researchers shouldn't expect to find any original chitin (or any other biomolecule) in a sample that is dozens of millions of years old--and it therefore should be utterly absent from samples deposited hundreds of millions of years ago. Thus, the chitin found in these fossils refutes their millions-of-years evolutionary interpretation, just as other fossil biomolecules already have done.

Read the rest of this article HERE: [http://scienceblogs.com/pharyngula/2011/12/creationist\\_abuse\\_of\\_cuttlefis.php](http://scienceblogs.com/pharyngula/2011/12/creationist_abuse_of_cuttlefis.php)

### [Kentucky school superintendent upset over omission of creation theory on biology test](#)

December 14th, 2011 by [Prescott Carlson](#)

A school superintendent in Kentucky is upset because a state test puts too much emphasis on evolution as a fact, not a theory. Ricky D. Line, superintendent of the Hart County school district, has expressed displeasure over new guidelines put in the biology portion of the state testing as part of the Blueprint for Kentucky's Children, which was implemented by legislators in 2007 partly in an effort to meet compliance of federal No Child Left Behind regulations. Read the rest of this article [HERE](#)

<http://www.imperfectparent.com/topics/2011/12/14/kentucky-school-superintendent-upset-over-omission-of-creation-theory-on-biology-test/>



### God is Imaginary

## Proof #5 - Read the Bible

Imagine that we are good friends. One day we are talking:

Me: Wow, you will not believe this new book I've been reading!

You: What's it about?

Me: It is a manual for living a better life. It is also a guide to creating a better society for ourselves and our children. It has changed my life!

You: That sounds like an important book.

Who wrote it?

Me: The author is supposed to be the smartest person in the universe.

You: That's amazing -- if the author is the smartest person in the universe, the book must be absolutely brilliant. I can't wait to see it. Do you have a copy with you?

Me: Absolutely! I carry it with me everywhere I go! Here, have a look for yourself...

You open the book to a random page, and you find this:

Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy; for I am the Lord your God. Keep my statutes, and observe them; I am the Lord; I sanctify you.

All who curse father or mother shall be put to death; having cursed father or mother, their blood is upon them.

If a man commits adultery with the wife of his neighbour, both the adulterer and the adulteress shall be put to death. The man who lies with his father's wife has uncovered his father's nakedness; both of them shall be put to death; their blood is upon them.

If a man lies with his daughter-in-law, both of them shall be put to death; they have committed perversion; their blood is upon them.

If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall be put to death; their blood is upon them. [Leviticus, chapter 20]



<http://godisimaginary.com/i5.htm>

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

# Skeptoid

By Brian Dunning

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## Pit Bull Attack!

Pit bulls have a reputation for being the most dangerous dog breed. Is this reputation deserved?

Skeptoid #288

December 13, 2011

Perhaps the most horrifying story to hear on the news is a case of a child being killed by a pack of dogs, hardly anything can incite a more emotional response. We're quick to vilify the dogs; perhaps justifiably so, perhaps not. In the United States, it seems that more often than not, the dogs involved in such attacks are pit bulls. Legislation is quick to address highly emotional issues, and many states now have various bans and limitations on pit bulls. Today we're going to turn our skeptical eye onto the popular belief that pit bulls are truly as dangerous as their reputation suggests. Defining exactly what a pit bull is is not a slam-dunk. It's not a specific breed; rather it's a collection of several related breeds. Those dogs that are unambiguously pit bulls include the American pit bull terrier, the American Staffordshire terrier, and the Staffordshire bull terrier; however the bull terrier or English bull terrier is not. Some municipalities classify the American bulldog as a pit bull "type" dog. Finally, pit bulls are usually



classified as any dog having the substantial physical characteristics and appearance of pit bull breeds, which establishes the somewhat unfortunately vague precedent that you know a pit bull when you see one.

Deaths by dog attack have been thoroughly studied. Perhaps the most often cited large study was published in 2000 in the *Journal of the American Veterinary Medicine Association* assessing 20 years of DBRF (dog bite related fatalities) in the United States, from 1979 through 1998. During that period, 238 Americans were killed by 403 dogs. Just over half of these deaths involved pit bull type dogs and Rottweilers. It's important to note that there is always some uncertainty about breed. A lot of dogs out there are not pure bred or are mixed, and numbers for those dogs were included in the study as well. But the trends over 20 years were clear: Pit bulls are indeed responsible for the most DBRFs, though in some years Rottweilers were most deadly. German shepherds are third, huskies and malamutes are next, and it goes down from there. Pit bulls killed more than seven times as many people as Doberman pinschers, which we usually consider to be so dangerous.

<http://skeptoid.com/episodes/4288>

**The Third Annual**

**Orange County Freethought Alliance Conference**

Promoting Science, Reason and Critical Thinking

**Our theme: “How is Science and Reason Making A Better World?”**

**UCI May 19 & 20<sup>th</sup>, 2012**

**With a special public debate Saturday night**



This will be Orange County’s third secular conference, where all freethinkers, humanists, atheists, agnostics, and church and state separatists can mingle with some of the most famous secular leaders of our time. Our speakers will inspire, educate and entertain you.



Mr Deity



Michael Shermer



Brian Dunning



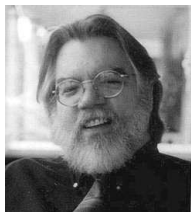
Barbara Forest



Jim Underdown



Aron Ra



Robert Price



Phil Zuckerman



Richard Carrier



Dan Barker



Dave Richards

**Jan 1 – May 10 Pre-Registration:**

Saturday afternoon: \$60, Saturday night debate: \$10, Sunday:\$90, All-weekend pass:\$130

**At-The-Door pricing,**

Saturday afternoon: \$70, Saturday night debate:\$10, Sunday:\$90, All-weekend pass:\$150

**Child-Car services: \$20 per day \$10 Box Lunch on Sunday**

**[www.Freethoughtalliance.org](http://www.Freethoughtalliance.org)**

## Backyard Skeptics

is part of Freethought Alliance, 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>

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



[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)

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



## [NEWS](#) (more at [backyardskeptics.com](http://backyardskeptics.com))

- [12/17/11 Christopher Hitchens 1949 – 2011](#) Click to read the Vanity Fair article
- [12/11/11 La Habra man accused of cruelly punishing teen at Irvine parents' request](#)
- [12/10/11 Santa Monica nativity scenes displaced by atheist messages](#)
- [12/9/11 Rick Perry's Anti-Gay Campaign Video: Disliked By Over 300,000 People And Counting](#)
- [12/8/11 Koch Political Group Brags About Bullying GOP Lawmakers Into Denying Climate Science](#)
- [12/7/11 Three GOP Presidential Candidates Sign Pledge To Investigate LGBT Community](#)

## Backyard Skeptics Events



Dec 23 – Winter Solstice Pot-luck party 5:00pm Free

January 7th – Diner and a movie night – “The Lord Is Not On Trial Here Today” in Villa park. \$12 with dinner, \$5 without.

February 18, Goldstone Deep Space Satellite Complex north of Barstow. all-day field trip

April 28 – 11am Pasadena DooDah Parade – Join us!

April 28, 2012 – 8pm Special private viewing at the 60” Mt Wilson Observatory \$55

Other events which are coming up at Backyard Skeptics:

Blackstar Canyon visit with the OC Astronomers Club

Habitat for Humanity volunteer day

Music Appreciation night – rock, classical and jazz

Mt Wilson Observatory night (we are renting the 60” telescope for the evening!)

Orange County Freethought Alliance Conference May 19 & 20, 2012

Borego Springs overnighter with the OC Astronomy Club

Joshua tree camping overnighter in June.

## Other Local Events

*(Also on the [Backyardskeptics.com](http://Backyardskeptics.com) page)*

*Wanting some more rational conversation? Check out these other groups in the SoCal area:*

Dec 25 – Atheists United meeting at 11am at CFI West in Hollywood at 11am

Monday, December 26, 2011 7:00 PM Starbucks 454 North Fair Oaks Ave, South Pasadena, CA 91103

San Diego Atheists: Monday, December 26, 2011 7:00 PM Cafe Cabaret 3739 Adams Avenue San Diego, CA 92116

Generation Atheist Dec 30th 6pm Game Night

Jan 4 12pm A Leisurely Review – History of Western Philosophy

IEAA JAN 11 6PM IEAA RIVERSIDE “The Importance of Making Things” TEDx Talk by Gene Sherman

Jan 11 CFI-LA Book Club for Skeptics 6pm

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# **Born Atheist**

## **Chapter 20. Religion and lies: necessarily intertwined.**

*Those who can make you believe absurdities can make you commit atrocities. Voltaire*

Religion is a lie. One need look no further than the four corners of the scriptures to find contradictions and impossibilities. For example, does the Bible say that god can be seen and heard? Well, yes and no. Here's what the Bible says:

*So Jacob called the place Peniel [the face of god], saying, "It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared."*

\* \* \*

*The LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his friend.*

\* \* \*

Then the man and his wife [Adam and Eve] heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?" He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid." And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?" The man said, "The woman you put here with me--she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it." Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

Ignoring the issue of why an omnipotent god could not find the only man and woman on earth, the Bible story has god and man conversing.

Other parts of the Bible say that no man may see god's face:

*And the LORD said, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the LORD, in your presence" . . . "But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live."*

Puzzlingly, Jesus, the putative son of god, said that god could be neither heard nor seen. The Bible reports Jesus said, "And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape."

At least one of these statements in the "perfect book" is untrue. An atheist sees these inconsistencies as evidence the book was written by different men at different times, probably never knowing their tales would be assembled into a single book labeled the work of god. A religionist, on the other hand, is left supporting the lie that his holy book is perfect, when the imperfections are obvious.

The Koran has similar contradictions. For example, Muslims are prohibited from drinking alcohol in sura 2:219, but another part of the "perfect book" says that among the good things Allah provides are, "the palm and the vine, from which you get wine and other healthful nutriment." Other translations use the terms intoxicants, "strong drink," and "inebriating liquor," although some change it to "wholesome drink."

Returning to the Bible, the story of god stopping the sun in the sky is instructive. The Bible says:

*On the day the LORD gave the Amorites over to Israel, Joshua said to the LORD in the presence of Israel: "O sun, stand still over Gibeon, O moon, over the Valley of Aijalon." So the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, till the nation avenged itself on its enemies . . . The sun stopped in the middle of the sky and delayed going down about a full day. There has never been a day like it before or since, a day when the LORD listened to a man. Surely the LORD was fighting for Israel!*

<http://bornatheist.com/20.html>

## Opinion

# Thomas Huxley and Scientific Reasoning

**Scientific reasoning differs from ordinary common sense not in kind, but simply in its rigor and in its scrupulous and systematic way of proceeding**

## Charles

Thomas Henry Huxley (1825-1895) gave numerous lectures with the goal of demystifying “scientific reasoning” by showing that it differed from ordinary common sense not in kind, but simply in its rigor and its more systematized way of proceeding. **The scientist, Huxley says, “simply uses with scrupulous exactness the methods which we all habitually use carelessly.” “In science, the evidence of a hypothesis is subjected to the most rigorous examination.”**

Huxley tells his audience that in scientific inquiry it becomes a matter of duty to intentionally expose a hypothesis, theory or law of nature to every possible kind of verification. “Precisely the same mode of reasoning was employed by Newton and Laplace in their endeavors to discover and define the causes of the movements of the heavenly bodies, as you, with your common sense, would employ to [discover that you’ve been robbed by the kid next door or that you left your keys by the sink]. The only difference is...that every step the scientist takes has to be most carefully watched, so that there may not be a single crack or flaw in his hypothesis. A flaw or crack in many of the hypotheses of daily life may be of little or no moment as affecting the general correctness of the

conclusions at which we may arrive” writes Huxley; “but in a scientific inquiry, a fallacy, great or small, is always of importance, and is sure to be in the long run constantly productive of mischievous if not fatal results.”

Thus, at least according to Huxley, Juan’s “wet wife means rain” hypothesis, easily checked by going to the window, is **not** an example of science or scientific thinking, even though there was evidence, a reasonable hypothesis, deductive-inductive reasoning, and the window test. But why not? Simply because no effort was made to control all the variables in the situation, to scrupulously eliminate every possible flaw or crack in the hypothesis. (In earlier emails I listed numerous uncontrolled variables (flaws, cracks).)

Authorities can be mistaken; reasoning can be flawed; intuitions can be wrong; our senses can be distorted. This is why controls are so important. As Huxley repeatedly emphasized, science differs from ordinary common sense **not** in kind, but simply in its rigor and its more systematized way of proceeding, of purposefully trying to eliminate all possible cracks or flaws in the hypothesis. This is why so many scientific articles sound so dull and so cautious. If a scientist gets carelessly, nature will soon make a complete fool out of him.

Finally, what real scientists do is to try to expand our knowledge of the world. This means searching for paradoxes, contradictions, anomalies — interesting problems to rigorously and systematically (not common sensically or lackadaisically) attack. Thus, I seriously doubt that any professional scientist would insist that he/she was doing real science or even acting scientifically by looking out a window to confirm a rain hypothesis....unless it was raining fish in July in Death Valley.

## Secular DVDs from FreethoughtAlliance.org [BackyardSkeptics.com](http://BackyardSkeptics.com)



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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 Populations \\$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 & DeSouza \\$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](#)

## 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](http://AmericansUnitedforChurchandStateSeparation.Nationalau.org)

[American Humanist Assoc.](http://AmericanHumanistAssoc.americanhumanist.org)

[americanhumanist.org](http://americanhumanist.org)

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

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

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

[ACLU.org](http://ACLU.org)

BERTRAND RUSSELL SOCIETY

[www.users.drew.edu/~jlenz/brs.html](http://www.users.drew.edu/~jlenz/brs.html)

CFI [centerforinquiry.net](http://centerforinquiry.net)

[camp-quest.org](http://camp-quest.org)

Freedom From Religion Foundation [ffrf.org](http://ffrf.org)

[jennymccarthybodycount.com](http://jennymccarthybodycount.com)

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

National Center for Science Education [ncse.com](http://ncse.com)

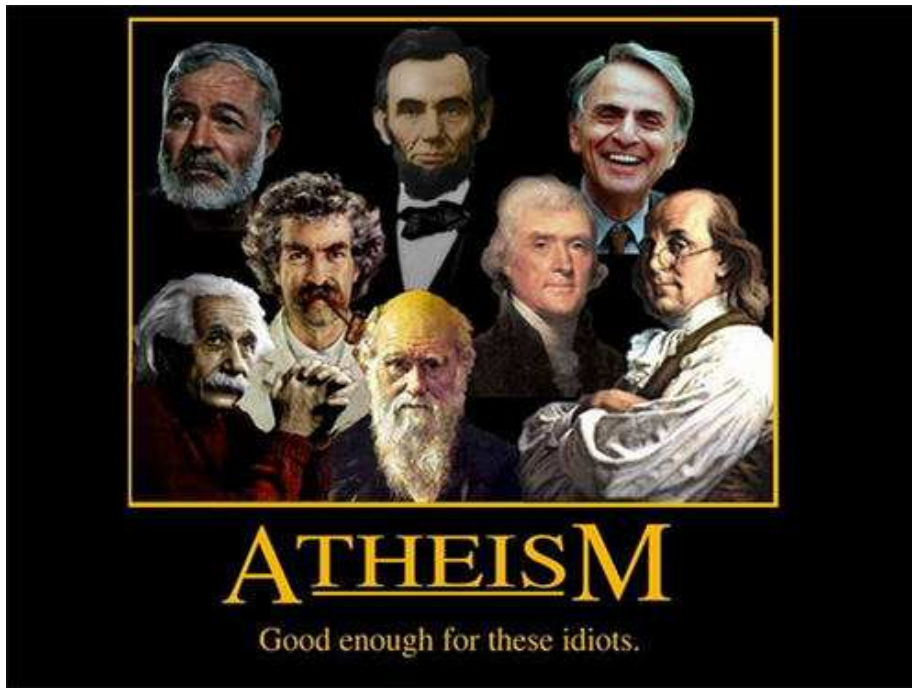
People for the American Way [pfaw.org](http://pfaw.org)

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

James Randi Educational Foundation [randi.org/site](http://randi.org/site)

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

[Whatstheharm.net](http://Whatstheharm.net)



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://IrvineRanchWaterDistrict15600SandCanyonAve.Irvine,CA92618)

<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](http://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>

San Diego Coalition of Reason

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

## Local Southern California groups and links

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](mailto: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](mailto:larry-a-taylor@att.net)

Inland Empire: 1st Wednesday, 7 p.m., Riverside Unitarian Church 3657 Lemon St., Riverside Contact [JanGoings@aol.com](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto: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/>