

FACT
P.O. Box
160881
San Antonio,
TX 78280

FACT

is an association of atheists, freethinkers, agnostics, secular humanists, rationalists, skeptics, and other non-theists serving the purpose of preserving the separation of church and state and promoting Freethought through education.

September Meeting	1
August Meeting Report	2
Freethought Convention	2
Same-Sex Marriage	3
"Expelled" and the Holocaust	4
Letters	5
First Anniversary of the Creation Museum	6
Ingersoll and Professor Briggs	8
Changing Religious Attitudes	10
Pascal Was Wrong	10
Calendar of Events	11
Membership Application	12

A Matter of *FACT* & *The Voice*

September 2008

Something Special

On September 16th, the Freethinkers Association of Central Texas (FACT) will proudly present San Antonio actress Anna De Luna in her one-woman show "¿Chicana Atheist?" This monologue is all about growing up in an overtly spiritual community, among a devoutly religious Hispanic family, while realizing you don't believe any of this stuff! Even though she has performed this show in several venues around San Antonio in the last couple of years, she is still reluctant to discuss it with her strongly Catholic mother, and still makes concessions to keep peace in the family.

De Luna has worked as a classically-trained actress for 15 years, and has toured in productions around the world, as well as appearing in many productions in the San Antonio area. But the "¿Chicana Atheist?" is her own personal production, stemming from her struggles against cultural and family pressures to conform. It has been described as both comical and poignant.



"¿Chicana Atheist?" will be presented at the Community Unitarian Universalist Church, 4818 Beverly Mae Drive (just off Babcock in the Medical Center area) on September 16, 2008 at 1:00 PM. Admission is free, but a \$10 donation is requested.

Every Monday at 12:30 and 8:30 PM

Time Warner Digital Cable Channel 20

FREETHOUGHT FORUM

Hosted by Hugh Henry

Ingersoll Is Honored Guest

Elected Positions:

President, Nick Lee
 Vice President, Jane Tuck
 Secretary, Jim Evans
 Treasurer, Cathy Howard
 Publicity, OPEN

Appointed Positions:

Newsletter

Publisher/Editor, Marc Janssens
 Webmaster, Jim Evans
 Discussion Group Host, OPEN
 Librarian, Jimmie Barnes

Texas Hill Country Freethinkers

(No Officers)

For Information contact

Julie Fisher:

zoezappa@hughes.net

FACT MEMBERS:

FACT wants your participation in communicating through our newsletter. Please contribute letters, articles, book reviews, highlights and comments on church/state separation, quotes, drawings, cartoons, etc. Please send contributions to FACT.newsletter@FreethinkersACT.org.

All submissions are subject to editorial revisions at the discretion of the publisher.

Well, Bob Ingersoll was there in spirit! (Can I say "spirit" in this newsletter?) The August meeting of FACT was devoted to honoring the 175th anniversary of the birth of the "Great Agnostic".

Robert G. Ingersoll was, in turn, a preacher, a teacher, a lawyer, a cavalry Colonel, Illinois Attorney General, and the most effective orator of his day. Riding the lecture circuit, he spoke to thousands of people on abolition of slavery, promotion of civil and social rights for women. But, foremost, he was the leading critic of the evils of organized religion, champion of the rule of reason, and the founding father of the "Golden Age of Freethought" in America.

FACT members were treated to a brief video biography of Ingersoll's life and taped recreations of two of his most famous orations, presented by a professional actor. Through the re-enactment, one could feel the power of his words and why even fervent believers paid to get into, and sit through, his three-hour orations!

During the coffee break, attendees enjoyed a slice of the special Ingersoll birthday cake, and afterwards Jim Evans shared some of his favorite quotes from Ingersoll's writings. In the discussion that followed, many members expressed an interest in following up with personal readings to learn more about this giant of Freethought.

Nick Lee

Texas Freethought Convention

You MUST NOT miss the state-wide Freethought Convention, to be held on Sunday October 26th at the Saengerrunde Hall in Austin! The organizers are constantly improving the agenda and planned activities, to appeal to the broadest spectrum of atheists, agnostics, freethinkers, and secular humanists from all over Texas. Attendees will range from children to mature veterans of the struggle.

Activities include speakers from all over the state, and live music from local talent. You will have a chance to talk to folks from other parts of the state. The hope is that we can build a network to coordinate the various groups in such social issues as faith-based initiatives and creationism in Texas schools. Planned activities include:

- A formal "De-Baptism Ceremony" to wash away any residual holy water you may have acquired in your youth;
- Face-painting for children and the young at heart;
- A video booth to record oral histories of the atheist experience; and
- A Bloodmobile will be set up in the parking lot, as a community outreach project.

The full agenda and a list of participating groups are posted on the web site at www.texasfreethoughtconvention.com. The event organizers urge folks to sign up on-line. There is only a modest registration fee of \$15 (\$10 for seniors), which can be paid at the web site. Those who do not have a Pay-Pal account can give a check to the FACT Treasurer, and we will make a mass deposit. Registration will also be available at the door, but we would like to keep that to a minimum.

The convention schedule will run from noon to 11 pm. If you plan to stay overnight (to avoid a late-night drive back to San Antonio), you are advised to make hotel reservations NOW. Also, if you would like to car-pool with someone, call Nick Lee at 767-0769 who may be able to put you in contact with others of like mind.

Will you be there at this historic first?

Contemporary Issues: Same-Sex Marriage

by Marc Janssens

Shortly before the presidential elections four years ago, the Bush campaign pulled the "same-sex marriage" rabbit out of a hat. Partly as a result of this stroke of genius the religious right showed up at the polls in droves and Bush was allowed to prolong his stay at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue for four more years. Why is there so much opposition to legalizing and recognizing same-sex marriage in America?

Most arguments against same-sex marriage ultimately boil down to the idea that the government should protect the "sanctity" of marriage, or that marriage is a "sacred trust" handed down by God.

But the truth of the matter is that the government has no business doling out sanctity and sacred trusts in the first place. Marriage, as far as the government is concerned, is and must be a secular institution. The government can no more hand out a marriage certificate that grants a sacred union than it can hand out a death certificate that grants a place in the world to come. The government does not hold the keys to the sacred.

And just as the government does not hold the keys to the sacred, it should not make decisions that are based on the premise that it does. If the purpose of the Federal Marriage Amendment is to "protect the sanctity of marriage," then it has failed in theory even before it has had the opportunity to fail in practice.

Source: http://civilliberty.about.com/od/gendersexuality/a/marriageamend_2.htm

According to a report given to the Office of the General Counsel of the U.S. General Accounting Office, there are 1,138 benefits the United States government provides to legally married couples: www.gao.gov/archive/1997/og97016.pdf. It should be noted that these rights and responsibilities apply only to male-female married couples, as the 1996 Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) defines marriage as between a man and a woman and thus bars same-sex couples from receiving any federal recognition of same sex marriage or conveyance of marriage benefits to same sex couples through federal marriage law. In addition, there are many state-level benefits within the United States. If it is not unconstitutional to deny benefits to a specific group of citizens based on their sexual orientation, something that is beyond the individual's control, it must certainly be immoral.

In my opinion the main problem is that the government has elevated a religious ceremony to an official one by allowing it to award specific Federal and State benefits to its citizens. This flies in the face of separation of church and state. The problem is largely non-existent in my native Belgium, a country that was firmly in the grip of the Catholic Church in the not-too-distant past and where same-sex marriage is now legal. The reason is that the "official" marriage, i.e., the ceremony that allows a couple to receive special privileges from the government, is performed by a competent civil servant. Only marriages celebrated by this official in due and legal form are valid. A religious ceremony may, however, be performed subsequently at the option of the contracting parties. The optional religious wedding does not result in any additional privileges and it is purely symbolic. If such a system were in place in the US, perhaps the candidate's position on same-sex marriage would be irrelevant in the presidential race.

The
TEXAS Freethought
Convention

Sunday, October 26, 2008 at Saengerrunde Halle next to Scholz's Garden
www.texasfreethoughtconvention.com

“Expelled” and Holocaust Denial by Marc Janssens

Perhaps the most preposterous claim in Ben Stein’s movie “Expelled” is that evolution was responsible for the Nazi atrocities in the Holocaust.

The film-makers' logic is that by teaching evolution, the US public school system is telling children that there is no God, morality or free will. And this can lead to only one thing: Holocaust.

Amanda Geffer, New Scientist

The use of the Holocaust to further an anti-evolution agenda quickly resulted in a strong condemnation by the Anti-Defamation League.

The film *Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed* misappropriates the Holocaust and its imagery as a part of its political effort to discredit the scientific community which rejects so-called intelligent design theory. Hitler did not need Darwin to devise his heinous plan to exterminate the Jewish people and Darwin and evolutionary theory cannot explain Hitler's genocidal madness. Using the Holocaust in order to tarnish those who promote the theory of evolution is outrageous and trivializes the complex factors that led to the mass extermination of European Jewry.

Anti-Defamation League

The critics were nearly unanimous in describing the movie as divisive and dishonest propaganda. The following excerpt from Glenn Beck’s June 23 interview with Stein on CNN Headlines News shows how dishonest the filmmaker really is.

STEIN: Already in Germany I’m told people are given this little pill when they get old and sick and they take the pill and go to sleep and don’t wake up.

BECK: No.

STEIN: Yes, yes, that’s happening a lot in Germany.

BECK: What’s the name of the pill? That’s being prescribed by doctors?

STEIN: Apparently it’s a super powerful barbiturate. And people take it and that’s it for them.

BECK: You say we’re never going to forget -- what the ...

STEIN: The problem with that of course is what if you’re just in a bad mood for a couple of hours and you take it and then you’re gone for good. You can’t change your mind.

BECK: I don’t know if that’s the -- I mean ...

STEIN: That’s one of the problems.

BECK: That’s one of the problems. The other problem, I see it, doctors are prescribing -- are killing people in Germany.

STEIN: Well, again you might say. Again. Yeah, again. We showed this -- we documented in the movie that they’ve been doing this for a while.

Source: CNN Transcripts

Euthanasia is against the law in Germany. Stein either made this up or did not check his sources. I have my opinion. The CNN Headlines interview again confirms that Stein is nothing but a fraud.

Published in Atheists for Human Rights, June 2008 Newsletter, Minneapolis, MN.

Re. Newsletter Article About Ben Stein's Attack on Evolution in "Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed"

I feel betrayed by Jews who play nice with the religious right, so I sent my thoughts to Mr. Stein. Of course he gave no response. But I thought I'd share them with you.

1. Stein's objection to Darwinism is that it leads to Social Darwinism. Not necessarily, but even if so, it's fallacious. Misuse of a theory does not make it false. It makes as much sense as denying Einstein's Theory of Relativity because you loathe moral relativism.
2. Stein claims his film promotes academic freedom. But creationism is not science and thus has no place in science class. I know of a math instructor who, instead of teaching math, read the Bible to his class until he was fired. Would Stein defend his academic and religious freedom too?
3. Stein complains that science is structured to keep it from reaching God. Science is the study of matter and energy. God, to them, is spirit. Not the domain of science. Not examinable.
4. Stein promoted his film on The 700 Club, where he schmoozed with Marion Robertson, saving how his father, Herb Stein, was honored to occupy the Willis Robertson seat at the Univ. of Virginia. Robertson was a U.S. Senator who opposed Civil Rights. I wouldn't be so honored.
5. Doesn't he realize that his political bedfellows merely tolerate and use him, pending the time he falls to his knees and confesses Jesus as Savior, Lord, and GOD? Might as well do it. Along with Lieberman, Lapin, Eckstein, Medved, Kristol, Podhoretz, Prager and the other Uncle Hymies.

Stephen Van Eck

Published in Atheists for Human Rights, July-August 2008 Newsletter, Minneapolis, MN.

Re. Presidents' Critical Thinking

Teaching children to accept ideas or stories as truth that cannot be verified or confirmed corrupts their cognitive processes. They can become imprinted with the idea that faith, magic and superstition are legitimate ways of finding truth in their lives. They become epistemologically crippled, and for teachers, retrofitting their brains in school to become critical thinkers becomes a tall order. Ronald and Nancy Reagan believed astrology is a legitimate knowledge base that could be reliably employed in decision making. George W. Bush believes he hears the voice of his god.

What we need is a president with critical thinking skills, and who is scientifically literate. Pseudoscience is nonsense masquerading as a legitimate intellectual enterprise. Students need to learn to identify pseudo intellectual nonsense from verifiable, confirmable, reliable truth. Believing irrational, unsupportable ideas as truth is easy, but legitimate truth can be elusive and requires brain work.

Rodney Sheffer, Deerwood MN

Published in Atheists for Human Rights, July-August 2008 Newsletter, Minneapolis, MN.

Re. Reasons to be Moral

The letter that claimed "our young people keep killing" because "we've taken God ... out of our lives" assumes the only reason to be moral is the same as that of children who are only good when their parents are watching. We Atheists don't need to imagine a Parent in the sky who watches our every move, and certainly not an abusive Parent who will throw us in His Everlasting Stove if we ever disobey, in order to be ethical.

The justification for societies having moral codes is that we are all better off if we do not have to live in continual fear of everyone else trying to murder, rape, and rob us. But moral codes did not develop when our ancestors got together to agree on a contract specifying how we would treat each other. Instead, when our animal ancestors evolved to the point of speech, they were already living in bands with nonverbally enforced norms of behavior and codified these norms in spoken moral codes.

Robert Halfhill, Minneapolis MN

HEY, LETTER WRITERS!

We're looking for well-crafted letters having to do with the separation of church and state, atheism, or any other relevant topic. Members are encouraged to forward published letters, or ones which were rejected by the mainstream media, for publication with the date that they were submitted.

Send them to: FACT.newsletter@FreethinkersACT.org or PO Box 160881, San Antonio, TX 78280

The Creation Museum's First Anniversary (Part I)

by Rabbi Robert Barr, Congregation Beth-Adam

This is a report by George Maurer of Rabbi Barr's presentation at the May meeting of the Free Inquiry Group (FIG), Cincinnati, OH. Rabbi Barr is the president of The Greater Cincinnati Board of Rabbis and talked about his visit to the Creation Museum in Northern Kentucky, that opened its doors to the public on Memorial Day 2007.

Rabbi Barr began by telling us how he happened to visit the creationist museum. This after he had declared publicly and on his web site he would never go because he did not intend to give them any money. However, about nine months ago he received a call from German Public Radio. He was slightly skeptical at first but he answered the call. The person identified himself as American, and when Rabbi Barr asked where he was calling from, he replied he was calling from Berlin. He went on to explain that he had lived in the States as a teenager, so his English was colloquial. He produced a Sunday show from Berlin talking about American Culture.

The broadcaster was coming to the United States to visit the Creation Museum. The debate between evolution and creation is an American phenomenon, he explained. He was planning a program on the Creation Museum on its first anniversary. He had been given the name of Rabbi Barr as a knowledgeable contact person, and would the Rabbi accompany him on this excursion.

The German broadcaster, the Rabbi, and another friend, a Presbyterian minister visited the museum on 9 November. Rabbi Barr told us: "We arrived about a quarter to ten. Other than I thought it was silly, offensive and bad science, and bad Bible, I had no pre-conceived notions about what it was going to be." After the laughter abated, he continued, "These were not really pre-conceived notions, they are facts. I had my camera along because I travel a lot and I take a lot of pictures in the process. I didn't know whether it was going to be a problem but I started taking pictures." He then took us on a "virtual tour" of the Creation Museum.

We showed up and we were early and the parking lot was full. Before we go any further I want to read you something: "Officials at the Museum said that they had passed their one year attendance goal in only seven months, drawing \$297,000 dollars at the end of 2007, and gotten 400,000 visitors in the first year." When the Museum opened on Memorial Day with protesters outside, the Creation Museum said that their twelve month goal was 250,000 visitors. They passed the 300,000 mark in January of this year. When I read about this in The Enquirer- not that I'm a skeptic - but I thought that maybe The Enquirer was being more generous than was warranted. When we showed up I began to see the number of people who were there. I talked to a number of friends of mine who went on a Saturday, it was so busy, they stood in line for an hour to get tickets, and it was so crowded they walked out, but they were told: "well give you your money back, we know it's crowded on the weekends, come back during the week." When I had read about the fact that there were not enough parking spaces, I thought that was also part of the press, but when you drive around the neighborhood, in some of the subdivisions, there are signs that say, "Please don't park here." The neighbors are bothered by it. They need more parking. It was depressing. Almost a half a million people have gone there already.

At the same time, an unaffiliated Institute for Creation Research in Texas seeks approval for a Master's Program in Science Education. So there is not only this museum but there are people who are trying to award master's degrees in creationism biology and geology and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board may well [eventually] give its final approval. Teachers thus qualified would find employment in religious schools, but might well apply to teach in public schools too.

The first thing, outside the building is a dinosaur. The kids love dinosaurs. The museum goal is to get families, homeschoolers, and churches to come visit and dinosaurs are hip, cool and fun. What would you see at the Natural History Museum? The bones of dinosaurs. So here too, dinosaurs. But their notions of when dinosaurs lived and our notions of dinosaurs are extremely different. They believe in the creation in six literal days. Their Bible is bad. It isn't just that their science is bad, their Bible is worse. A lot of folks who are against the museum just object to their science. I rail against the fact that they reject astronomy, physics, geology, archeology, and linguistics along with other fields. But their Bible study I find repulsive.

Fundamentalists do a lot of work to show the "day" as used in one of the stories in Genesis is a 24-hour day. Every major religion has rejected the notion that the days of creation are 24-hour days. The Catholic Church has said that a biblical day can be different than a modern day, the Lutherans, the Methodists, Conservative and Reform Judaism, most religious people are no longer trying to shoe horn creation into six days. They view these stories as metaphors.

If you read the bible closely there are two creation stories side by side, Genesis I and Genesis II. In the one man and woman are created simultaneously and equally; in the other man is created first and woman subservient four days later. Fundamentalists don't deal with that.

[Continued on the next page ..](#)

The Creation Museum's First Anniversary (Part II)

by Rabbi Robert Barr, Congregation Beth-Adam

The first thing you see in the museum is a scene with a waterfall and people and dinosaurs living together. Then you see Adam and Eve and a lamb and a penguin all very co-existent because everything was created in six days. This scene is before the fall of humankind. Animals didn't function like animals today. Before the fall none of the animals in the Garden of Eden were meat eaters. So all the animals that we know co-exist. Dinosaurs lived at the same time as human beings. According to their interpretation of the Bible everything was perfect. And perfect meant there was no death. So animals would not kill each other and that means even the dinosaurs were plant eaters. They merely had those big teeth to crack coconuts!

That is not what the bible was meant to say. The Rabbi does not think they are reading Genesis right. But for somebody who wants to believe, for somebody who is bringing their children here, they provide an explanation.

There is a dinosaur with a sign saying, *Thou shalt not touch*. The Rabbi thought this was cute. He insisted the museum and its production is incredible, it is absolutely fantastically well done. He was depressed. It wasn't junky, it wasn't cheesy, they put 35 million bucks into it and you can see the money. There is another display of Adam and Eve. This is another display of the Garden of Eden. If you look at them, they are not what you would expect Adam and Eve to look like, you wouldn't expect European looking folks in the Garden of Eden.

This building is called a Creation Museum, but it's not a museum; it's a church that has a series of sermons. Their use of the word *museum* I think is disingenuous. It is not even a Biblical museum - "I've been to Biblical museums" - this is a sermon. There is a quote posted: "For this cause a man shall leave his mother and father and cleave to his wife and they shall be together as one flesh, therefore what god has joined together, let no man separate." Jesus Christ said that! This is really interesting because this is in the Garden of Eden. They are already quoting from Jesus Christ. If you know the Bible, he wasn't part of Genesis. They quoted this because they wanted a foundation for marriage as one man, one woman. All of this display is about supporting certain ideas. And this brings up a bizarre aspect: it doesn't matter when something happened as long as it can be ascribed to the Bible. The point is they don't care if they quote out of sequence; they want to make their point. In this museum people are taking pictures. Some people who come to this museum imagine this is what the Garden of Eden looked like.

The reason the museum is located here is that two-thirds of Americans are living within a one day drive. That is why they came to Northern Kentucky. They weren't looking for some cheap land, they are strategically located to bring field trips from churches and the home schooled. These people come to see the Garden of Eden. The serpent is here and it looks benign. Why is the serpent benign looking? They haven't eaten the apple yet, so nothing is quite bad. So what happens next: Eve eats the fruit of the tree and gives it to the man who also eats it and their eyes are opened. God comes down and they hide from him. The world changes and death comes into the world.

Now what happens in the museum, things go dark. Their clothes are made of animal skins. The next scene is Noah's Ark. This is incredibly important for fundamentalists for the flood explains much that exists on earth. All the fossil records we know, the stratigraphy we've studied, the reasons that fossils are on mountain tops, all that is explained by the flood. The museum has an amazing diorama with marvelous animatronics.

Then they have a whole section about passing down traditions. You have to prove that tradition came down accurately. That is a really important point. How do you prove that their God was an epiphany at Sinai? Because 600,000 people witnessed it. They use numbers and then they say it all came down accurately. It is emphasized the King James version of the Bible is the authorized translation. What believers want is to authorize it. The passing of the tradition becomes incredibly important. If there is a break in the transmission, then one could argue that the stories we have are incorrect. They need to do that.

Rabbi Barr concluded: "I really went in thinking I was going to a Creation Museum. Assuming that it was going to focus on the state of creation and the period that ends at the Tower of Babel. But this is not a Creation Museum. Creation is only a small segment. The whole point to show creation is true is to justify Jesus." This appears in a quote from the Museum brochure: "Our hope is that the museum will challenge non-Christians to receive Jesus Christ as savior and Lord and to equip Christians to better evangelize the lost of Jesus Christ as Creator and Redeemer."

So that's what the museum is. When the Regional Board of Tourism promotes them, they're promoting a church. What we should be saying to every public official: "we don't want dime one to go there because it's a church." They can be tax exempt, but let's start calling it what it is. Call it a Creation Church. They shouldn't get the benefit of being called a museum.

Source: FIG Leaves, July 2008, Newsletter of the Free Inquiry Group (FIG), Cincinnati, OH

Robert Ingersoll and Professor Briggs (Part I)

Charles Augustus Briggs (1841–1913) was a professor at the Union Theological Seminary in New York City from 1874 to 1904. In 1892 he was tried for heresy by the presbytery of New York. The charges were primarily based upon Briggs' conclusion that the Bible is not inspired as expressed during his inauguration as professor of Biblical theology in 1891. Briggs was first acquitted, but in 1893 he was suspended.

Robert Ingersoll wrote about Briggs suspension and stated "Studying the Bible was the first mistake that Professor Briggs made, reasoning was the second, and publishing his conclusions was the third." Ingersoll used this opportunity to question the veracity of various sections of the Bible. Some excerpts from Ingersoll's writing follow.

The Biblical Flood

This flood business puts Jehovah in such an idiotic light. Of course, he must have known, after the "fall" of Adam and Eve, that he would have to drown their descendants. Certainly it would have been more merciful to have killed Adam and Eve, made a new pair and kept the serpent out of the Garden of Eden. If Jehovah had been an intelligent God he never would have created the serpent. Then there would have been no fall, no flood, no atonement, no hell.

Think of a God who drowned a world! What a merciless monster! The cruelty of the flood is exceeded only by its stupidity. Thousands of little theologians have tried to explain this miracle. This is the very top of absurdity.

The rain fell for forty days, this caused the flood. The water was at least thirty thousand feet in depth. Seven hundred and fifty feet a day more than thirty feet an hour, six inches a minute; the rain fell for forty days. Does any man with sense enough to eat and breathe believe this idiotic lie?

Sodom and Gomorrah

The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah is another legend. If those cities were destroyed sensible people believe the phenomenon was as natural as the destruction of Herculaneum and Pompeii. They do not believe that in either case it was the result of the wickedness of the people. Neither does any thinking man believe that the wife of Lot was changed or turned into a pillar of salt as a punishment for having looked back at her burning home. How could flesh, bones and blood be changed to salt?

The Plagues of Egypt

When a truth-loving man reads about the plagues of Egypt, should he reason as he reads? Should he take into consideration the fact that like stories have been told and believed by savages for thousands of years? Should he ask himself whether Jehovah in his efforts to induce the Egyptian King to free the Hebrews acted like a sensible God? Should he ask himself whether a good God would kill the babes of the people on account of the sins of the king? Whether he would torture, mangle and kill innocent cattle to get even with a monarch?

Moses

The probability is that the Hebrews never were in Egypt. In the Hebrew language there are no Egyptian words, and in the Egyptian no Hebrew. This proves that the Hebrews could not have mingled with the Egyptians for four hundred and thirty years. As a matter of fact, Moses is a myth. The enslavement of the Hebrews, the flight, the journey through the wilderness existed only in the imagination of ignorance.

Joshua

So Professor Briggs has his doubts about the sun and moon having been stopped for a day in order that General Joshua might kill more heathen. This miracle can be accounted for only in one way. Jehovah must have stopped the earth.

[Continued on the next page ...](#)



FACT T-Shirts for Sale (Grey w/Black Logo)

Small-XLarge.....\$12.00	3X.....\$15.00
2X.....\$14.00	Vests (Red).....\$17.00

To order or for further information, contact Sally Chizek
Sally.Chizek@FreethinkersACT.org (210) 656-3796

Robert Ingersoll and Professor Briggs (Part I)

The earth, turning over at about one thousand miles an hour weighing trillions of tons had to be stopped. Now we know that all arrested motion changes instantly to heat. It has been calculated that to stop the earth would cause as much heat as could be produced by burning three lumps of coal, each lump as large as this world. Now, is it possible that a God in his right mind would waste all that force? If Jehovah performed this miracle he must have been insane. There should be some relation, some proportion, between means and ends. No sane general would call into the field a million soldiers and a hundred batteries to kill one insect. And yet the disproportion of means to the end sought would be reasonable when compared with what Jehovah is claimed to have done.

The Father of Christ

It seems clear that when the gospel according to Matthew was first written the writer believed that Christ was a lineal descendant of David, through his father, Joseph. The genealogy is given for the purpose of showing that the blood of David flowed in the veins of Christ. The man who wrote that genealogy had never heard that the Holy Ghost was the father of Christ. That was an afterthought.

How is it possible to prove that the Holy Ghost was the father of Christ? The Holy Ghost said nothing on the subject. Mary wrote nothing and we have no evidence that Joseph had a dream. The divinity of Christ rests upon a dream that somebody said Joseph had.

According to the New Testament, Mary herself called Joseph the father of Christ. She told Christ that Joseph, his father, had been looking for him. Her statement is better evidence than Joseph's dream if he really had it. If there are legends in Holy Scripture, as Professor Briggs declares, certainly the divine parentage of Christ is one of them. The story lacks even originality.

The Gospels

There are many contradictions in the gospels. They differ not only on questions of fact, but as to Christianity itself. According to Matthew, Mark and Luke, if you will forgive others God will forgive you. This is the one condition of salvation. But in John we find an entirely different religion. According to John you must be born again and believe in Jesus Christ. There you find for the first time about the atonement that Christ died to save sinners. The gospel of John discloses a regular theological system, a new one. To forgive others is not enough. You must have faith. You must be born again. The four gospels cannot be harmonized. If John is true the others are false. If the others are true John is false. From this there is no escape.

Is the Bible Inspired?

Suppose that all the interpolations in the Bible should be found and the original be perfectly restored, what evidence would we have that it was written by inspired men? How can the fact of inspiration be established? When was it established? Did Jehovah furnish anybody with a list of books he had inspired? Does anybody know that he ever said that he had inspired anybody? Did the writer of Genesis claim that he was inspired? Did any writer of any part of the Pentateuch make the claim? Did the authors of Joshua, Judges, Kings or Chronicles pretend that they had obtained their facts from Jehovah? Does the author of Job or of the Psalms pretend to have received assistance from God?

There is not the slightest reference to God in Esther or in Solomon's Song. Why should theologians say that those books were inspired? The dogma of inspiration rests on no established fact. It rests only on assertion the assertion of those who have no knowledge on the subject. Professor Briggs calls the Bible a "holy" book. He seems to think that much of it was inspired; that it is in some sense a message from God. The reasons he has for thinking so I cannot even guess. He seems also to have his doubts about certain parts of the New Testament. He is not certain that the angel who appeared to Joseph in a dream was entirely truthful, or he is not certain that Joseph had the dream.

Source: <http://www.archive.org/details/worksofrobertgin12ingeiala>

READ A GOOD BOOK LATELY? TELL US ABOUT IT.

Send your book reviews, recommendations, critiques, or top 10 list to:

FACT.newsletter@FreethinkersACT.org

Or P.O. Box 160881, San Antonio, TX 78280

Changing Religious Attitudes

by Nick Lee

In discussions among Freethinkers, we often talk in terms of the “Church” as a monolithic enemy in the battle for Church/State Separation. But religion has never been that unified in their doctrine. (Why else would there be 2,000 religious denominations in the U.S.?) There have always been vast groups of religious leaders, including Christian Protestants, who have been concerned about the recent heavy involvement of fundamentalist evangelicals in the political process who have taken dogmatic public policy positions.

According to a recent survey by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, a majority of Americans now believe that churches should keep out of politics. More impressively, that includes 50% of people who consider themselves political conservatives. That is eight percentage points higher than just four years ago, and continues a trend that has become evident over the past 12 years that Pew has been asking the same question.

This shift in attitudes about the role of churches as political instruments may be reflected in the November elections, as the knee-jerk religious support for the Republican party may be softening, while the Democrats are reaching out to centrist believers.

This one survey does not spell the end of the battle for separation of church and state, but illustrates that generalized assumptions do not serve us well. We may not agree with the Methodist (or Lutheran, or Episcopalian, or whatever) minister theologically, but, if he will march with us in protection of the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment to the Constitution, he is our friend!

Pascal Was Wrong

by Chick Schissel

Pascal's Wager says that if you become a believer it might enable eternal bliss and there is no down side: it can help but it can't hurt. But if Pascal's Wager causes you to become religious, if it persuades you to waste a considerable amount of otherwise productive time in praying and religious rituals, that hurts.

Pascal is wrong when he asserts that if God exists, belief in him would enable eternal bliss. Consider the following scenario: A philosophically inclined man decided, on the basis of the wager, to become religious. He died, and stood before God at the portals of heaven.

God: Prove you deserve heaven.

Deceased: I believed in your existence.

God: But there is no evidence of my existence; in fact all the evidence I created clearly disproved it.

Deceased: My belief was based on faith, belief despite the evidence.

God: Did I create you with a brain?

Deceased: Yes.

God: Did I expect you to use that brain?

Deceased: I suppose so.

God: Well you haven't. You have gone against my wishes. I don't want you here in heaven. Go to hell.

Source: PIQUE, Newsletter of the Secular Humanist Society of New York, July 2008

I'M IN THE MORAL MINORITY

I don't think there's really such a thing as morality. I think it's a human construct designed to facilitate the control of people. Values, ethics, legal standards—all of these things are human-generated, and they're lumped under some vague idea called morality. But suppose humans got it wrong? Suppose there's no actual, objective morality? Suppose there's just a natural, worldly, secular, common-sense standard of behavior whose purpose is what's best for getting along and what's best for survival? That would be a good system. Why should a system like that be overlaid with a sense of spooky, mystical, judgmental oversight?

Excerpt from “When Will Jesus Bring the Pork Chops?”, George Carlin (1937-2008)

September Events

September 2nd - THCF First Tuesday Lunch

1:00 pm: Meet other Freethinkers at the Texas Hill Country
Freethinkers' First Tuesday Lunch (held monthly)

Host: Julie Fisher

No Discussion Topic

Ping's Restaurant (by HEB in Leon Springs)
24165 W IH 10 # 221

September 10th – THCF Northwest Lunch

1:00 pm - Meet other Freethinkers at the Texas Hill
Country Freethinkers' Lunch (held monthly)

Host: Julie Fisher

No Discussion Topic

Cha Cha's
2026 Babcock Rd
New Location!

September 20th – The Lunch Bunch

11:30 am: Join the "Lunch Bunch" for good food and
great conversation before the General Meeting

Sarika's Thai Restaurant
4319 Medical Dr, Near Fredericksburg Rd

September 20th – FACT General Meeting

1:00 pm: General meetings occur on the 3rd Saturday of
every month (unless otherwise announced)

Special Performance: "¿Chicana Atheist?"

By Anna De Luna

Community Unitarian Universalist Church
4818 Beverly Mae East (off Babcock)

September 27th – FACT Discussion Brunch

9:00 am - Join us for a brunch and discussion the last
Saturday of every month.

Host: Jane Tuck

Topic: TBD

DENNY'S Back Room
4510 Fredericksburg Road
(South of Crossroads Mall)
NOTE TIME CHANGE!!

October Events

October 7th—THCF First Tuesday Lunch

October 8th—THCF Lunch in the Northwest

October 18th—General Meeting

October 25th—FACT Discussion Brunch

October 26th—Texas Freethought Convention

September 2008						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

October 2008						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

FACT
P.O. Box 160881
San Antonio, TX 78280
(210) 767-0769

www.FreethinkersACT.org

Opinions and statements made by authors, contained herein may not reflect the position of FACT and are, therefore, not the responsibility of FACT, its officers, directors, or editors.



FACT MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Tel: (____) _____ Cell: (____) _____ E-mail: _____

Return this form to : FACT, P.O. Box 160881, San Antonio, TX 78280-3081

ANNUAL DUES (Jan-Dec)

A.	Individual Paying Member	\$30
B.	Family (2 or more members)	\$42
C.	Active Duty Military/Full-time Student (non-voting)	\$18

- Membership dues are due in January.
- Dues are non-refundable.
- New members who join after the 1st month of the year will pay a prorated amount for the remainder of the year.
- Members who paid dues the previous year, but who are paying late, will be liable for the entire year.
- Donations in addition to dues are always welcome.