



THE SECULAR CIRCULAR

Newsletter of the Humanist Society of Santa Barbara

www.SBHumanists.org

MARCH 2012

March Program

Speaker: Michael Newdow

Subject: Our Coruscating Constitution

Mike Newdow - whom you may remember from his (unfortunately short-lived) victory in challenging "under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance a decade ago - will discuss our nation's Constitution, which he didn't really discover himself until he brought his case in the federal courts. Newdow will give an entertaining, educational, and inspiring presentation that puts the document in its historical perspective. Emphasizing its religion clauses, he will explain the Establishment Clause, a uniquely American idea that (as is the case today) has repeatedly been attacked since its ratification 220 years ago.

Join him on that journey, and gain a new understanding of the most important lesson from your junior high school American History courses. See how the framers of our great national charter consistently shied away from references to God, as they spoke repeatedly of "freedom of conscience" in matters of religion. Learn how they intended for that freedom to be guaranteed to all. And leave with a new sense of pride in the American experiment that now, more than ever, should be seen as among the greatest of advances in human civilization.



Michael Newdow's appearance at HSSB is sponsored by **Richard and Penny Martin**.

When: Saturday, March 17th, 2012. Doors open at 2:30 pm, program begins at 3:00 pm.

Where: Patio Room at Vista del Monte

Please park only in spaces behind the church marked "VDM"

Fee: Optional donation: \$2 for members, \$5 for non-members

Dining: Vista Del Monte. Cost per person, \$22. Please send your reservations to:

Activities@santabarbarahumanists.org .

For more information: 769-HSSB (769-4772)

HSSB Book Club Marty Shapiro

Our February book club convoy to Solvang and back was a rousing success and we now look forward to a tamer trip to Montecito in March. Molto grazie to the di Croces for their kind invitation, and for their gracious hospitality. "A splendid time was had by all." Our hostess for March is Carol Weingartner, who lives at 157 Santa Elena Lane, in Montecito (near Olive Mill Road and US 101). We'll be meeting there on Wednesday, March 21, at 1:30 p.m. (969-1558)

And the book -- it's got a funny title: *Towing Jehovah*. Two things - (1) every reviewer has raved (more or less) about the book, and (2) every reviewer (mostly) has felt the urge to recount the "fantastic" plot of this metaphorical parable. So I won't - but I will include here a sample Mini-review:

"This book has something to offend everyone. It is hilarious, deep, troubling, and enlightening, all at the same time. No matter what your faith (or lack thereof) you will gain something from it. Buy it and read it."

See you there!

Humanists Support Group Claudia Solé

We are doing rounds at Cottage Hospital and it's going very well. The main problem will be finding one's way around that enormous new facility! Stay well and let us know if you need help whether in hospital or not. solemio@verizon.net

New Board Members

Recently the HSSB Board reached its maximize size of eleven with the election of **Judy Fontana** and **Helen Gordon**. Meet our two new Board members.

Judy Fontana. I was born in Stockton, California in 1948 and am a third generation Californian. I

grew up in Southern California and moved to Guerneville on the Russian River during high school. I attended UCSB and graduated with a BA in anthropology in 1970. With a look toward employment I obtained my RN from SBCC in 1973 and my BA in nursing and PHN from California Lutheran University in 1982 and have worked in various areas of nursing in the Santa Barbara area, retiring in 2003. I come from a long line of non-believers and my father, Ralph Fontana, was an early member of this organization.



Judy Fontana

Eight years ago my husband, Phil Holland, and I bought a 46 foot sailboat and sailed off to wander the Pacific Ocean in search of everyone's fantasy. We sailed as far north as Kodiak, Alaska and as far south as the North Island of New Zealand. Along the way we explored many of the traditional islands of the South Pacific such as the Galapagos, Marquesas, Society and Cook Islands, Tonga, Fiji, Hawaii and many others. It was an incredible experience and we are now back in this area permanently.

Reintegrating into the community and the greater society at large is an ongoing process. Having returned after eight years I am confronted with many changes and have found the HSSB a great place to explore many of these changes. I have recently joined the board and have agreed to be the activities chair and look forward to expanding activities programs this coming year. I am a member of the SB Unitarian Society, love singing in their choir and at the age of 64 have started taking voice lessons figuring that it is never too late to learn something new or to attempt to improve oneself.

Helen Gordon. I'm a historical novelist and poet, retired from the classroom as an English Professor at Bakersfield College in 1995 to bring my husband to SB for medical care. I served as editor in the Electrical and Computer Engineering Department at UCSB for 5 years. Now single after my husband's death in 2004, I spend time



Helen Gordon

writing articles and books, promoting my books, and do some traveling. I volunteer at Maravilla Retirement Community and the two Unitarian-Universalist churches in SB and Goleta and recently won an essay contest sponsored by the newspaper "Successful Aging" in Santa Barbara. Most recently I have been promoting a word game "Anagrabber (R)" for fund-raising, and speaking about my research for my recent books, *The Secret Love Story in Shakespeare's Sonnets* [2008] and *Malinalli of the Fifth Sun: The Slave Girl who Changed the Fate of Mexico and Spain* [2011].

New Board Election Ron Kronenberg

Our Board will be compiling a slate of candidates for the new Board at our April Board meeting. If you are interest in serving as an at-large Board member or as an officer such as President, Secretary or Treasurer please contact me by April 15th. Our new Board term begins on July 1st and ends June 30th the following year. Any questions you may have about the Board are best answered by me or any other member of the Board. We look forward to new ideas brought to our Board by new members. Thanks.

Actors/Actresses Needed

The July meeting of HSSB will feature another production of Steve Allen's "Meeting of Minds". Besides Steve himself, the cast will consist of Martin Luther, Voltaire, Plato and Florence Nightingale. If you'd like to try out for the cast please contact Meredith McMinn at: meredith48@mac.com. Auditions will be held in April, and rehearsals will start soon thereafter.

Beyond the Sacred Canopy Jonathan Young

The massive tent filled most of the vacant city block. The big top was usually used for the circus, but this time it was set up as a canvas cathedral for a revival meeting near downtown Los Angeles. The year was 1949, but could have been a hundred years earlier. Such meetings with itinerant preachers inviting people down the sawdust trail are an old American tradition.

I was just a boy, and fascinated to watch the tent go up, and see how they set out thousands of folding wooden chairs, and built a platform for the preacher and enormous choir. My daddy was one of the organizers, so us kids were around for all eight weeks of meetings. The preacher was a young stem-winder named Billy Graham, and this was the crusade that made him famous.

Reflecting back on those tent meetings and the many other huge events my father helped organize for Billy Graham through the years, I mainly remember how stirring the music and preaching were to me. I was a sanctified boy, with no doubts about the absolute truth of the sacred worldview that had always saturated my reality. To this day I am impressed with the welcoming warmth of the fundamentalist circles of my youth.

It wasn't until college that I seriously considered other ways of looking at the big questions. It was a provocative discussion at the UCLA Bruin Humanist Forum in the early sixties that introduced the notion that we can choose from the great teachings

to assemble our own philosophy of life. It would be a few years before I could handle this kind of radical self-invention, but it got filed away somewhere in the back of my mind that such a thing was possible.

After changing schools several times, I transferred to the most conservative bible college I could find. After graduating, I started at a Baptist seminary, but began to have reservations. What had seemed like reassuring certainty, started feeling constrictive -- especially the emphasis on sin, and the judgmental narrowness of thinking.

All this was deeply upsetting. I went for therapy at the Fuller Theological Seminary. After spilling out all my spiritual struggles to the therapist, he said I might have to get rid of my father's religion, and find my own way of engaging the life of faith. As the therapy unfolded, I left ministry studies, and started graduate work in psychology.

Reading developmental theory, I came across the idea that the God image could be an emotional fragment of how powerful a father seems in early life. This rang true for me. My father was a commanding leader. I could see immediately that he was the template for my sense of God. My gathering doubts culminated in a sudden shift. The God who had always been there was simply gone. The idea of an afterlife seemed like wishful thinking. The notion of one true path seemed parochial. Everything changed at once.

The departure from the old time religion did not seem deliberate. It was not so much choice as collapse. Any effort to make a logical case for the transformation would be a stretch. In hindsight, the steps leading to the change seem obvious, but at the time, the departure was unexpected.

Emotionally, it was like the earth had fallen away under my feet. The loss was wrenching. I felt like an orphan. The wonderful sense of belonging and shelter the church community had always given me fell apart. I lost most of my friends. (They were so intent on getting me back in the fold it got annoying.)

What followed was a lengthy project of building a personal framework for meaning. One expression of this new inner life was finding my way back to the Humanism. I went through the process to be certified as a Humanist Celebrant/Minister in 1979. Performing weddings and memorials (without reference to a divinity) gave a place for my pastoral tendencies, as did becoming a psychologist.

At Humanist meetings, I found a friendly welcome, accompanied by a wide range of perspectives, and a genuine respect for differing views. The national Humanist conferences I've attended have been gatherings of marvelous characters. Many kindred spirits have also escaped oppressive religious backgrounds. It's great to share notes. These Humanist events don't take place in enormous circus tents, but I still manage to find an invigorating renewal I might be tempted to call revival.

Wandering in a vast forest at night, I have only a faint light to guide me. A stranger appears and says to me: 'My friend, you should blow out your candle in order to find your way more clearly.' The stranger is a theologian. -Denis Diderot, philosopher (1713-1784)

Proposition 8 Ruled Unconstitutional

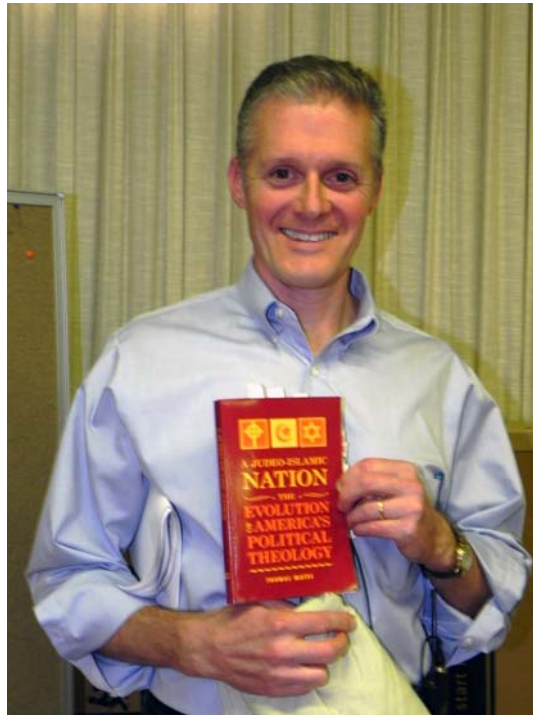
The U.S. 9th Circuit Court of Appeals recently ruled that California's ban on same-sex marriage is unconstitutional. Here is Judge Stephen Reinhardt's principal argument in the 2-1 decision.

"Although the Constitution permits communities to enact most laws they believe to be desirable, it requires that there be at least a legitimate reason for the passage of a law that treats different people differently. There was no such reason that Proposition 8 could have been enacted. All that Proposition 8 accomplished was to take away from same sex-couples the right to be granted marriage licenses and thus legally to use the designation 'marriage.' Proposition 8 serves no purpose, and has no effect, other than to lessen the status and human dignity of gay men and lesbians in California."

February Meeting Report: Tom Mates Jim Balter

Tom Mates, HSSB member and a materials scientist at UCSB, who spoke to us previously in April 2008, has recently finished his book *A Judeo-Islamic Nation: The Evolution of America's Political Theology*, and presented his ideas from that book to a full house.

Tom observed that the religious social conservatives have slowed but cannot reverse progress toward liberalization, and they feel embattled and have become insular, with their own web sites and TV shows, homeschooling their kids and so on; this isn't healthy for democracy, which is supposed to be based on conversation. Tom wants to find a way to talk about religion in public life -- a way other than the mocking and put-downs of the "New Atheists". He proposes talking about relativism, the simple fact that different believers believe different things, that religion is in a constant state of evolution. Religionists differ on war vs. pacifism, the status of women, protecting vs. dominating the environment, and so on, and this refutes the argument that the antidote to our supposed slide into decay due to moral relativism is religious absolutism, when it isn't absolute at all. If it really were written into the Constitution that the U.S. is a Christian nation, this still wouldn't give us any guidance on these issues. Tom suggests that we should focus on relativism in our discussions with religionists, rather than on unwinnable arguments about the existence of God. Journalists should ask Christian candidates whether people



Tom Mates

Photograph by Robert Bernstein

with other views on social issues are really Christians ... to say no is political suicide, and to say that people can come to their own conclusions undercuts the very idea of theism.

Tom expanded on the idea of the evolution of religion by contrasting modern American Christianity with its roots. The early Christians had no earthly goals; Jesus and Paul announced their new faith as anti-imperial; the world was going to end because it was being run by evil people like the

Romans. Yet, by the fourth century, the meaning of Christianity had been turned around, with Constantine and Theodosius slapping the term onto the very materialist and warlike Roman Empire.

Moses sought to free his people from Egypt, to a land where they could be self-determined, with laws of their own. The first Muslims were living under an autocratic polytheistic authority in Mecca; they fled to Medina, where they could similarly have a land of their own. The American story is about people getting out from under the power of Europe, to a land of their own ... not at all the idea of early Christianity. No one today believes in the anti-worldly, anti-material notions of the early Christians; the closest

were the Shakers: celibate, communal, any surplus wealth went into worship and proselytizing. Early Christianity had no exceptionalism, no city on a hill, no chosen people. The parallels between the American and Jewish stories are striking, and they were quite explicit among the Pilgrims of the Plymouth colony, who prided themselves on knowing Hebrew, "the language of heaven".

Another example of the evolution of Christianity is the notion of predestination, which was reinserted by the Reformation but was never a popular position. According to this idea, all events have

been willed by God; whether you will go to heaven or hell is determined before you are born. This autocratic, authoritarian concept was quite inconsistent with the ideas of equality, justice, and democracy of the newly independent U.S. ... so, it got turned around ... instead of being saved if God accepts you, you are saved if you accept Jesus. This led to the "Second Great Awakening", with revival meetings and enthusiastic preaching. The number of Americans belonging to churches went from 10% in 1760 to 50% in 1860.

These are just some of the themes that Tom discussed, along with rich historical references. You can hear his whole talk at the calendar page of our web site. And there's a lot more in his book, which is available at Amazon and other booksellers.

The Good News Club

In 2009 Katherine Stewart, a Montecito resident, spoke to HSSB about how the public school her children attended was renting out their rooms for after hours Bible studies. Since that time, Katherine has moved to New York and has written a book about what she's found out about the "Good News Club", the national organization that is behind the religious schooling.

Katherine is currently on a book tour of the country, and on Saturday, March 10 from 5-7pm, will be at the Tecolote Book Shop at 1470 E. Valley Road in Montecito. She will read from her book: *The Good News Club: The Christian Right's Stealth Assault on America's Children*.

You can find out more about Katherine Stewart from Starshine Roshell's recent column in the Santa Barbara Independent: <http://www.independent.com/news/2012/feb/15/afte/school-gospel/>

The Reason Rally

The Reason Rally is an event sponsored by many of the country's largest and most influential secular organizations. It is being advertised as "the largest

gathering of the Secular Movement in World History". It will be free to attend and will take place on March 24th from 10:00AM – 4:00PM at the National Mall in Washington, D.C. There will be music, comedy, speakers, and so much more. Click [here](#) for more information, stay tuned for frequent updates. Speakers include:

Richard Dawkins
Adam Savage
Tim Minchin
Jessica Ahlquist
Taslima Nasrin
Paul Provenza
James Randi

More about the Reason Rally Bob Perry

President Lincoln could not have imagined that the words he spoke that day at the Gettysburg battleground would be memorized by generations of American school children, or the sentiment he expressed: that the Union's soldiers died there "so that government of the people, by the people, for the people should not perish from the earth", would ever come into question. However, less than two and a quarter centuries later that is the undeniable reality. Democracy, at least in the United States, is on "life support".

The problems have been diagnosed: a polarized and dysfunctional legislature, a judicial system that is subordinate to a religious majority at the summit; and an electoral process that rewards political minorities and powerful self interests. The cure for these potentially fatal maladies is known and available; but the doctors in charge, and the people who will suffer the painful consequences if the patient dies, to date have not shown the interest or the will to administer the bitter remedy that is required. The prognosis by knowledgeable experts is that, without improvement, the deadline for recovery is twelve years!

Why TWELVE years? That is the time it now takes for the human race to add one BILLION people to the world's population. This year we just passed

seven billion. Another billion and the planet's average temperature will increase one degree with predictable disastrous effects. The alarm bells have been clanging for over fifty years: Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*; Paul Erlich's *Population Bomb*; Garrett Hardin's *Tragedy of the Commons*; and the MIT computer science study of the population/environment relationship *The Limits To Growth*. They all present real evidence that a slow grinding Armageddon could occur in our lifetime.

Though the time is short, at last there is one sign that we may be heading in the right direction: The Freedom From Religion Foundation's recent announcement sponsoring the REASON RALLY on the Washington Mall the weekend of March 24th this year, supported by twenty of the nation's freethought and secular organizations, including the American Humanist Assn., was a featured front page story on the MSNBC's website, with a large picture of Richard Dawkins, the event's principal speaker. The story's headline hailed it as a 'coming out' party for the nation's closet atheists and agnostics.

In or out, it would seem the least we can do individually is to support, in any and every way possible, this first large scale effort to gain recognition for the validity of our basic philosophical premise, and hopefully by so doing, give an impetus to the only means by which we will solve our nation's current pressing problems.

Famous Humanists: Desiderius Erasmus (Desired Beloved) Dick Cousineau

The greatest Humanist of the 15/16th Century was born in Rotterdam in 1466. His first teachers began to teach him in the Dutch language but soon he was instructed by priests to speak and read Latin in which he was encouraged to study selected ancient pagan classics. He not only acquired an astonishing command of that language but his interest was piqued in the topics revealed, namely Pre-Christian Philosophy and religion, Platonism, and Epicureanism, which damaged his orthodoxy

forever. Nonetheless he took vows as an Augustinian canon scholar (similar to Luther) and tried hard to become accustomed to the monastic life, but to no avail. He instead learned the *filles de joie* (the joys of women) and the magical openings of the world of imagination and delight.

His studies in Greek Literature convinced him that the original Christianity had been overlain by myths, and dogmas of the church, just as the reformers and humanists had said; Christ's words were overshadowed by centuries of superstitions and the



Desiderius Erasmus

desire for monetary gain. This was most evidenced to him by the hordes of monks and priests reliant on the selling of "Get out of Purgatory Free" cards and their ruse of telling the ignorant and uneducated that they should pay for the opportunity to

drink the milk of the Virgin's Breast and for kissing Joseph's sandal. His book *In Praise of Folly* debunked such superstitions, and drove the theologians to fury. His new edition of the New Testament marked the first application of humanistic learning to the early literature of the church and to the beginnings of scholarly biblical criticism, which in the 19th Century restored the Bible to human authorship, and therefore fallibility. What would Jerome say if he could see the Virgin's milk exhibited for money, portions of the True Cross, ("enough collected to 'freight a great ship'"), used to ransom dead sinners? Such were his musings in the early 1500s, and yet Erasmus found it hard, even impossible, to break from the Church that had patiently borne the sting of his critique. As a philosopher he taught peace and tolerance and civility at the same time that wars of religion were fought over him and his ideas of world peace.

His belief that “there is no peace, even unjust, which is not preferable to the most just of wars” ran up against Augustine himself and his just and even preemptive wars. He wanted a common Country for all, and the earth as the Holy Mother. He remained Orthodox even with his personal bent for rationalism and he obviously doubted the Trinity, Incarnation, Virgin Birth, and even questioned Christianity itself. He wanted to harmonize Jesus with Plato, Cicero, and Seneca, but, alas, to no avail.

Physically Erasmus was unimpressive: short, thin, pale, weak in voice and constitution but it is reported that his hands were expressive, his nose was long and quite pointed, his gray-blue eyes flashing with wit and his speech brilliant with the quickest mind of his time. His interests were few but intense, namely, Philosophy and Literature beyond all else. His writings were surpassed by no other of his time and his fame was unequalled, save for Martin Luther. He was the spirit of Renaissance and Humanism combined, in addition he was the path to The Enlightenment where he hoped education would spread, the Church would experience a deep cleansing, and the average person could keep his lovely rituals and consoling faith, but the human mind would be free to think and doubt.

The Reformation of the 16th Century was Luther’s work, but when any fresh Reformation comes about, as it is beginning today, it would be based on the principles of Erasmus, in a long slow labor of intellectual respect and tolerance for all: a new Enlightenment.

Things in Some Procession

Again on the street where I live
 these torches of large old trees.
 I liked the house because I could walk
 once every year in the light they give—
 gold on the ground, gold in the air
 falling with repeated extravagance
 into the earth, under the rain.
 In the midst of the universe’s indifference,

this beautiful gift:
 that things should die, like human minds,
 with such superfluous glory—
 the stellar explosion,
 the treasure thrown in the grave,
 the gold mask of the king.
 You can never use up
 all you’ve learned in a lifetime

and will watch at the end
 its gathered light vanish
 like a luminous landscape
 into the dark
 of your own disappearance.
 It seems such a waste.
 Why can’t you come back
 with what you’ve learned?

Like stars, seeds,
 fish eggs in billions sprayed in the sea,
 blooms of algae, golden mayflies
 that cling when they’re dead
 to your windows, you’re one
 of the things that flare and die.
 But what if all lived?—

No space on earth, a sky thick as dirt.
 Cosmos or chaos, it’s darkly ordered:
 tragedy one way, tragedy the other.

by Gordon Grigsby

Gordon Grigsby grew up in Upper Darby, Pennsylvania, near Philadelphia; was drafted twice, once into the Navy, once into the Army, but got the GI Bill twice too and will always be grateful for it; has published *Tornado Watch*, *Mid-Ohio Elegies*, and a chapbook, also some poems in magazines. He lives now in Mount Air, Ohio.

“Things in Some Procession” was published in *Above Us Only Sky, Atheist Poetry, Volume Two*, Incarnate Muse Press, 2008.

In Discussing God, a Continental Divide

Bonnie Erbe

(Bonnie Erbe is a TV host and writes for Scripps Howard News Service. Published February 3, 2012)

As I sit through and observe the God-smathered GOP presidential primary, I look longingly at Europe, where people can have intellectual, stimulating discussions about religion, atheism and politics. Europe is a place, unlike the U.S., where they don't expect a bolt of lightning to strike down any person who mentions he or she is an atheist. At the same time, Europeans are not as zealous in their lack of faith as religious voters here are in their beliefs. Europeans recognize that religion fills some basic human cravings that atheism just can't sate.

A recent review in the Financial Times of London compared three new books. *The Atheist's Guide to Reality: Enjoying Life Without Illusions* is by atheist Alex Rosenberg, who sees religion the way most people view *Grimm's Fairy Tales*. *The Importance of Religion: Meaning and Action in our Strange World* is by Gavin Flood, a religious scholar who argues for the importance of religion even in today's world, where science and technology make it horribly outmoded for some. In *Religion for Atheists: A Non-Believer's Guide to the Uses of Religion*, writer Alain de Botton travels a middle path somewhere in between religion and atheism.

Reviewer Stephen Cave, a Berlin-based philosopher, writes: "This tension between religion's intellectual implausibility and its emotional satisfactions remains unresolved to this day. As a result, there is a pattern to Western thinking on religion since the Enlightenment: First the intellectual classes gleefully declare God dead, then they set to worrying about what, if anything, is to fill the God-sized gap He leaves behind. The Cult of Reason was one answer to this puzzle. Now, after God's recent execution at the hands of the New Atheists (Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens and Co.), a number of thinkers are again asking

whether, even in His absence, we need religion regardless."

Can you imagine either Newt Gingrich or Mitt Romney speaking in such terms or even suggesting that God may or may not exist?

They, Ron Paul and Rick Santorum (and let's not forget Michele Bachmann, Herman Cain and all the rest) can't find enough ways to prove themselves the most religious one in the room. Texas Gov. Rick Perry even hosted a stadium-sized, revival-style prayer rally that drew 22,000 faithful on the eve of his presidential-nomination campaign to sport his God-fearing credentials.

There is no "tension between religion's intellectual implausibility and its emotional satisfactions" in the good ol' U.S. of A. because in most circles it is considered zany to admit to atheism. In American politics, it is tantamount to suicide.

Yet, I would love to be able to have a serious conversation in public about what secular Americans can learn from religion. As Cave points out, that conversation is already taking place in Europe, as described by writer de Botton:

"His smart and stimulating new book, 'Religion for Atheists,' is a sensitive analysis of the deeply human needs that faith meets. He offers practical suggestions for how secular society might learn from religious institutions."

I have often pondered why it is in this country that voters tell pollsters 90 percent or more of Americans believe in God when many of those polled don't attend church regularly or belong to a congregation.

It's seen as embarrassing by most Americans to admit a lack of faith, even if that admission is made to an anonymous pollster.

Religion is appealing because it answers the unanswerable questions and faith gives people a reason to hang on and even to enjoy life, when they may have no other. Religion also provides a ready-

made social structure, a calendar of activities and events and groups of friends with similar interests. Atheism would do well to adopt some of these structures and to offer adherents an alternative to socializing solely within church (or synagogue or mosque) walls.

Tebow, an Opposing View

Ryan Eshoff

**Sports Columnist, UCLA Daily Bruin
January 19, 2012**

[The January Secular Circular published an article disapproving of Denver Broncos' Quarterback Tim Tebow's explicit religious gestures on the football field. Ryan Eshoff is this editor's grandson. Ed.]

The original, snarky opening line of this column was going to be: "As a sports columnist, I'm obligated to write about Tim Tebow." It didn't take long to realize, though, that writing about Tebow was not an act of obligation but of inspiration. Everybody seems to have weighed in on the Denver Broncos' quarterback, who has done some incredible things on the football field while exhibiting a vigorously overt Christian spirituality.

Among other accomplishments on the gridiron, Tebow has proven himself to be a master of "The Option" – an offensive system that necessitates elite athleticism and decision-making skills on the part of the quarterback. The Option is a running offense that often puts quarterbacks, like Tebow, directly in harm's way. And that's just the beginning. The real point of discussion about Tebow is his religion – the man's genuineness when it comes to spirituality has been debated to the point of ridiculousness.

It's an issue that's especially poignant for me, because I happen to believe in the same tri-person God – Father/Son/Spirit, or GM/Coach/Offensive Coordinator, if you will – that Tebow does. So does Johnathan Franklin. "He's a role model to believers and non-believers," said the UCLA running back, one of the football team's more openly Christian athletes. "It takes a lot of faith to do what he has."

I've watched a LOT of Tebow footage, whether it be highlight reels or press conference soundbites. The idea that a spiritual force is intervening to help him break tackles or complete passes is silly, but the thing about Tebow is that he's operating with an unreal amount of poise and confidence that stems from his faith. What makes the man so endearing is that he's been the same way at every level of exposure. I believe that the guy you see in the NFL is the same guy you would've seen had you attended his Pop Warner games.

That's one of the most inspiring things about Tebow to me: It'd be a lot easier to share my faith in this column space if it was just my mom and girlfriend reading (which might be the case anyway, it usually is). But the more intense the microscope, the more trepidation is involved in living out your beliefs, especially when it comes to religion. "(Tebow's) allowing God to use him as an example, on that platform," Franklin said. "The way he's been able to resist temptations and remain steadfast in his beliefs is just evidence of how God's doing something great with him."

What can't get lost in this is that Tebow's actions aren't just inspirational for the Christian community that Franklin and I belong to. The fact that a professional athlete playing the most important position in sports remains so convicted in his beliefs should be encouraging to anybody who feels strongly about anything. Look at UCLA's own history; arguably the most famous Bruin of all time – Lew Alcindor – changed his name to Kareem Abdul-Jabbar to reflect his Islamic faith.

"Guys like Tebow don't come along very often," Franklin said. "It's very encouraging for a guy like me to see that he's capable of living out his faith in a professional sports environment." This isn't to say that living out your faith and your beliefs should be based on a desire to mimic the actions of others. But a guy like Tebow just has such an infectious and healthy confidence that he inspires people like me and Johnathan Franklin. I understand that it's easier for us to be drawn to Tebow because we share similar beliefs, but I don't think that the

lessons learned from his stance and character are exclusive to Christianity. Or football.

Regardless of what he does on the football field for the rest of his career, Tebow should remain a role model. Some have chosen to deride his openness, but we also have the choice to embrace it, to apply it. That's the option I'm running with.

Dear Dr. Laura

A few years ago on her radio show, Dr Laura Schlesinger said that, as an observant Orthodox Jew, she believes homosexuality to be an abomination according to Leviticus 18:22, and cannot be condoned under any circumstance. The following response, penned by an anonymous listener, soon appeared on the Internet.

Dear Dr. Laura:

Thank you for doing so much to educate people regarding God's Law. I have learned a great deal from your show, and try to share that knowledge with as many people as I can. When someone tries to defend the homosexual lifestyle, for example, I simply remind them that Leviticus 18:22 clearly states it to be an abomination . End of debate.

I do need some advice from you, however, regarding some other elements of God's Laws and how to follow them.

1. Leviticus 25:44 states that I may possess slaves, both male and female, provided they are purchased from neighboring nations. A friend of mine claims that this applies to Mexicans, but not Canadians. Can you clarify? Why can't I own Canadians?

2. I would like to sell my daughter into slavery, as sanctioned in Exodus 21:7. In this day and age, what do you think would be a fair price for her?

3. I know that I am allowed no contact with a woman while she is in her period of Menstrual uncleanness - Lev.15: 19-24. The problem is how do I tell? I have tried asking, but most women take offense.

4. When I burn a bull on the altar as a sacrifice, I know it creates a pleasing odor for the Lord - Lev.1:9. The problem is my neighbors. They claim the odor is not pleasing to them. Should I smite them?

5. I have a neighbor who insists on working on the Sabbath. Exodus 35:2 clearly states he should be put to death. Am I morally obligated to kill him myself, or should I ask the police to do it?

6. A friend of mine feels that even though eating shellfish is an abomination, Lev. 11:10, it is a lesser abomination than homosexuality. I don't agree. Can you settle this? Are there 'degrees' of abomination?

7. Lev. 21:20 states that I may not approach the altar of God if I have a defect in my sight. I have to admit that I wear reading glasses. Does my vision have to be 20/20, or is there some wiggle-room here?

8. Most of my male friends get their hair trimmed, including the hair around their temples, even though this is expressly forbidden by Lev. 19:27. How should they die?

9. I know from Lev. 11:6-8 that touching the skin of a dead pig makes me unclean, but may I still play football if I wear gloves?

10. My uncle has a farm. He violates Lev.19:19 by planting two different crops in the same field, as does his wife by wearing garments made of two different kinds of thread (cotton/polyester blend). He also tends to curse and blaspheme a lot. Is it really necessary that we go to all the trouble of getting the whole town together to stone them? Lev.24:10-16. Couldn't we just burn them to death at a private family affair, like we do with people who sleep with their in-laws? (Lev. 20:14)

I know you have studied these things extensively and thus enjoy considerable expertise in such matters, so I'm confident you can help.

Thank you again for reminding us that God's word is eternal and unchanging.

Letters

To Editor: Secular Circular

I've seen a ton of movies at the Santa Barbara Film fest this week. An excellent documentary on growing and producing organic chocolate in Grenada, "Nothing But Chocolate", had my favorite quote of the entire festival.

The main character signs up a local woman to be one of his farmers. She says, "Thank God!" He responds, "I'm an atheist. I don't believe in God. But I do believe in chocolate."

Me too. I believe in chocolate!

Timothy Rodgers, M.D.

To Editor: National Geographic Magazine

I do hope that you can stand some criticism and are willing to publish the following letter:

I have been a subscriber of your magazine for well over 50 years and considered it always, and liked it to be, a science publication. So please leave religious writing to the zealots who are trying to force their superstitions down our throats. It is an undeniable fact that the misery that organized religion has caused on this globe far outweighs any good it has done. Wearing the blinders of religious dogmas makes it impossible for a human being to face life objectively. So let science and clear reasoning be our guides. Like Benjamin Franklin stated: "The way to see by faith is to shut the eye to reason".

John Coppejans

Non-HSSB Events of Interest Diane Krohn

Upcoming Events in California:

- March 3: Katherine Stewart, author of *The Good News Club: The Christian Right's Stealth Assault on America's Children*. Irvine. <http://www.au.org/get-involved/events/orange-county-chapter-event-with-katherine-stewart-march-3>
- March 4: Katherine Stewart, author of *The Good News Club: The Christian Right's Stealth Assault on America's Children*. San Diego. <http://www.au.org/get-involved/events/san-diego-chapter-event-featuring-katherine-stewart-march-4-0>
- March 4: Adam Winkler: *Gunfight: The Battle over the Right to Bear Arms in America*. CFI West, Los Angeles. <http://www.cfiwest.org/calendar/FeedYourBrain.htm#four>
- March 11: M.G. Lord: *The Accidental Feminist: How Elizabeth Taylor Raised Our Consciousness and Lowered the Boom on the Roman Catholic Censors*. CFI West, Los Angeles and Costa Mesa. <http://www.cfiwest.org/calendar/FeedYourBrain.htm#four>
- March 11: Dr. Eric Topol: *The Creative Destruction of Medicine: How the Digital Revolution Will Create Better Health Care*. CalTech, Pasadena. <http://www.skeptic.com/upcoming-lectures/>
- March 19: Dr. Elaine Pagels: *Revelations: Visions, Prophecy and Politics in the Book of Revelation*. Cal Tech, Pasadena. <http://www.skeptic.com/upcoming-lectures/>
- March 25: *The Great Debate: "Has Science Refuted Religion?"* Cal Tech cosmologist and physicist Sean Carroll teams up with *Skeptic*

magazine publisher and science historian Michael Shermer in this epic debate with noted conservative author and King's College President Dinesh D'Souza and MIT physicist Ian Hutchinson. Cal Tech, Pasadena.

<http://www.skeptic.com/upcoming-lectures/>

- March 25: Sam Harris: *Free Will*. Cal Tech, Pasadena.
<http://www.skeptic.com/upcoming-lectures/>
- April 12: Alliance of Happy Atheists (AHA) will have speaker Hemant Mehta, The Friendly 'Atheist blogger. San Luis Obispo.
<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/friendlyatheist/speaking-engagements/>
- April 21: SkeptiCal 2012. A northern California convention on science and skepticism. Speakers include Dr. David Morrison, senior scientist at NASA and Dr. Indre Viskontas, co-host of television show *Miracle Detectives*. Berkeley.
<http://www.skepticalcon.org/>

Upcoming Events Outside of California:

- March 24: The Reason Rally, sponsored by many of America's largest secular organizations. Speakers include Richard Dawkins, PZ Myers, James Randi, among others. Washington, DC.
<http://reasonrally.org/>
- March 25-26: American Atheists Annual Convention. Speakers include Richard Dawkins, Jamila Bey, Greta Christina, Darrel Ray, and many others. This occurs right after The Reason Rally, so you can get a "twofer" if you are in the Washington DC area. Bethesda, MD.
http://atheists.org/events/2012_National_Convention
- April 13-15: Global Atheist Convention 2012. Speakers include Daniel Dennett, Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris, Brian Keith Dalton (Mr. Deity), Eugenie Scott, Tanya Smith, and of course many others. Melbourne, Australia.
<http://www.atheistconvention.org.au/home/>

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Newsletter Deadline:

Deadline for submissions to the Secular Circular is Midnight, the last day of each month.

HSSB meetings are held on the 3rd Saturday of each month at 2:30 pm, usually in the Patio Room of Vista del Monte, 3775 Modoc Rd., Santa Barbara. More information is available at our web site:

www.SantaBarbaraHumanists.org or by contacting any board member. At meetings, a donation of \$2 from members and \$5 from non-members is appreciated. First-time visitors are welcome on a complimentary basis.

To send a copy of this newsletter to someone interested in our Society, please send their contact information to: PO Box 30232, Santa Barbara, CA 93130, or contact Mary Wilk at 967-3045, or mwilk@cox.net. Newsletters are also available at the above web address.

Annual HSSB membership dues are \$36 for a single person, \$60 for a couple, and \$100 (or more) to become a sponsor. One may subscribe to our newsletter only for an annual fee of \$20.

Link to HSSB Photos:

<http://picasaweb.google.com/Humanist.Society.of.Santa.Barbara>

HSSB Phone: 769-HSSB

HSSB Calendar

Saturday, March 10, 5-7pm. Book Signing. *The Good News Club: The Christian Right's Stealth Assault on America's Children*, by Katherine Stewart. Tecolote Book Shop at 1470 E. Valley Road.

Saturday, March 17. Monthly meeting. Michael Newdow. "Our Coruscating Constitution". Vista Del Monte. Socializing at 2:30, program begins at 3pm.

Sunday, March 25 (and the last Sunday of every month), 10am, **Secular Sunday Brunch** for humanists, atheists, agnostics, skeptics, freethinkers, singles, couples and families without religion. No cover charge; membership not required. Pay only for your food, drink and tips. Cody's Cafe, 4898 Hollister Ave. in the Turnpike Center, Goleta in the room to the right as you enter the restaurant. For information phone Board member, Mary Wilk at 805-967-3045.

Saturday, April 21 Greta Christina

Saturday, May 19 Barbara Forrest

Saturday, June 16 Summer Solstice Picnic

Saturday, July 21 Meeting of Minds II

Saturday, August 18 Dr. Deity



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