

Meetings

Roundtable

Oct. 7, 2007
Pellissippi State
10:30 AM

Presenter:
Lee Erickson

Topic:

History of Science: Selected
Episodes of Natural History
and Natural Philosophers

Book Club

Oct. 14, 2007
Barnes & Noble Books
4:00 PM

This month's selection is

The Wisdom of Crowds
by James Surowiecki

There will be no November Book Club.

December: God is Not Great by Hitchens.

January: Stumbling on Happiness
by Daniel Gilbert

February: Economics as Religion
by Robert H. Nelson

March: Atheist Universe: The Thinking
Person's Answer to Christian Fundamen-
talism by David Mills with a forward by
Dorion Sagan

Philosophy

Oct. 21, 2007
Pellissippi State
10:30 AM

Presenter: Dr. Elaine Breslaw

Topic:

Witches and Witchhunts: Where,
Why and Who?

Elaine Breslaw from UT will present a talk
on the history of witch hunts and witches
with a special focus on Salem.

The Least Religious Candidate

The September /October issue of Mother Jones magazine has a lengthy and surprising article about Hillary Clinton's involvement in the Fellowship or Family. This fellowship's long-term goal is "a leadership led by God-leaders of all levels of society who direct projects as they are led by the spirit."

To quote the article: "Clinton's prayer group was a part of the Fellowship (or the 'Family'), a network of sex-segregated cells of political, business, and military leaders dedicated to 'spiritual war' on behalf of Christ, many of them recruited at the Fellowship's only public event, the annual Prayer Breakfast. (Aside from the breakfast, the group has 'made a fetish of being invisible,' former Republican Senator William Armstrong has said.)"

This group also has world wide connections and recruits many unsavory characters, such as General Suharto of Indonesia, a Honduran general death squad organizer, an ex-Nazi and other generals and dictators and apparently even King Abdullah of Jordan. The group has cells (according to a former Florida organizer Grace Nelson) in "parliaments all over the world" and welcomes them as long as they submit to "the person of Jesus' as the source of their power'."

There is much more about the influence of this group in politics but an interesting and disturbing part of the article deals with Clinton's religious position with respect to government and her sincerity of personal belief. It seems she predates Bush in wanting federal funding for faith-based social services and in her book, It Takes A Village, she "writes approvingly of religious groups' access to schools, lessons in Scripture, and 'virtue' making a return to the classroom." She has expressed regret that her church spent too much time on social issues to the "exclusion of personal faith and growth." Keep in mind that Clinton, in polls, is considered one of the least religious candidates.

Some of the most important points in the article are: "And while such cross-over conservatives may never agree with her on the old litmus test issues, there is an important, and broader, common ground -the kind of faith-based politics that, under the right circumstances, will permit majority to trump individual rights" and "In her own way she is a true believer." As Conservative Senator Brownback puts it Clinton is "a beautiful child of the living God." While her husband was President and Hillary referred to a vast right wing conspiracy, she must have known more of what she was talking about than we expected.

What was it Harris was saying about the danger of moderate Christians?

A couple of choice quotes used by Hitchens in God is Not Great

Loyola: "We sacrifice the intellect to God."

Martin Luther: "Reason is the Devil's harlot, who can do nought but slander and harm whatever God says and does."

Liars for Jesus

An interesting web site and book can be found at <http://www.liarsforjesus.com/>. The author, Chris Rodda writes pieces for www.talk2action.org. She researches Christian claims to a historical basis that American government is based on Christian principles and positions.

Her book is called Liars for Jesus: The Religious Right's Alternate Version of American History. The rebuttals are based on historical research. Since the book has a forward by a preacher it appears that this is not written with an "atheist's agenda." I have just read portions but it seems like a good reference if one comes across claims that "history" demonstrates that America is a Christian nation.

Sam Harris: excerpt from recent article at washingtonpost.com

“Reason is a compulsion, not a choice. Just as one cannot intentionally startle oneself, one cannot knowingly believe a proposition on bad evidence.”

“This constraint upon our thinking has always been a problem for religion. Being stocked stem to stern with incredible ideas, the world’s religions have had to find some way to circumvent reason, without repudiating it. The recommended maneuver is generally called “faith,” and it actually appears to work. Faith enables a person to fool himself into thinking that he is maintaining his standards of reasonableness, while forsaking them. There is a powerful incentive to not notice that one is engaged in this subterfuge, of course, because to notice it is to fail at it. As is well known, such cognitive gymnastics can be greatly facilitated by the presence of others, similarly engaged. Sometimes, it takes a village to lie to oneself.”



Ingersoll

“It (The Bible) has lost power in the proportion that man has gained knowledge”

This matches Hitchens statement (regarding “rational” faith arguments such as Aquinas’s) that “Faith of that sort - the sort that can stand up at least for a while in a confrontation with reason - is now plainly impossible.”

Billy Graham Strikes (out) Again

In a recent column the letter addressed was from an atheist. He said that he didn’t want anyone praying for him and that he didn’t need “some holier-than thou-Christian acting like he is better than me.”

Graham’s response was that Christianity was like a cure for cancer that had to be made available to as many people as possible.

The only problem with that is that the “cancer” in this case was invented by the religion (original sin) and the con is that one has to pay for a “cure” by selling your soul (intellectual integrity) along with 10% of your gross, of course.

RET Newsletter submissions

Feel free to submit news of interest. Submissions are welcomed but may be limited by space and topic relevance. The format may vary depending on the amount of information submitted. Short submissions are preferred but longer ones may be accepted if they can be published as a series over two or more issues. Text or Word format are best for submission. Text may also be included in an E-mail. Carl Ledendecker at: (ledendecker@earthlink.net) 2123 Stonybrook Rd., Louisville, TN 37777 982-8687 evenings

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