

Mid Ohio *A*theists

A Newsletter For Atheists in the Mansfield Ohio Area

Sixth Issue

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MOA Starts Public Service

A few members of MOA worked with the Friends of Mansfield Parks (FOMP) for National Make a Difference Day on October 23rd. Activities included -

- Painting the gazebo and parts of the pavilion at South Park.
- Litter pick-up in South, Middle, and North Lake Parks.
- Winterizing Atherton Avenue Community Garden.
- Planting trees and flower bulbs. Beautification project at North Lake Park.

Thanks goes out to the members who gave up their Saturday morning to help.

October Meeting

We met at Barnes and Noble on Sunday the 17th. The turnout was low but it's understandable that other things can get in the way of meetings. We have some exciting things planned and we don't want anyone to miss out by not being at the meetings.

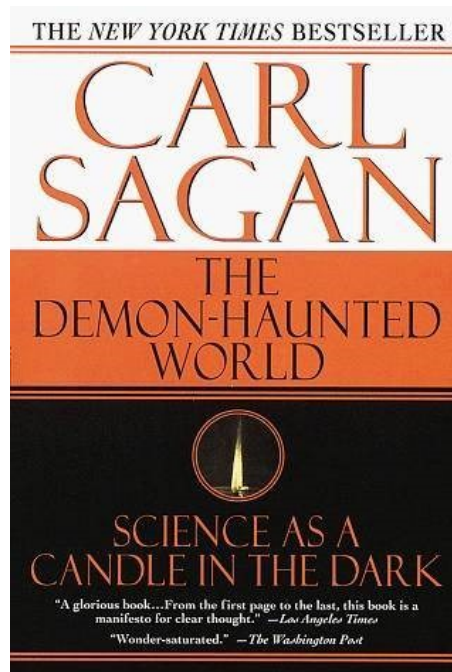
This month, we talked about the upcoming opportunity to help the Friends of the Mansfield Parks on the 23rd. We also discussed going to HCCO's Winter Solstice Banquet this December. It would be a great way to celebrate the holiday season and to meet new people at HCCO. Dan Barker is scheduled to speak and we do have a few Dan Barker fans in our group! ♦

Atheist Quote

"The idea of god implies the abdication of human reason & justice; it is the most decisive negation of human liberty & necessarily ends in the enslavement of mankind both in theory & practice. He who desires to worship god must harbor no childish illusions about the matter but bravely renounce his liberty & humanity. -- Mikhail Bakunin (1814-1876) Russian anarchist and political theorist

Atheist Book Corner

As a tribute to a great man who's birthday is the 9th of this month, the review will be on Carl Sagan's [The Demon-Haunted World, Science as a Candle in the Dark](#). This book was released back in 1995, a year before Sagan died an untimely death at the age of 62.



This book is a great introduction to skepticism and is written on a popular level so a wide audience is able to pick this book up and read it. It is a favorite book among many atheists and skeptics. It appears on many atheists' must-read lists.

In this book, Sagan explains that our species started in the dark in relation to knowledge of how the world works. To explain many natural things that happen, superstitious explanations were thought up and passed around as fact. This was the beginning of religion.

Sagan shows that science is the way to gain better knowledge of the operation of the natural world. Evidence based research is much better at explaining things than, for instance, prayer or revelation. These two latter claims to

sources of knowledge are not verifiable by other people. Conversely, scientific claims must agree with the natural world, which can be verified by anyone with the right knowledge and resources. It is that fundamental difference that makes science so much more powerful.

Sagan also has a warning for all of us. If we let our guard down, those ancient myths and beliefs will come back, they have not been vanquished but merely severely wounded. The unfortunate fact is no matter how much evidence we have, some people will tenaciously hold onto the old beliefs..

As Sagan put it- "The candle flame gutters. Its little pool of light trembles. Darkness gathers. The demons begin to stir. " If we are to see the light of science continue to make progress in pushing back darkness, it is up to us to fight the demons of ignorance and credulity.

There many other powerful quotes from this book. Here are just a few-

"Think of how many religions attempt to validate themselves with prophecy. Think of how many people rely on these prophecies, however vague, however unfulfilled, to support or prop up their beliefs. Yet has there ever been a religion with the prophetic accuracy and reliability of science? ... No other human institution comes close. "

"I would love to believe that when I die I will live again, that some thinking, feeling, remembering part of me will continue. But as much as I want to believe that, and despite the ancient and worldwide cultural traditions that assert an afterlife, I know of nothing to suggest that it is more than wishful thinking."

This book is well worth reading and is highly recommended. ♦

Atheism is not a religion.
It's a personal relationship with reality.

A Tragic Accident

By Drenn Workman

The religious are fond of creating stories to make a point, they call them parables. The following is a parable created by yours truly.

A moderately sized airliner prepares for take off. Aboard are a pilot, a co-pilot and 40 evangelists on their way to a remote point to preach the word of their god to the ignorant.

As the plane rolls down the tarmac, the pilot eases up the throttle. The plane roars down the runway and lifts gently into the air. Just as they reach a couple hundred feet a flock of geese suddenly appears in front of the still climbing machine. It's too late, several of the large

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birds are sucked into the turbines and the engines flame out. Panic sets in as the pilot and co-pilot frantically attempt to restart the engines. A large hill looms ahead leaving no time for the pilots to do anything except exclaim "Awww shh...." The plane with extreme violence thunders into the hill destroying the plane.

Moments pass... then, from the wreckage, one of the evangelists, pushing aside some debris, rises from the mangled mess, with nary a scratch. All others have met their fates.

What a miracle, some claim, that this man walked away from such a horrendous crash. Yet there is the problem about the 39 other evangelists. Why did god save one sole man from destruction, yet allow 39 other, equally religious and upright men die?

What about the pilots? Oh well, they were Catholics.

Some might say that god called these poor evangelists home. It could then be

asked "What does heaven need with 39 evangelists? Who will they be preaching to there? What purpose will they serve? Aren't they more needed on Earth?"

Another might say that god simply didn't like the messages the others were spreading, perhaps contrary to his teachings. Then why take them to heaven? Or were they taken there?

At this point, faced with difficult questions, there is always the standby excuse: "Man cannot know the reasoning of the lord." But... is not man made in god's image, did not man sin by consuming the fruit of the tree of knowledge? With this knowledge isn't it easy to see that the killing of the 39 was an evil act?

"Oh but, there is free will; they didn't have to get on that plane." Free will, how can free will exist if god knows all things? Things of old, things now, and things to come. In the face of so many contradictions there is the old standby again.

"Man cannot know the mind of god."

Isn't that part of the problem? One cannot know the mind of god. Further, there is no way to know god. Many claim that god's words are in the bible, but it has been proven the product of ancient peoples, trying to create an understanding about their world, trying to assuage their own fears of being unable to control their environment. Every religion is a product of humans, all were for the same purpose.

Even if the bible were the imparted words of a god, they are so vague, and can be interpreted in so many ways, that their usefulness is simply up to the user, for whatever purposes they desire. So many books have been deleted from the bible as well. What human can determine which are to be included? What if a crucial book has been deleted? What if those books included were not the intended words of god?

Am I sowing doubt? I am sowing nothing. The crop is already in the field. The

questions are relevant to anyone using the power of reason. To many the delusion of religion is readily apparent. A thinking man must go through impossible hoops to convince himself of religion's validity. Reason usually leads to atheism unless adequate mental blocks are erected against logic and reason. In those intelligent men of reason that believe, reality has to be suspended in the matters of faith. ♦

Atheist Humor

One day a Catholic Priest was walking down the street and saw a little girl on her front porch with a box of newborn kittens.

The little girl greeted him, "Hello Father; these are Catholic kittens."

The Priest replied, "That's nice. Bless you child."

A week later the Priest saw the little girl again with the box of kittens and asked, "How are the little Catholic kittens doing?"

The little girl solemnly informed him, "They are not Catholic kittens anymore, they are Atheist kittens now."

The Priest was shocked, "What happened?!"

The little girl grinned, "Their eyes opened." ♦

November Meeting

This month's meeting will be on Sunday the 21st at 10:00 AM at Barnes & Noble in Ontario. We will be discussing updates to the community service activities discussed in last months meeting. Also, any members who haven't yet done so need to bring a list of books they wish to include in the group's lending library.

You don't have to be a member to come to the meeting. Anyone that is atheist friendly is welcome to attend. ♦

We're also on Facebook

[www.facebook.com/
midohioatheists](http://www.facebook.com/midohioatheists)