

Mid Ohio *A*theists

A Newsletter For Atheists in the Mansfield Ohio Area

Fourth Issue

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August Meeting

We met at Barnes and Nobles in Ontario in the café section on August 15th for our monthly meeting. The attendance was down from our July meeting but some members came in later.

At the July picnic, it was decided we needed a mission statement. This month, we reviewed several mission statements from other atheist groups and decided to base our mission statement on the Atheist Community of Austin's. We agreed that group's statement closely aligned with what we want to do in our group.

One of the things we want to do is to provide opportunities for our members to help the communities in which we live. This could also help put a better image of what atheists are before the public. We brainstormed ideas on specific areas where we could volunteer or provide help to the public. Ideas included working with kids, giving blood, helping the poor. We will be discussing this more at the next meeting.

We also filled out membership cards so we can get an official count of members and their contact information. A membership form will be added to the website for anyone interested in joining that way.

We decided we want to connect with other atheist groups in our area. One person suggested we have a group trip to Columbus to go to a meeting of The Humanist Community of Central Ohio. This is a great idea and we will follow up on it.

Another idea was to have a lending library of atheism related books since most of these books are not in the public libraries. We will be putting together a list of books that members are willing to lend to each other and get this going right away. The details of how this will work will be discussed at the next meeting. ♦

Ground Zero Mosque Controversy

There is a huge uproar in this country about the proposed construction of a "Ground Zero Mosque" in New York City. The problem with the issue starts with the name of the controversy as the proposed building is neither just a mosque nor is it on Ground Zero (the site of World Trade Center which was attacked on 9/11/2001). The building will house an Islamic cultural center and is 2 blocks away from Ground Zero.

Regardless of the location or the name, the issue comes down to the First Amendment. Since there is a freedom of religion in this country, the government cannot legally stop the center from being built. The same rules that Christians have fought for to stop the government from controlling church constructions must also be applied to Islamic buildings, including this one.



Some politicians are up in arms over this situation. Newt Gingrich, a past speaker of the U.S. House and a potential candidate for President in 2012, said on his website- "There should be no mosque near Ground Zero in New York so long as there are no churches or synagogues in Saudi Arabia." What Newt forgets is that we are better than Saudi Arabia and we shouldn't stoop to their level.

While the actions of radical Islamists are certainly threatening, freedom of religion applies to all Americans, even those we don't agree with. Until it is proven the money behind the building

is coming from terrorist organizations or there is illegal activities going on in the building, no one should stop the construction.

The ending of the Pledge of Allegiance, that Christians love so much, says- '...with liberty and justice for all.' Unless they can see that these words apply to the Muslims in our country also, their beloved pledge is just meaningless words mouthed by unthinking people. ♦

Mission Statement

At our July meeting, we approved the following to be the official mission statement of Mid Ohio Atheists-

"Mid Ohio Atheists is a group committed to supporting atheists by providing opportunities for socializing and friendship, promoting secular viewpoints, encouraging a positive atheist culture, defending the first amendment principle of state-church separation, supporting the civil rights of atheists, and affiliating with other organizations in pursuit of common goals."

All the activities of our group will be designed to support one or more parts of this statement. ♦

Atheist Quote

"If I were not an atheist, I would believe in a God who would choose to save people on the basis of the totality of their lives and not the pattern of their words. I think he would prefer an honest and righteous atheist to a TV preacher whose every word is God, God, God, and whose every deed is foul, foul, foul."

- Isaac Asimov

We are on the web at-
midohioatheists.org

Death Penalty Reconsiderations

By Drenn Workman

Up to now I have supported the death penalty for those whose heinous crimes have merited it; a conservative viewpoint supporting the old eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth mainstay straight out of the bible.

Recently, having contemplated my own individual existence, its total uniqueness, me-ness, if you will. I have come to the conclusion that each individual is unique, a product of their genetic make-up and the train of life experiences.

Intervention can work to change some whose aberrant behavior has warranted legal involvement, producing a different product. Some, however, who have biological causes, may never change.

There are people who simply do not possess the ability to experience what it might be like to be in another's shoes, as in many ADHD cases. They are unable to sympathize with the feelings of others. Even facial expressions on those they might assault are misunderstood, if recognized at all.

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Mental aberrations caused by brain anomalies are not yet curable or controllable in many cases.

Others still, never consider the consequences of their actions perhaps due to immaturity or dismal education, and only later regret their actions.

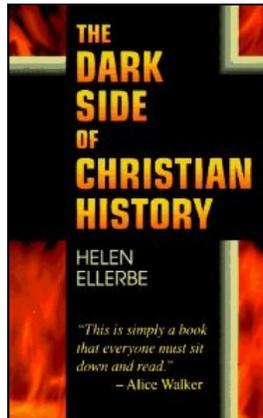
In any case, each is a unique individual, and will never be completely duplicated. Even clones will have unique life experiences should they ever come to see the light of day.

Life in prison or an institution is the solution. For those whose mental status cannot be altered, life in prison, no chance of parole. Many of those will live desiring death, punishment enough. ♦

Atheist Book Corner

A book that has been out for a few years but still well worth the price is The Dark Side of Christian History by Helen Ellerbe. This book provides page after page of information relating to the awful things done in the name of Christ from the beginning of Christianity up until recent times.

It details how there were many differing beliefs about Christ, then one group obtained control over the others by gaining the backing of the Roman Empire. This group became the Catholic Church.



A continuing theme in the book is how the Church wanted to have a single doctrine that everyone must follow. And of course, it wanted to be the sole institution to control that doctrine. That way, everyone would be under the control of the Church's hierarchy.

In the middle of the fourth century, Augustine declared the doctrine of *Cogitate intrare*, or "compel them to enter" which was used throughout the Middle Ages to justify the suppression of dissent and oppression of difference. In his own words, Augustine stated: "*The wounds of a friend are better than the kisses of an enemy. To love with sternness is better than to deceive with gentleness... In Luke 14:23 it is written: 'Compel people to come in!' By threats of the wrath of God, the Father draws souls to the Son.*"

Anyone with a differing opinion on doctrine was declared a heretic and hunted down and 'given' the opportunity to agree with the Church. If the person later went back to his previous views, he was burned at the stake

The book goes on to tell many horrifying stories of persecuting pagans, the Inquisition, witch hunts and the Crusades. It is pointed out that not all of the atrocities were committed by

Catholics as many of the witch hunts were conducted by Protestants.

Women were a particular target of the Christians. The reason can be traced to the story of the Fall of Man in Genesis chapter 3. Eve was the one deceived by the serpent and she talked Adam into eating the forbidden fruit. As a consequence the Church held women as sinful and easily beguiled by the devil. The results of this doctrine is that 80-90 per cent of the people accused of witchcraft were women.

This book reminds us of what it was like when the Christians were in control. It's useful in combating Dominionists who want to make this nation into a theocracy based on the Bible. It gives many examples of why we should never again allow secular power to be relinquished back to the churches. ♦

Atheist Humor

An atheist and a theist were walking together and were kidnapped. The kidnapers said they were going to kill the two hostages but would grant each a final wish. The theist said, "I am a Christian apologist and love giving my speech called "The Evidence for God" and I want to present it one more time. The kidnapers said OK. Then they all looked over at the atheist, who said, "My wish is that you would shoot me before he gives his speech." ♦

September Meeting

This month's meeting will be on Sunday the 19th at 10:00 AM at Barnes & Nobles in Ontario. We will be discussing updates to the community service activities discussed in last month's meeting. Also, members 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