

Mid Ohio *A*theists

A Newsletter For Atheists in the Mansfield Ohio Area

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HCCO Banquet

Instead of our regular monthly meeting in December, we went to the Humanist Community of Central Ohio's Winter Solstice Banquet in Columbus. The banquet was held on December 18th at the Fawcett Center on Olentangy River Rd.

There were about 200 people at the banquet. We met several of them, including Sharon Moss, the president of HCCO. We also met August Brunsman, who is the executive director of the Secular Student Alliance and Amanda Metskas, executive director of Camp Quest Inc., a network of summer camps aimed at children from freethinking families.

The evening started out with dinner. The choice was a stuffed Portobello mushroom with smoked gouda, spinach, and mozzarella or a slow roasted pork loin with rosemary & shallots. The food looked great and was just as delicious as it looked.

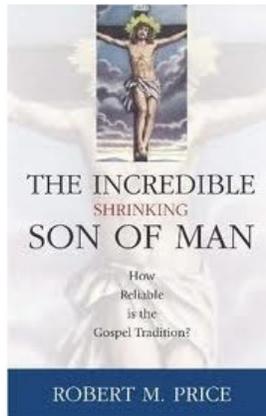
After the meal, HCCO leaders recognized their volunteers for 2010 and gave out several awards to members of their group.

Next came the featured speaker of the evening, Dan Barker, a co-president of the Freedom From Religion Foundation. He spoke about his conversion from a fundamentalist evangelical Christian to a prominent atheist activist. He also talked about meeting his future wife, Annie Laurie Gaylor, on the Oprah Winfrey show. Dan then discussed several of the court cases in which the FFRF has been involved. Dan finished the talk with three of his free thought songs. Afterwards was a book signing where our members had pictures taken with Dan. ♦

Atheist Book Corner

The Incredible Shrinking Son of Man: How Reliable is the Gospel Tradition, by well known biblical scholar and prolific writer Robert Price, details how most everything about the stories of Jesus are not historical.

In the introduction, Price quotes Paul Tillich who said when anything is put on a pedestal beyond criticism, it becomes an idol. As can be seen throughout our culture, the Bible has certainly become an idol to millions of Americans. Questioning it is akin to treason.



Price first goes through an excellent introduction to the historical-critical method, also known as Higher Criticism, a branch of literary analysis that looks at the origins of a text. The historical-critical method compares the books of the Bible to other texts written at the same time, before, or recently after the text in question.

By applying this method to the New Testament, Price shows that the source of many of the stories and details of the Gospels are from the Old Testament, Jewish apocrypha, or Greek mythology.

Also by comparing the Gospels to each other, where the same story is told in each, it can be seen that the earlier Gospels start out with simple stories with few details and the Gospels written later add more details and make

greater theological claims.

Although Price claims to love the Bible as literature, by using the historical-critical method, he shows that the Gospels are totally unreliable as historical documents. ♦

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

Billboard on P.A.W.

A billboard was recently put up in Mansfield on Park Avenue West. The billboard boldly declares that Saturday is the TRUE



Lord's Day and also states that the antichrist changed it. The billboard has a website address of the Eternal Gospel Church, founded by Seventh-Day Adventist Believers. By advertising this split among Christian believers, they merely put on display the fractiousness of religion, the multiple interpretations of the Bible, and the unfounded absolute confidence in the Bible of those who are true believers. ♦

Is Polygamy Wrong? A Reply to the Town Crier

Matt Timmons, a local minister from Ashland Ohio, recently started a radio show that is, as of now, only available as a podcast. The show is called The Town Crier and can be heard or downloaded at <http://www.towncriershow.com>

Recently, in an episode entitled "Polygamy, the Beer Church, and Talking Trash to God", Timmons discussed the polygamous community of Bountiful, located on the outskirts of the small town of Creston, British Columbia, Canada. A case involving the community has reached the Canadian Supreme Court because, as in the United States, polygamy is illegal in Canada.

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In the podcast, Timmons states that Canada is in a quandary. Since Canada is so liberal and humanistic, to the Canadian Government morality is relative, there is no absolute objective morality. Therefore Canada has no way to say that polygamy is wrong any more than it can say that same sex marriage is wrong. (Same sex civil unions have been legal in Canada for some time)

Timmons' statement is the oft heard attack on atheism and humanism that god is the ultimate source of morality. If you don't base your morality on god, then you have no basis. Since any other source of morality you claim is relative, you can't make any objective claims that anything is right or wrong.

The problem with this thinking is that it discounts and rejects common sense reasons for morality. It only values an absolute, objective morality, without ever proving that such a thing exists. To say that an objective morality exists because there are some common moral judgments across human cultures, like prohibiting rape and murder, is not convincing evidence.

It shouldn't be too hard to see that to be able to exist in a society, there must be rules to govern the members of that society. A society couldn't last long if members were allowed to rape and murder at will. It also shouldn't be too hard to realize that any person wouldn't want to be raped or murdered, nor for that to happen to any of their family and friends either. To think this moral judgment had to come from a higher power is just silly.

Timmons goes on to say that polygamy is a sin, without stating exactly which verse in the Bible states that. His basis is the story in Genesis 1 & 2, that god gave Adam only one wife, that Adam couldn't have as many as he wanted. Timmons admits that some of the 'figures' in the Old Testament were polygamists but says they were blessed in spite of their sin and not because of it. The fact is, nowhere in the Bible is polygamy declared a sin. Merely because Adam had one wife is certainly no declaration that a man couldn't have more than one wife. No where in the OT does anyone get a rebuke from god for having multiple wives. A great example is King David, in 2 Samuel 12:7-10, the prophet Nathan, speaking for god, said "I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives". In this story David was rebuked for taking someone else's wife, but not for already having multiple wives.

One can only conclude that if Timmons believes god is the ultimate authority on morality and the bible is the revelation of god's morality, he must then believe that it is OK to be a polygamist, since god gave multiple wives to King David. What basis then does Timmons have to say that what the polygamist cult in Bountiful is doing is wrong?

On the other hand, atheists have the fact of teenage girls being forced to wed much older men in these cults as one of many reasons to oppose them. We also have the fact that many boys are kicked out of the cults and abandoned because they pose a threat to

the older, established males as competition for available females.

One should watch the documentary 'Leaving Bountiful' to decide if there are good humanistic reasons to say polygamy is wrong. It is about Debbie Palmer, a woman who was able to escape from the same cult that is the subject of Timmons' show. Debbie lived in the cult starting at age two. At age 15, she was forced to wed a 57 year old man that already had 5 wives and 30 children. Two years later her husband died and she was ordered to wed another 57 year old man. By the time she was finally brave enough to leave the cult, the only world she knew, she had been wed to 3 different men and was pregnant with her 7th child. After viewing the video, it is clear there are good humanistic reason for saying polygamy is wrong.

The documentary can be viewed here- <http://tinyurl.com/66etp26> ♦

January Meeting

This month's meeting will be on Sunday the 16th at Barnes and Noble in Ontario. Anyone that is atheist friendly is welcome to attend. ♦

We're also on Facebook
[www.facebook.com/
midohioatheists](http://www.facebook.com/midohioatheists)

