



"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion ..."
The first words of the Bill of Rights of the United States Constitution

September Program Meeting: Paul Gehrman



Paul Gehrman is the author of *Kaleidoscope*, a philosophical novel that challenges readers to evaluate the role of religious belief in society and humanity's place in the universe. The novel is not only inspirational, but contains many nonfiction elements and is based on several years of research. Paul will speak on his novel and his ideas.



Paul's personal view is that much of religion's negative impact (both today and historically) is based on the notion of "Original Sin." And a primary theme raised in his book is: *Do we timidly accept the primitive dogma in ancient texts or do we rise to our highest potential as a species by embracing our unique abilities, trusting our own minds, and taking full responsibility for our own destinies?* Read more [here](#), and join us for a stimulating discussion at the September program Meeting!

6:00 pm Saturday, September 26, 2009

[Schroeder's Restaurant](#), rear dining room, 240 Front Street. SF Financial District, 2 blocks north of Market, between California and Sacramento Streets. Use California Street cable car, or BART/MUNI Embarcadero stop. Parking on street or at nearby garage. Restaurant and bar remain open after meeting.

San Francisco Atheists is an affiliate of **American Atheists**. You can help American Atheists fight for your rights by joining for \$35 per year. As a subscriber of this newsletter, you can also request a free 6 month trial membership. Join at www.atheists.org or call 908-276-7300.

East Bay Atheists Meeting



Member Craig Spitzer recently volunteered to initiate and help lead periodic discussions on Atheist Living. This month we will focus on **Rituals: Approaching Marriage, Death, and Holidays as Atheists in a Theistic Society**.

There are no commonly owned “How to Live Life as a Good Atheist” pamphlets. The goal for these open discussions is to share with each other how we have, and how we think we should fill in the blank pamphlet pages for our lives.

At the meeting, we will discuss several questions, including:

- Do theists many times substitute ritual for the “real thing,” as a way to mesmerize people into accepting beliefs because they feel good? If so does that mean that ritual is a negative, or can we use it in life affirming ways, without the extremes of True Believers?
- Do you have a theistic spouse or other family members? How do you/how should you handle religious holidays in your household?
- How do you handle discussing and observing religious holidays (or not) with your children/grandchildren?
- How do you handle being with (or not being with) your theistic relatives on religious holidays?
- Is there a way to be respectful to your family members’ beliefs while still being true to your Atheist perspective?
- For those who are married, how did you merge your Atheism and the wedding ceremony? In retrospect, would you like to have handled it any differently?
- For those not yet married, how should you merge your atheism, other family members’ beliefs, and your wedding ceremony?

- If a loved one passes away, and you are in a position to manage the community gathering/service how would you like to handle it?

Knowing our group, we look forward to a lively discussion, both on the prepared questions as well as on topics emerging at the meeting. Come and share your thoughts and experiences with others!

Meeting is **Sunday, September 20**, 1:30 - 3:30 PM in the Berkeley Main Library, 3rd Floor Meeting Room. 2090 Kittredge Street

BART Access: From the downtown Berkeley BART Station, walk 1.5 blocks south on Shattuck Avenue, then turn right on Kittredge. The library is a half block down the street on the left.

Parking: The city parking lot at Allston & Harold Way, a short block from the library, is \$5 for the entire day on Sunday. If you don't mind walking, take University to MLK, turn right and then instead of proceeding left on Allston to the parking lot, turn right. In several blocks you will see parking on the side streets.

Information:

Larry Hicok, Coordinator: 510-222-7580

Ski Grabowski, Treasurer: 510-652-8350

Our October meeting will take place on Sunday, October 4. It will be our annual picnic in Tilden Park. Details next month.

Richard Carrier Speaks at SFSU



Students at San Francisco State University have asked [Dr. Richard Carrier](#) to give a talk and take questions on the subject of mathematics and god, from the perspective of physics and naturalism. It's been quite a long time in the making, but the event is now arranged for **Tuesday, September 29, 4-6pm**. The talk is sponsored by the SFSU Department of Philosophy and by the Philosophy of Religion Society. It's free and open to the public. Richard will be selling and signing copies of his books afterward.

The event will be held in Room 587 of the SFSU Humanities Building. You can get directions (and info about parking) from the [SFSU website](#) (among many options, there are shuttles and buses to the campus from the Daly City BART, and I hear the Muni M line goes somewhere near as well, but don't quote me on that). For exact locations, see the southwest section of the [SFSU Campus Map](#). There is no website for the event, but inquiries can be emailed to [Steve Baughman](#).

The title of the talk is: "**The Universe Is Mathematical, Therefore God Exists! (Or Not).**" As advertised: *Dr. Richard Carrier, author of [Sense and Goodness without God](#), explains how godless naturalism explains the mathematization of physics without any Mind behind the Universe. Using examples from Archimedes to modern String Theory, Carrier will show how advocates of the contrary view, like Russel Howell and Mark Steiner, don't understand the true nature of physics or mathematics. Then he will take questions from the audience on the remarkable thesis that mathematical laws prove the existence of God.*

This is basically a summary and update of his ongoing debate with Howell and Steiner, which he's blogged about before: "[Our Mathematical Universe](#)" (October 5, 2007). Except this time, he'll use examples from ancient (and modern) science to show why the mathematization of nature is actually expected on naturalism.

Books For Africa



Here's an item that may interest some of you book-lovers. We have heard from one Robert Bwambale, the Director of the **Kasese United Humanist Association**. Where is that? Well, it is in the country of Uganda--Idi Amin's old stomping grounds, and I'm glad to report they have made good progress since those bad old days. However, they are still largely a very poor nation. Mr. Bwambale has sent us an appeal for the donation of used, or new freethought/humanist/atheist-type books:

"We are proposing to set up a public library in Kasese district to be situated in Base camp at our premises, our association plans to open up this library facility to the general public early next year and right now we are in a campaign to solicit for library materials and if possible logistics so that we equip it with literature related to freethinking, humanism, atheism, politics, philosophy, economics, popular science, biographies, studies on controversial issues like abortion, sexuality, prostitution etc, history, geography, critical studies on religions and other essential primary and secondary school subjects all aimed at assisting our members plus all the general public in our community get knowledge. Any kind of book donation is highly welcome and in case of periodicals, scientific journals, magazines both current and back issues or DVDs, VCD or CD-ROMs with knowledgeable information to pass to our members is also invited."

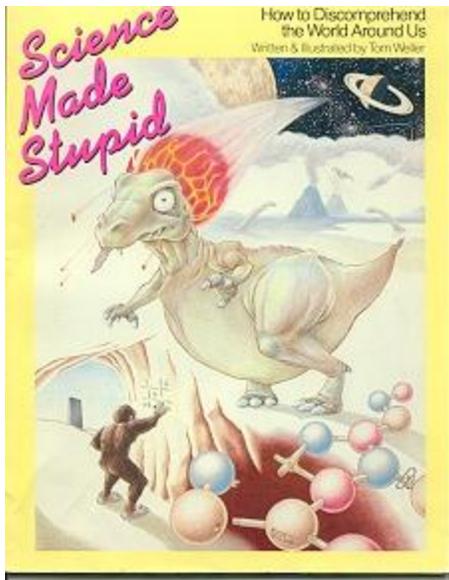
The books will be placed in their Humanist Library set to open in February of 2010. Anyone interested in donating a book or books to this worthy project can simply bring the book or books to the next S.F. Atheists monthly meeting, or mail it/them to: [Don Havis](#), 439 Grand Blvd., San Mateo, CA. 94401. Thank you for your help in spreading the "good news." -- Don Havis

Joke Of The Month

WHAT ATHEISTS CRY OUT DURING SEX



Quote Of The Month



"Several thousand years ago, a small tribe of ignorant near-savages wrote various collections of myths, wild tales, lies, and gibberish. Over the centuries, these stories were embroidered, garbled, mutilated, and torn into small pieces that were then repeatedly shuffled. Finally, this material was badly translated into several languages successively. The resultant text, creationists feel, is the best guide to this complex and technical subject."

-- Tom Weller, *Science Made Stupid* (1985)

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