

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

October meeting program

God and His Demons

This month we are fortunate to host Dr. Michael Parenti, an internationally known award-winning author and lecturer. He is one of the nation's leading progressive political analysts. He will speak on his new book, God and His Demons.

In this book Parenti brings his critical acumen and gifted writing skills to bear on the dark side of religion, the many evils committed in the name of godly virtue throughout history. This is not a blanket condemnation of all believers. The focus is on the threat posed by fundamentalists and theocratic reactionaries. Historically anchored and biblically informed, this eloquent indictment of organized religion's delusions and abuses will be welcomed by secular laypersons and progressive religionists alike.

Parenti delves into a wide and fascinating range of subjects:

The harsh narratives of the Old and New Testaments, from the appalling accounts of violence, draconian justice, and moral turpitude in the older books of the Bible to the latent anti-Semitism in the New Testament.

Creationism and intelligent design in both laughably crude and sophisticated forms.

The duplicities of gurus, with a revealing scrutiny of such icons as Pope John Paul II, Mother Teresa, various US televangelists, the Dalai Lama, and even Jesus himself.

The hypocrisies of "family-values" religionists and politicians, their rapacious financial schemes and frauds.

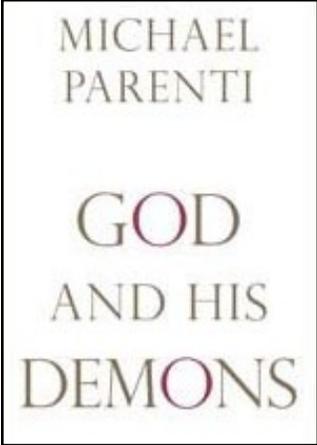
The sexual predation, pedophilia, and criminal cover-ups perpetrated under the cloak of religion.

The totalitarian theocratic goals of Christian and Islamic extremists, and the Shangri-La myths about feudal Old Tibet.

The growing strength of secular freethinkers and liberal theologians who are doing battle against the intolerant theocratic usurpers of public life.

Copies of his book will be offered for sale.

Please join us for this talk and the discussions afterwards.



Saturday October 30 at 4:30,

Schroeder's Restaurant 240 Front St San Francisco, CA 94111

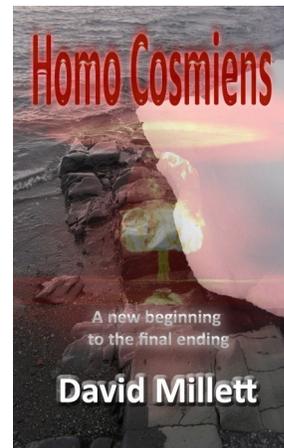
the restaurant is two blocks north of Market Street, between California and Sacramento Streets.

Use California Street cable car, or BART/MUNI Embarcadero stop. Parking on street or at nearby Embarcadero garage.

September meeting roundup

Science Fiction with an atheist theme

At our September meeting, local author David Millett introduced his new science fiction novel, Homo Cosmiens: a new beginning to the final ending. Taking inspiration from Darwin and envisioning a post-theistic future, Millett took us on a multi-millennial journey, from the origins of our universe to the arrival of an omniscient extraterrestrial vessel, a 'Pandora's box' offering its intelligence to all. Though this new knowledge leads to our self-annihilation, Millett's story then moves us far into the future, when the Earth is now inhabited by the new species, Homo cosmiens. Offering a slide show summary and readings from the book, Millett offered us his vision of both our world and a utopian future.



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



October Meeting: Quantum Mystics “Entanglement”

I remember when a horrible movie, “What the Bleep Do We Know,” was released several years ago. The film included statements by supposed “experts” tying in quantum theory and New Age mysticism to create Quantum Mysticism. One of the “experts” was a woman whose expertise was that she is able to channel a 35,000-year-old warrior god that only she has even heard of. While I wasn’t aware of her area of expertise at the time, I found the film repugnant. It was pure woo-woo, pure magical thinking. What bothered me even more was that some people in our movement liked the film and considered it a positive contribution.

Now Quantum Mysticism is so prevalent that I often find intelligent believers in the spirit world referring to quantum theory to back up their arguments. — *Larry*

This month Daniel Sabsay of the East Bay Skeptics will examine the primary aspect of quantum theory that so enralls the Quantum Mystics: “Entanglement.”

Here is what he has to say about his talk:

“No, I am not a quantum mechanic, nor do I play one on TV. However, I have long been concerned that the widespread success of the mathematical framework known as quantum mechanics has lumbered physics with a corollary notion known as “entanglement” that posits the idea that previously associated sub-atomic particles can stay interconnected over long physical distances.

“As a Skeptic, I am bothered by the growing acceptance of the concept of entanglement as a fact by physicists because it is absurd on its face, and worse, has provided the general public with a justification for belief in telepathy and other similar paranormal abilities. In the early days of quantum mechanics, Einstein expressed his conviction that quantum mechanics was not a complete characterization of reality because of its probabilistic description of the sub-atomic world, saying: “I don’t believe that God plays dice

with the universe” and calling entanglement a “spooky action at a distance”. But in 1964, a physicist named John Bell published a paper with a formula he said could verify whether or not entanglement was really a fact. Subsequent experiments by other physicists whose findings were interpreted according

to Bell’s formula, lent increasing credence to entanglement as a fact. So for the last 45 years, entanglement has gained virtually universal acceptance, and the popular culture has increasingly looked to entanglement to legitimize its belief in telepathy.

“In addition, a fresh crop of entrepreneurial physicists has declared that entanglement can be used as the basis for a new type of computer, called a quantum computer. This type of computer could be very significant, since it might be used to crack the encryption codes securing all our e-commerce. However, more than 10 years have sped by as group after group have claimed imminent success, only to have the headlines fade a week or so later. Unfortunately by now, most people in the physics and computer world have come to accept the idea that quantum computers are just around the corner or already working in a secret lab somewhere.

“Well, I’m relieved to report that our 45 year detour in the quantum desert is just about over. A paper by an Oxford physicist with the unlikely name of Joy Christian has, according to him, identified a fatal flaw in Bell’s formula. This flaw discredits the significance of the Bell-inspired experiments for validating the reality of entanglement.

“I will review the basics of quantum mechanics, the notion of entanglement, its egregious misuse by the paranormal groupies (such as the cringe-worthy film, “What the Bleep”), and other implications of Bell’s formula. I will explain as best I can the new discovery by Dr. Christian, and show why the emperor has no clothes.”

Please join us for this talk and the discussions afterwards. And don’t forget to join the speaker for dinner after the meeting at a local reasonably priced Chinese Restaurant.

Sunday, October 24, 1:30 - 3:30 PM

Berkeley Main Library, 3rd Floor Meeting Room
2090 Kittredge St., One Block From Downtown Berkeley BART
Larry Hicok, Coordinator: 510-222-7580
Ski Grabowski, Treasurer: 510-652-8350

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.

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

Atheist News

Hawking: God did not create the universe

The universe was not created by God but physics says Professor Stephen Hawking in his new book due to be published later this month.

The scientist believes that the Big Bang which created the universe was caused by physics in a challenge to traditional religious beliefs.

[Read more](#)

Ireland's sons turn their backs on the priesthood

The number of priestly ordinations in Ireland has dipped below England and Wales for the first time in living memory, new figures reveal.

The recruitment crisis is a clear indication of how low the church has sunk in a country that once used to export Catholic missionaries to all corners of the globe and often provided Britain with a significant proportion of its priests.

[Read more](#)

UK protestors abandon planned citizen's arrest of Pope Benedict

Anti-religious activists and other opponents of Pope Benedict's upcoming state visit to England have not changed their plans for public protests during the visit. However, they acknowledged on Wednesday that they would not be able to have him arrested, as some of their number --including the outspoken atheist and professor Richard Dawkins-- had hoped to do.

[Read more](#)

Larry Hicok named new CA State Director for American Atheists

Larry Hicok has been named the new California State Director for American Atheists (AA). When asked about his new appointment he said: "I am honored and challenged by my selection as State Director. Our longtime State Director, Dave Kong, provided a model of dedication and the ability to bring together the various groups for activism, including leaders from as far away as Los Angeles. Even though many of these people were affiliated with Atheist Alliance and not American Atheists, Dave consistently inspired them to travel to our events.

I was recently elected Coordinator of the Bay Area Coalition of Reason, an umbrella group composed of the various local Freethought groups. I am also the Organizer of the major Bay Area Freethought Meetup group. These positions reflect my dedication to promoting unity and cooperation between the various tendencies in our movement, while maintaining my principles as a dedicated Atheist activist. I see the State Director appointment as a continuation of that dedication. I hope I can be worthy of the position."

Dave Kong the former state director said: "As a former state director for American Atheists, my hope is that future directors will maintain the focus of the organization while bringing it even greater success and prestige. After watching him grow as a leader over the years, I can think of no other member in California better suited to do that than Larry Hicok. He has an excellent understanding of the political and social issues and challenges facing the Atheist movement. In an age when the religious have become more sophisticated in obfuscating their arguments, Larry knows how to distill them down to their basic premises and dismantle them. He is an American Atheist member who cares deeply about the future direction of the organization, and has worked tirelessly to support San Francisco Atheists and Bay Area Atheism in general. I am pleased that he has decided to broaden his scope to the entire state. I am sure he will be an asset to both California and American Atheists."

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

Quote of the month

Carl Sagan

You can not convince a believer of anything; for their belief is not based on evidence, it is based on a deep-seated need to believe.

Joke of the month

