



Orange County Chapter

Americans United for Separation of Church and State

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On the web at www.au-oc.org Email us at orangecountyau@yahoo.com

**The Founding Fathers'
Religious Reasons for Separation of
Church and State**

**Saturday, April 18th at 2:00 pm
Irvine Ranch Water District
15600 Sand Canyon Ave, Irvine**

**Apr—Jun 2009
Volume 5
Issue 2**

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Dr. Barbara McGraw, a strong supporter of separation of church and state and the founder of the Center for Engaged Religious Pluralism at St.



Mary's College in Moraga, California will speak to the chapter in April.

Dr. McGraw will talk about the founding fathers from a religious perspective and why they believed in the separation of church and state.

Dr. McGraw will discuss how it is that both supporters of the separation of church and state and the religious right can always find quotes from the American founders to support their very diver-

gent views. She will show that both the separationists and the religious right are "half right" and "half wrong" about what the founders accomplished. Dr. McGraw will be looking to the past to find a way to understand how the two "half rights" can pave the way for an American future that preserves the separation of church and state, while also welcoming religious voices in the public square.

Dr. McGraw received her Juris Doctor from USC in 1984 and her Ph.D. in Religion and Social Ethics also from USC in 1999. She has taught at Saint Mary's College of California since 1998.

We hope you will join us for what promises to be a very interesting discussion!



Have You Read Newt Gingrich's Interview in US News & World Report?

When asked why he's focusing on religious issues he said: "... It was the 9th Circuit Court's decision that was the last straw. [The decision found that recitation of the pledge of allegiance in public schools was unconstitutional because its "under God" clause violates the First Amendment's ban on government-established religion.] And I said, "It's time to challenge head-on secular domination in the West." <http://www.usnews.com/blogs/god-and-country/2009/3/20/>



Quick Internet Activism

Contact Senator Dianne Feinstein of the Judiciary Committee and urge strong support for David Hamilton who is President Obama's pick for the 7th Circuit Court of Appeals. He is a strong supporter of church/state separation and in 2005 he made news by ruling

that the Indiana legislature was prohibited from beginning its sessions with overtly Christian prayers.

The best way to reach Senator Feinstein is through her web site at <http://feinstein.senate.gov/public/>.



Dan Barker at Saddleback College

Karla Westphal

On Monday, February 23, the Freethinkers Club at Saddleback College hosted guest speaker Dan Barker, founder of the Freedom from Religion Foundation. The title of Dan's talk was "Jesus of Nazareth: Messiah or Myth?"

In suggesting that Jesus may have been a myth, Dan went beyond suggesting that he was simply a historical figure whom many believe was the Messiah; he suggested that Jesus may not have even been a historical figure. He discussed, among other things, the historical records of the times and contradictions between the four standard Gospels of the Christian New Testament.

Dan kept his talk fairly short in order to allow for lots of questions at the end; the 45 minute talk was followed by

a lively question and answer session that lasted for over an hour.

This was the first public event hosted by the Saddleback Freethinkers Club, and it was a great success, with a turnout of about 70-80 people. Many local organizations, including our very own chapter of AU, made an effort to get out their members in support of this newly formed club. The Freethinkers of Saddleback are very grateful for this show of support.

DVDs of the event will be available for a donation of \$5 to the Freethinkers Club. Contact Karla Westphal, kwestphal@aya.yale.edu, if you'd like to receive a copy.



Message from the President

Steph Campbell

If you look at politics through a filter of separation of church and state there is no doubt that we are better off in 2009 than we were at any time during the Bush administration. But better off is relative. We're not where we need to be with the Obama administration and we certainly aren't any better off in Orange County.

Yes, the folks in the Capistrano Unified School District are toeing the line of legality, but privately they are still talking about running the school district on "Biblical principles."

The Newport Mesa Unified School District is facing a law suit in which Corona del Mar High School administrators are accused of "permitting and sanctioning an atmosphere that is hostile to female, lesbian, bisexual, gay and transgender students" according to the ACLU.

Our County Board of Supervisors' unanimous decision to suspend their contract with Planned Parenthood for sex education was a blatant case of mixing religion and politics. What else can it be when Supervisor John Moorlach says "I personally have a problem with government funding of an organization that provides abortion services." And before they voted they heard from Wiley Drake (the same one who prays for the deaths of Americans United staff) who said to the Board that

they are ordained by God and that God is holding them accountable.

It might be funny except that following his rant the Supervisors did vote to suspend the contract. And if that's not enough they're considering giving the money to Birth Choice Health Clinics – an organization pushing abstinence-only education. In fact this group provides no services to anyone who is not pregnant and their counseling involves only pressuring women against choosing an abortion. Oh and where has Birth Choice got money from before? Why President Bush's faith based initiative.

And speaking of the faith-based initiative it's time President Obama did some work on his Council on Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships. It's time for the President to put an immediate end to such discrimination and clearly ban proselytization. Every rule and regulation of George W. Bush's Faith-Based Initiative remains intact today.

I urge everyone to monitor your School Board and keep in touch with your elected officials; we must ensure that the wall of separation is maintained. We cannot lose our focus.



Author & Former LA Times Columnist: William Lobdell
“Losing My Religion: How I Lost My Faith Reporting on Religion in America — and Found Unexpected Peace”

Saturday, May 16th at 2:00 pm
Irvine Ranch Water District
15600 Sand Canyon Ave, Irvine

Our May speaker will be William Lobdell, an award-winning journalist, author, blogger, speaker, college lecturer and media consultant.



An L.A. Times reporter for 18 years Lobdell covered the religion beat. He earned several national awards for his work before becoming a metro editor for the paper in 2006. He left the paper in 2008.

He has been a visiting faculty member for 12 years at the University of California, Irvine, where he teaches “Religion and the Media” and “The Internet, Blogs and Politics.”

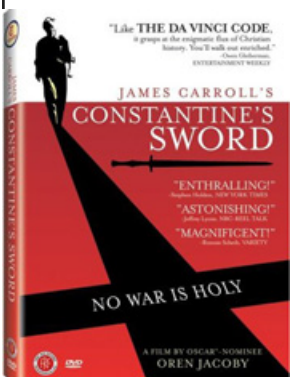
Come and meet the author of “Losing My Religion: How I Lost My Faith Reporting on Religion in America — and Found Unexpected Peace.” You will hear his story of covering religion and how his experiences led him into a new understanding of God, religion, and faith. Lobdell's journey of faith — and doubt — is a book about life's deepest questions that speaks to everyone; he understands the longings and satisfactions of the faithful, as well as the unrelenting power of doubt. How he faced that power, and wrestled with it, will be thought provoking for people of faith and nonbelievers alike.

“Losing My Religion” will be available for purchase and personally signed by the author. ~~~~~

Screening of Constantine's Sword

Saturday, June 20 at 2:00 pm
Irvine Ranch Water District
15600 Sand Canyon Ave, Irvine

Constantine's Sword is the story of James Carroll; a former Catholic priest on a journey to confront his past and uncover the roots of religiously inspired violence and war. His search also reveals a growing scandal involving religious infiltration of the U.S. military and the terrible consequences of religion's influence on America's foreign policy.



Carroll focuses on Christian anti-Semitism as the model for all religious hatred, exposing the cross as a symbol of a long history of violence against Jews (and, most recently, Muslims). The film brings the history of religious intolerance to life, tracing it as a source of the fanaticism that threatens the world today. At its core, Constantine's Sword is a compelling

personal narrative — a kind of detective story — as one man uncovers the dark areas of his own past, searching for a better future.

The book of the same name was published in 2001. Oren Jacoby's film Constantine's Sword was a sequel to the book, following James Carroll on a journey to expose the roots of religious violence, and includes a scary new development: the infiltration of the U.S. military by religious fundamentalists which continues to this day.

Mikey Weinstein who appears in the film with his son Casey, felt compelled to start the Military Religious Freedom Foundation when he saw their story in the context of a long history of the terrible events that have followed the coming together of religious zealotry and military power, as shown in the movie.

Join us for the film and a discussion of the role of religion, war and the military. ~~~~~



We're on the web
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**Apr 18— 2:00 pm Dr. Barbara McGraw
of The Center For Religious Plurality on
The Founding Fathers' Religious Rea-
sons for Separation of Church & State**

**Jun 20—2:00 pm “Constantine’s
Sword”**

All AU-OC events are at The Irvine
Ranch Water District, 15600 Sand
Canyon Ave., Irvine. No charge for
any of the events.

**May 16— 2:00 pm William Lobdell
author of Losing My Religion: How I
Lost My Faith Reporting on Religion in
America — and Found Unexpected
Peace**

The Steering Committee meets at
12:30 before the general meeting. All
are invited.

Keep Up To Date with Americans United-Orange County
Along with our newsletter, we keep people informed with what’s going on in the fight to preserve separation
of church and state as well as our events through the web site at www.au-oc.org and also through our Yahoo!
Group. If you’re not on the Yahoo! Group, send an email to us at:
au-oc-subscribe@yahoo.com. We meet monthly at the Irvine Ranch Water District, 15600 Sand Can-
yon Ave., Irvine on the 3rd Saturday at 2:00 pm.
*Irvine Ranch Water District neither supports nor endorses the cause nor activities of organizations which use the District’s meeting
rooms that are made available as a public service.*

Membership Form

Basic membership is \$25 and includes an annual subscription to Church & State magazine. We are a 501(c)(3) non-profit organiza-
tion, and donations beyond the \$18.00 value of the subscription to Church & State magazine are tax deductible to the full extent of the
law. Email any questions to orangecountyau@yahoo.com.

3337 S. Bristol, #251, Santa Ana, California 92704

\$25 (new membership) **Donation \$ _____**

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ **Zip** _____ **Home Phone** _____

Email: _____