

THE ATHEIST VOICE

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Falwell ministry accused of funding Political Action Committee

AMERICAN UNITED

TV preacher Jerry Falwell has used his Jerry Falwell Ministries to endorse President George W. Bush's re-election in apparent violation of federal tax law, Americans United for Separation of Church and State has told the Internal Revenue Service.

In a complaint to the federal tax agency, Americans United told the IRS that Falwell endorsed Bush in a July 1 e-mail to supporters and also urged followers to send money to a political action committee that supports Republican candidates. Falwell also posted the partisan election-year appeal on his ministry website.

The Rev. Barry W. Lynn, Americans United executive director, said Falwell's action clearly merits an IRS investigation.

"Falwell is thumbing his nose at the

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Religious Right's constitutional scheme falls far short of needed votes

AMERICAN UNITED

In a major defeat for the Religious Right, the Senate decided today not to bring up the Federal Marriage Amendment for a floor vote.

Only 48 senators voted to bring S.J. Res.40 to the floor, far short of the 60 votes needed. Fifty senators voted against cloture.

Opponents of the amendment were jubilant. Speaking at a news conference on Capitol Hill, the Rev. Barry Lynn, executive director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, said the Senate did the right thing.

"Today's vote," said Lynn, "is a powerful repudiation of bigotry. It rejects unnecessary Constitution tampering and is a strong rebuke to the Religious Right.

"A serious threat to the separation of church and state lurked in the shadows of

this debate," Lynn continued. "From the very beginning, supporters of the marriage amendment have used religious language to describe their goals. Marriage was 'sacred,' noted President Bush, and it was a 'sacrament' according to Sen. Frist. The preservation of the sacred and promotion of sacraments is the province of religious institutions, not government bodies.

"This unfortunate debate," Lynn said, "was spawned by an unholy matrimony between political leaders with an eye on the ballot box and Religious Right leaders determined to win support for a mean-spirited and divisive proposal. The result was a floor vote designed to score political points, not advance sound policy. Now it's time for a divorce. The Senate needs to move on to more important matters instead of trying to

curry favor with religious extremists."

A broad array of civil liberties, civil rights and mainstream religious groups oppose the amendment. It is supported by James Dobson, Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson and other Religious Right leaders. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and a few other conservative religious bodies have also endorsed the measure.

Advocates say the measure is intended only to keep state and federal courts from requiring that same-sex couples be allowed to wed. But critics insist the amendment jeopardizes many civil rights protections extended to gay people by state and local laws. Church-state separation activists say the plan entangles religion with government by writing the marriage doctrines and rituals of the majority faiths into the Constitution.

Jesus didn't mean what he said

What I learned from calling prayer lines – Part 2 of 2

By William McEwen
METROPLEX ATHEISTS

The 700 Club

Next, it was Pat Robertson's 700 Club, 800-759-0700. I was greeted by a recording announcing 55 calls were ahead of me, and I could expect a one minute wait to reach a prayer partner. A few minutes later, the recording returned, stating there were 15 calls still ahead, one minute wait time. I'm not sure how the estimates are derived.

Nancy came on the line and I explained that I was feeling low and needed someone to pray with. She said sure. I used a favorite, Ezekiel 4: 12-13.

I read: "And thou shalt eat it as barley cakes, and thou shalt bake it with dung that cometh out of man, in their sight. And the Lord said, Even thus shall the children of Israel eat their defiled bread among the Gentiles, whither I will drive them."

And then, a favorite from II Kings.

"But Rabshakeh said unto them, Hath my master sent me to thy master, and to thee, to speak these words? Hath he not sent me to the men which sit on the wall, that they may eat their own dung, and drink their own piss with you?"

"Good night!" Nancy exclaimed. "What version is that?"

"King James. It's II Kings 18:27, you can look it up."

"I have lots of bibles," Nancy said, "just not right here on hand. What in the world would they even put that in the word for?"

"I was hoping you could help me, because I'm certainly not interested in eating dung or drinking piss. I guess I'm confused."

"Well, I would be confused, too. I never heard that before."

"Write it down and check it. I get the impression you don't believe me."

"I didn't say that. I believe you. Why wouldn't I believe you? There's not much that isn't in the bible. Sometimes you have to see things for yourself to really believe. I do believe there's not anything that the bible doesn't tell us of, you know, it seems that



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way."

"How about this?" I went on, reading II Kings 6: 28-29. "And the king said unto her, What aileth thee? And she answered, This woman said unto me, Give thy son, that we may eat him today, and we will eat my son tomorrow. So we boiled my son, and did eat him: and I said unto her on the next day, Give thy son, that we may eat him: and she hath hid her son."

"No wonder you're not feeling well," Nancy said. "To be reading that kind of stuff would even make you sick." With that, Nancy immediately launched into a prayer.

"Father God, we do greet you in the name of the lord Jesus Christ of Nazareth by his shed blood. God in heaven, we thank you for your word. Oh, God, oh, certainly there is nothing to compare with it but I don't certainly understand or just wonder why that would ever be in there. God just look unto you, your love, and your mercy upon us and mighty work with your power concerning for this brother that's praying. In Jesus' name, a-man. Praise God."

And then Nancy kindly counseled: "Get in some of the good parts. You'll feel better."

"I was hoping you were familiar with

these and could help me."

"No, I haven't any desire to, and I don't know why it's even in there. But there's a lot of things in there that I don't understand, too."

Nancy was very nice, and I hope I planted a few questions about the crazy bible in her mind. But it appears she will just ignore these strange bible verses.

700 Club Part II

Nancy was so much fun that I couldn't resist another call to the 700 Club. This time I decided to milk Deuteronomy 23:1 for entertainment. Bill answered, and I said my name was Jeff. I explained that I'd just returned from the hospital, and tests confirmed that I had testicular cancer. It is very advanced, and I told him I will need to "have that part of my anatomy removed."

I told him I was upset because if I had the surgery, I wouldn't go to heaven. The verse states: "He that is wounded in the stones, or hath his privy member cut off, shall not enter into the congregation of the lord."

"They were speaking as a law," Bill explained. "You're taking it too literal. Your spirit is something of a different matter."

"Huh?"

"You understand how that was written for another time, not just because it is in the old testament, because it was written for a law which doesn't speak about your spirit."

"I don't understand."

"OK, just because you're having something removed because of cancer, it does not mean that you're not going to enter to the kingdom of God."

"So you're saying the bible is incorrect?"

"No. The bible's not incorrect, but they were speaking as a law for entering the temple. Our temple is not the temple that's made from earth and hands."

"I see. So you're saying I just can't go to church."

"No, no, no. The building is a meeting place of God's people. The temple is something different."

"It says the congregation of the lord."

"I understand, Jeff. I would say you're taking it too literal, OK? Your spirit is something of a different matter, OK? Your spirit is still the lord's. And if Jesus is there, that's what means you can be before the kingdom."

"I don't understand."

"As an old law. As an example, Jeff. If today we applied the law literally, then anyone with an issue would not be able to come to the congregation for weeks. It had to be ostracized until they were cleansed. And we don't do that."

I wasn't following any of it, but I pretended I did. "I wish I felt that in my heart," I said sadly.

"Jeff, can you see the analogy, then?"

"I'm afraid I'm having trouble."

"Tell you what, let's pray that you'll seek further guidance on it, OK?"

That made sense. Cut your losses and pray. Bill's prayer was interesting.

"Father God, we just lift up Jeff up to God in the name of Jesus, Father and God, that Lord, we first want you to comfort him, Lord God, by your holy spirit, Father God, from the surgery, Father God. We do pray, Lord God, that, God, you just recommend to him to receive good counsel, Father God, concerning your word, Father God, that, God, you have not taken away from your kingdom, Lord God, and that God, you have not taken your holy spirit

from him, Father God.

"We do pray, Lord God, that you will restore him, Lord God, for the soul of your salvation, Lord God Father.

"And Lord God, help him at this time in his life, Father God, this difficulty in his life, Lord God. And assure him, Lord God, of the home, Lord God, the mansion, God, that you have prepared for him, Father God, for him and his children, Father God.

"And treasure him, God, and strengthen him, God, God, just pray, Father God, that you would rise up on God, and find him the counsel that he needs, Lord. In Jesus' name, Amen."

Yeah, that about covers it.

John Hagee Ministries

San Antonio-based John Hagee Ministries (210-491-5100) was a fun call. The line was answered by Patsy, a 75-year-old woman who, like the Daystar prayer partner, revealed the business nature of the prayer line operation.

"I was hoping there was someone that I could talk to about some concerns I have."

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Bush campaign targets churches for election outreach

AMERICAN UNITED

A Bush-Cheney re-election scheme that targets churches to win votes is an abuse of religion and raises serious questions concerning federal tax law, says Americans United for Separation of Church and State.

According to an account in today's Washington Post, the Bush campaign has sent a detailed memo to religious volunteers, urging them to turn over church directories to the campaign, distribute

issue guides to fellow church members and enlist pastors in voter registration drives.

"This is a shameless attempt to misuse and abuse churches for partisan political ends," said the Rev. Barry W. Lynn, Americans United executive director. "People go to church to worship, not to be proselytized by politicians.

"Injecting partisan politics into our nation's sanctuaries is a desecration of sacred space," Lynn continued. "Politicizing churches is morally wrong and legally

dubious. The Bush campaign should repent of this reckless scheme."

Lynn noted that the Internal Revenue Service issued an unprecedented warning to the nation's political parties June 10, reminding them that churches and other 501(c)(3) organizations may not be involved in partisan politics.

"Any coordination between the Bush campaign and church leaders would clearly be illegal," Lynn said. "Our chapters and members around the country will be watching closely to see how this plays out in the pews."

Prayer – From page 3

"Well, this is a prayer line," Patsy explained. "We can't counsel or anything like that, but for this particular case, you'd have to give just a state, not the city, and just your first name, no last name, and just more or less what kind of prayer you're needing and then we pray with you, that's about it. We don't counsel on the air."

"I'm Jeff, I'm in Texas."

I explained that I was afraid of dying, because I feared going to heaven.

"I'm not supposed to counsel you, but I'm going to overlook that for a bit."

"Thank you."

"We've all come short of the glory of God. None of us on this Earth have [sic] ever been perfect. There's only one, and we're not it."

Patsy went on and on about sin and forgiveness. I kept trying to interrupt, but she was on a roll.

Finally I was able to get her attention. "I don't fear God, I fear the kingdom. In Revelation, it talks about four very scary beasts that sit at the throne of God."

(The verse is Revelation 4: 6-8: And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind. And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle.

And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes

within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.)

"The spirit of fear comes from Satan, it does not come from God," Patsy said. "Remember, you're not going to have the same mindset that you have when we go. What you have here? All of it is changing."

"Tell me about that. That's helping."

"I really don't have the time, it's already seven minutes that I'm on, almost seven, I should have been off two minutes ago."

"OK, I don't mean to get you into trouble."

"I'm still on the phone."

"I don't mean to get you into trouble and make people mad at you."

"That's OK, Jeff. They're going to buzz me in a minute."

"I appreciate your bending the rules and I sure hope you don't get fired for trying to help me."

"I won't. They won't do that, it's just that I know I've been here for 20 years. I'm a piece of furniture around here now. The thing is, rules are rules, and I break them once in a while. I'll put you on the prayer line, we'll keep you in the prayer, Honey."

That's right. Time to move along. Lots more souls to save.

Crossroads Christian Church

Next I decided to try calling a local church. I grabbed the yellow pages - let's see, bail bonds, chiropractors, churches! I selected Crossroads Christian Church, 5200 S. Bowen in Arlington. The receptionist Jenny put me through to Rev. Brian Carter. I explained my fear of entering God's kingdom and facing the four scary beasts.

Rev. Carter knew his stuff. He went through the verses in Revelation, describing God's kingdom as nothing to fear. It was all a joyful place, with man and beast worshipping God. "These four creatures are representatives of God. They are helping John see the majesty," Rev. Carter explained. "Day and night, these creatures are circling the throne, they can't do anything but say, holy, holy, holy."

Rev. Carter's spin was don't be scared. It's all wonderful. Makes sense, but the beasts sure sound frightening. I'm more of a dog person, you know?

Rev. Carter preaches at Crossroads church on Wednesday nights at 6:30. Too bad we Metroplex Atheists meet at J. Gilligan's at that same time. Rev. Carter seemed like a decent guy, and he might be worth seeing.

Trinity Broadcasting

I made a final call to Trinity Broadcasting, channel 58 in Irving (972-313-1333). The phone was answered by Hope.

"Do you have a prayer line," I asked, "someone I can pray with?"

"No, we don't have anyone available right now."

"Could you recommend another number I could call for someone to pray with?"

"OK, um, this is my first day here, and I really don't have another number."

Oh, that's OK. I guess I'd had my fun.

William McEwen is a photographer and writer in Arlington, and a new member of Metroplex Atheists. His work can be viewed online at www.mcewenphoto.com.

Right – From page 1

IRS,” Lynn said. “He must not be permitted to use a tax-exempt ministry to engage in partisan politics. The vast majority of America’s religious institutions play by the rules. He should too.”

Falwell, in his “Falwell Confidential” bulletin, wrote, “For conservative people of faith, voting for principle this year means voting for the re-election of George W. Bush. The alternative, in my mind, is simply unthinkable. To the pro-life, pro-family, pro-traditional marriage, pro-America voters in this nation, we must determine that President Bush is the man with our interests at heart. It is that simple.”

Falwell continued, “However, simply voting may not be enough. I believe it is the responsibility of every political conservative, every evangelical Christian, every pro-life Catholic, every traditional Jew, every Reagan Democrat, and everyone in between to get serious about re-electing President Bush. That is why I am utilizing

this column to urge you to support the Campaign for Working Families, which is headed by Gary Bauer. It is the organization that I believe can have the greatest impact in re-electing Mr. Bush to the Oval Office.”

The message was sent out under the auspices of Jerry Falwell Ministries and included a direct web link to the donation page of the Campaign for Working Families, a Republican-oriented PAC founded by former Republican presidential candidate Gary Bauer.

Lynn, in his July 15 complaint to the IRS, charged that Falwell seems to have clearly violated federal law barring tax-exempt groups from partisan politicking.

“Falwell is using his ministry to urge the election of George W. Bush and other candidates and to implore supporters to make contributions to a PAC whose purpose is to secure the election of Bush and other candidates,” Lynn wrote in the IRS letter. “I believe this is intervention in a political campaign on behalf of a candidate in clear violation of

federal tax law. I urge you to take appropriate action to correct this abuse of the law.”

Lynn noted that the IRS in 1993 retroactively revoked the tax-exempt status of Falwell’s television ministry, the Old Time Gospel Hour, for the years 1986 and 1987 after determining that the group had improperly channeled funds into a PAC supporting congressional candidates.

Falwell is apparently still smarting from that action. On CNBC’s “Capital Report” July 2, AU’s Lynn reminded Falwell of his run-in with the IRS. Falwell denied it had ever happened.

“Never,” Falwell shouted. “Never. Never. Not one minute. Not one second. You are wrong.... Never one second did we lose our tax exemption.” He later added, “You are telling a lie right now, Barry.”

In fact, the revocation of the Old Time Gospel Hour’s tax-exempt status is a matter of public record. On April 7, 1993, The New York Times reported that the IRS in February of that year revoked the Old Time Gospel Hour’s tax-free status retroactively for two years for diverting assets and personnel to a political action committee. Falwell also had to pay \$50,000 in back taxes. The federal agency required the ministry to issue a public statement signed by Falwell reporting the settlement.

I believe it is the responsibility of every political conservative, every evangelical Christian, every pro-life Catholic, every traditional Jew, every Reagan Democrat, and everyone in between to get serious about re-electing President Bush.

Jerry Falwell
JERRY FALWELL MINISTRIES



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YOUR KIDS AND RELIGION

Robert M. Price, Ph.D.

ATHEIST ALLIANCE

Ancient societies and ancient families lacked a lot of our conveniences. They didn't even have soap, much less plumbing. But they also lacked a number of our problems. One of these is the increasingly vexing matter of how to raise one's children with regard to religious faith.

In the old days, it was simple: whatever creed your parents indoctrinated you with, you passed it on as well as you could to your own offspring. Religion might as well have been in the genes. But no more. We live these days in a pluralistic society. And this means that there are many different beliefs jostling one another in school, at the workplace, and even in the home. In turn, this implies faith is no simple matter. If it isn't, how can the matter of rearing your children in faith be simple either?

Brave New World

In traditional societies, people would grow up never even hearing that there was any other religion than theirs. In ours, sooner or later, even if one is a Hasidic Jew or living in an Amish paradise, young people become inescapably aware of a multitude of other options. And such awareness automatically tends to relativize belief. People begin to conclude that their and their friends' religious identities are pretty much analogous to their various ethnic identities. And this understanding, broad-minded and tolerant as it is, upsets some traditionally-religious people since it often leads to interfaith marriage.

Few couples these days would hesitate to tie the knot just because one was Polish, the other Irish. Similarly, fewer and fewer have any problem marrying even though one is Christian, the other Jewish. And here we have two major factors that make it no simple matter to know how to raise your kids with religion.

Since your child is sure to encounter religious diversity, and to have to make some sense of it, are you preparing him or her for such a world if you indoctrinate the child, old style? Granted, you have to make it simpler for children; you save the fine print and the special cases for later. The devil is in the details, and you want to tell



believing in Satan as it is to believe in Santa. Who Am I?

I have just mentioned religiously mixed marriages. These parents have an additional challenge. They do not have to wait till the future for their children to face the challenge of religious diversity. How should you prepare them for diversity? And for the other intellectual challenges to faith?

The most important guiding principle is that you owe it to your children to acquaint them with your and their heritage. They have every right to know their roots. To keep it from them would be like hiding the identity of biological parents from adopted children. They will one day realize that they will not be whole persons without knowing where they come from.

The second principle is that, in order to educate them in their religious tradition, you needn't indoctrinate them. They will be all too ready, willing, and

able to emulate your beliefs. At least at first.

You need to inject a note, paradoxically, of doubt and free choice. Children should know from the start that it is they who are ultimately responsible for their beliefs. Otherwise you run the risk of producing an individual who never gets around to thinking out the issues and has only a superficial faith as a result. I tell my daughters what I believe, and what Mommy believes, and what others believe, and then I tell them that they are smart and that one day they must decide for themselves.

Catechism as Vaccination

Over the years, I have met more people than I can count who told me that strict religious catechism during grammar school years had one effect: it vaccinated them against religion! They chafed at having religion forced down their throats.

Children will inevitably take on familiar ideas about God, heaven, and hell more seriously or more literally than we do. Poor William Ellery Channing was stricken with dread for weeks after going to church with his father, hearing about the doom awaiting sinners, until he asked his dad how he could live calmly in the light of it. The elder Channing told him not to worry. Apparently it never even occurred to him that little Billy would take it seriously. Don't make your child think you lied to him or her. It's nowhere near as fun

them about God first. But then there's the dangerous Santa Claus precedent: children forgive us for having fibbed to them about Santa because, like a surprise birthday party, the deception was so much fun. But if we tell them overly simplistic things about God, answered prayer, and whose is the right religion, we are on more dangerous ground. Especially if we do not believe them ourselves. Children will inevitably take on familiar ideas about God, heaven, and hell more seriously or more literally than we do. Poor William Ellery Channing was stricken with dread for weeks after going to church with his father, hearing about the doom awaiting sinners, until he asked his dad how he could live calmly in the light of it. The elder Channing told him not to worry. Apparently it never even occurred to him that little Billy would take it seriously. Don't make your child think you lied to him or her. It's nowhere near as fun

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Ask-an-Atheist: “How do you handle your children if they choose to be religious?”

My son is also not quite 3, so I have given this a lot of thought recently. My comments may not be quite so sage as those of parents of older children, but I'll offer them anyway. My current plan is:

1. Be as honest and straightforward as possible - about everything. Establish a relationship of mutual trust and respect. (When my son was born, my father advised me to respect my children. I have taken this advice to heart. My father lives by it, and I am convinced that is how and why I have learned to respect him in return. Conversely, to the degree that my mother is still somewhat of a control freak, my respect for her is correspondingly less.)

2. Expose the child to a broad range of religious belief systems, through literature and history study, lectures at (say) Unitarian churches and other such forums, talking directly with religious friends and neighbors about their beliefs (in as non-threatening a way as possible) and even visiting their places of worship (if invited), etc. The more religions a child is familiar with, the easier it is to recognize the similarities and differences among them and realize they are all pretty much equally bogus. It's also easier to understand why most people continue to need and want religion.

3. If a child becomes religious anyway, interrogate his or her reasoning. If he or she actually buys into the dogma, go back and explain, calmly and rationally, exactly why the dogma is wrong. If he or she is just going along with it to impress another boy or girl, explain why that's a bad strategy in the long run. Generally, the idea is to exercise critical thinking skills - which, when applied consistently, inevitably lead to atheism.

–S.R.

I'm not a parent, but if I were, I think I would pursue an “all-honesty, all-the-time” policy with my kid. Talk very openly about religion, why you think it's bad, why you don't believe in God, etc. I'd let the kid know that, while a lot of people seem to get a lot of benefit from joining religious groups (since he is likely to see

evidence in school as he grows up of campus Christian groups that all the “cool” kids are part of), point out that the main purpose of those groups, regardless of how fun they look, is to indoctrinate you into the world's largest and richest cult, and that this cult believes in things that either just aren't true (the supernatural) or, worse, are demonstrably harmful (the idea that all non-members deserve to be tortured in hell for eternity, which leads to bigotry against non-Christians, gays, etc.). Atheism is the new cool.

–M.W.

I was raised by people who are themselves to some degree religious, and who were not particularly respectful of their children (but not particularly disrespectful, either), and all of their children turned out atheists. What did it for us? Well, of course it could be a combination of things, but one absence from our upbringings which stands out to me now as a prominent feature is simply the lack of religion. They never mentioned god, never went to church, never prayed, never studied a holy book, never spoke about the spiritual or metaphysical at all. And that was enough (to their surprise I would say, at least the first time around) for us to all be atheists. It is interesting to ponder: does it require any particular character trait in the child for that phenomenon to happen, or would most people simply fail to be religious if no one told them about it or pushed it on them when they were young?

–C.K.

My brother and his wife have two children and both are atheists. They take, what I view to be, a pretty healthy approach. They haven't talked to their children much about god. But the most appropriate corollary is Santa Clause and the Easter Bunny. My niece and nephew (5 and 3 years old respectively) are both aware that Santa and the E-Bunny are pretend; and that the people who dress up as them are just doing it for fun. So they have never been told that Santa or the E-bunny is real, to them, it's always been just a silly story that some

people like to tell... BUT my niece and nephew have also had it stressed to them (my niece more so since she's older) that some people like to think that Santa and the E-bunny are real and that by no means should they ruin the other people's fun by telling them they aren't real. So they give their children a healthy bit of realism countered with stressing respect for others. I think that this lays down a pretty health foundation for skepticism later on in life since belief in Santa and the E-bunny is just a way to get your child used to the idea of believing in things that aren't there. I like the way they handled it.

–K.M.

I am not a parent, but it would seem that as they grow, they will ask questions, and I'd explain the answers in a way that encourages the natural 'wonder' of things in a real sense. An example would be “Why's the sky blue?” If you tell why the sky really is blue instead of “God made it that way, don't question God,” I'm sure they will naturally develop a good sense of logical reasoning. I'd encourage a healthy quest for knowledge, and understanding. Good character development, respect, sense of responsibility, and freedom of thought. I'm sure nature will take its course, and develop a good, unique person. I'd then allow them to take their own path. I was a Jesus freak once, and I turned out okay.

–C.T.

I'm an atheist, and my wife has not really decided. Recently she made a few trips to the Greek Orthodox Church (she is Greek and was raised Orthodox). The first time we went together, but after that she went by herself. I think it's fine that she take our daughter to church. And she thinks it's fine that when our daughter gets older, that I question her. I really believe that it's not enough to believe the right thing. It's important to believe the right thing for the right reasons, otherwise the entire purpose is corrupted.

I've also decided not to lie to her about

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Nuts in the news

Richmond, VA

Earlier this year, Virginia lawmakers mistakenly revived a colonial-era law giving all workers in the state Sundays off if they request it and subjecting employers to criminal penalties for forcing someone to labor on the Sabbath. The lawmakers signed an emergency bill correcting the mistake, an action that came at a rare special session convened by the governor. The mistake occurred when lawmakers intended to repeal an outdated "blue law" that restricted trade on Sundays, but inadvertently repealed a list of businesses exempt from Virginia's "day of rest" law instead. "I think that perhaps a lot of us have learned lessons from this on reviewing the legislation that we introduce," said Sen. Frederick Quayle, sponsor of the original bill. The mistake was missed by legislative staff members who draft bills, legislators, the attorney general's office and Governor Warner, who signed the bill.

Copenhagen, DENMARK

The pastor in Denmark's state Lutheran Protestant Church who said he did not believe in God will face an ecclesiastic court to explain himself, the Justice Ministry said. The court will decide whether the pastor's declarations were compatible with his position as pastor. He has been accused of sowing "deep confusion within the Church" with his comments in a newspaper interview, in which he was quoted as saying that he did not believe in God, resurrection or eternal life. He has continued to express this view since then.

Portland, OR

In the world of Christian video games, players sport the armor of God, the best weapon is a ball of holy energy known as a "smite," and demon-possessed Roman soldiers drop to their knees in prayer when they're hit. Enemies vanish, vaporize, or, in



the case of the Roman soldiers in N'Lightning's "Catechumen," start praying as Handel's "Hallelujah Chorus" rings out. Most games incorporate Bible verses, and story lines often focus on spiritual struggles. Two Guys Software's most popular game, "Eternal War: Shadows of Light," players assume the role of Mike, an angel charged with saving a suicidal teen. They battle demons with spiritual weapons that include "soul disks," "Trinity blasts" and the "smite," a ball of liquid holy energy that vaporizes bad guys.

Cedar Rapids, IA

A church's plan for an old-fashioned book-burning has been stopped by city and county fire codes. The pastor of The Jesus Church, Rev. Scott Breedlove, wanted to rekindle that tradition in a ceremony where books, CDs, videos and clothing would have been thrown into the flames. Officials said the county's air quality division prohibits the transporting of materials from the city to the county for burning. The new plan calls for members of the church to throw materials into garbage cans and then light candles to symbolically "burn" the material.

Milwaukee, WI

The brother of a minister is on trial for suffocating an autistic child during an exorcism and told jurors that it was God who "took" the child, not the defendant's intense ritual. Ray Hemphill, 47, who prayed and sang over 8-year-old Terrance Cottrell's chest as parishioners held him down on August 22, 2003, stands trial for felony physical child abuse. If convicted, he faces up to five years in prison. A medical examiner ruled Terrance's death a homicide by asphyxiation, due to intense pressure on his chest. Terrance, who was diagnosed with autism at age 2, hated to be touched, according to testimony. Terrance died after receiving the 12th in a series of "prayer services" from Ray Hemphill. David Hemphill, 63, was not there that evening, but he told jurors he gave his

brother permission to perform the exorcisms as an attempt to save the boy from what they believed was demonic possession.

Veracruz, MEXICO

James Caviezel has been deluged with requests to perform miracles by Mexican fans who believe he really is Jesus Christ. The actor, who played Jesus in Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ*, was on a tour of the east Mexican state. Dozens of residents from villages throughout the state asked Caviezel to heal the sick and perform other miracles as he passed through. "It was a shock for me to see how they came up to me to ask for my help. I had to explain to them that I was only an actor, and wasn't really the son of God," said Caviezel.

AUSTRALIA

MEMBERS of a bizarre cult have broken Australian health laws by donating their kidneys to hospitals as "living sacrifices" for God. The Jesus Christians cult claims the members lied to health authorities in Victoria and New South Wales so they could donate their kidneys to strangers in need of a transplant. In Australia, kidney donations are barred for anyone apart from family members, friends or those with an emotional connection to prevent organs being sold on the black market. Jesus Christians also urge members to donate parts of their livers.

Tehran, IRAN

An Iranian man who struck a suicide pact with his new bride over their guilt for having pre-marital sex is being held by police after he backed out on his side of the bargain, judiciary officials said on Sunday.

The couple, who were not named, had been married for just two days when, "due to their guilty consciences for having illicit sexual relations, they decided to kill each other at the same time," the official said.

The man helped to hang his wife but then changed his mind about killing himself and handed himself in to police in the northeastern Khorasan province, the official told the ISNA student news agency.

Pre-marital sex is taboo in the Islamic state where some girls have to go through a virginity test before tying knot.

On the steps of 9th Circuit Court of Appeals

Mark W. Thomas
ATHEISTS OF SILICON VALLEY, PRESIDENT

The U.S. Supreme Court recently declined to rule on the merits of having the phrase “under God” in our Pledge of Allegiance. This is disappointing because there are many reasons to keep religion and government separate.

The United States was the first country that derived its power from a purely secular, non-religious basis. Nations before had kings and queens who used their supposed “God-given divine right” to rule. Instead of this top-down power structure, our founders wisely created a government that derived its powers from the consent of the governed. They also realized the inherent dangers of religion, and specifically kept it out of our Constitution and government. While the deists’ “Nature’s God” is mentioned in the Declaration of Independence, there is no reference to a god in the Constitution. In addition, the Treaty of Tripoli, written during the administration of President George Washington, signed by President John Adams and unanimously approved by the Senate in 1797, stated, “The Gov-

ernment of the United States is not in any sense founded on the Christian religion.” Six years later, James Madison wrote, “The purpose of separation of church and state is to keep forever from these shores the ceaseless strife that has soaked the soil of Europe in blood for centuries.”

Our Constitution is also designed to protect the rights of the minorities from the tyranny of the majority. References to God by our government officials imply that the 14 percent of Americans who don’t believe in any god are lesser citizens. This is similar to when white men once discriminated against blacks, women and other minorities, often using the Bible as an endorsement. It wasn’t right then. It isn’t right now.

Almost two years ago, the U.S. Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled correctly on the inserted reference to God in the Pledge of Allegiance, saying that it conflicts with the First Amendment. To those who disagree, I ask, what part of the First Amendment is confusing? “Congress shall make

no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof ... “

Enshrined in the First Amendment is the idea that all Americans have a constitutional right to freedom of religion. This must include freedom from religion, because we can’t have true freedom unless we have the right to choose “none of the above.”

The mixing of government and religion is a threat to the freedoms of us all. The United States cannot be based on the belief that all persons are created equal when it implies that a god prefers some.

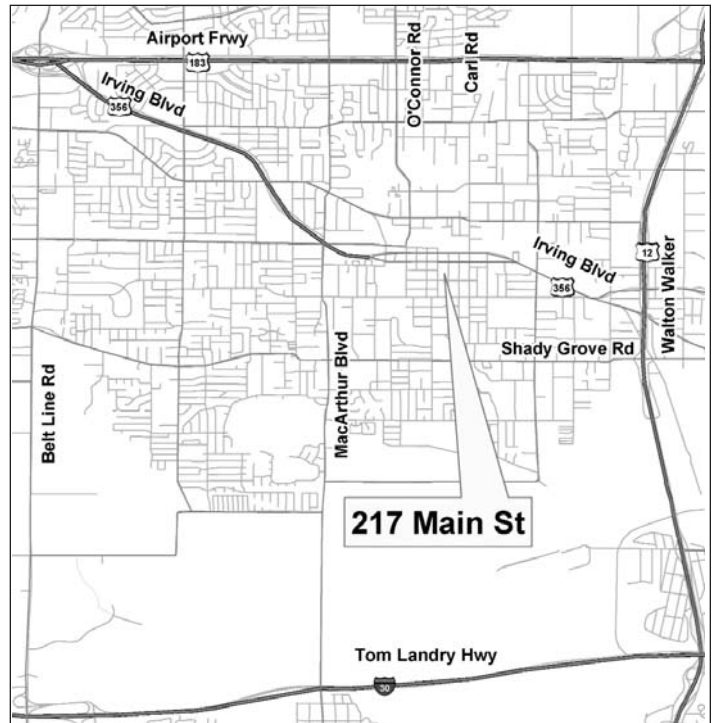
As shown by the national uproar and debate, religion is still divisive. The Pledge of Allegiance is supposed to help unite Americans. Having “God” in it divides us and attempts to link patriotism to public professions of religious belief. Let us return the pledge to its previous, non-religious and inclusive form ... so we can all once again say “one nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.”

“Our Constitution is also designed to protect the rights of the minorities from the tyranny of the majority.”

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Rationally Speaking: Soldiers' morality

It has been an awful month in Iraq, dominated by the news of prisoners' abuse in detention facilities run by the US and its allies, by the decapitation of an American, broadcast on the Internet, and of course by the usual list of bomb explosions and casualties all over the Middle East. Plenty of commentators have remarked on all these events, but I have made a list of what I think are interesting phrases related to the prisoners' abuse scandal, and that I'd like to submit to the readers' attention. What I think is relevant in the following quotes is what they reveal about the common sense of morality that appears to be shared by a lot of us. As we shall see, it makes for a disturbing picture of our ethical standards.

One of the first excuses adduced by the accused soldiers and their friends and families is a classic: "I (he/she) was following orders." Well, all right, what that means is that responsibility needs to be ascertained throughout the chain of command, but in what sense is this an excuse for the soldiers' behavior? It didn't help the Nazi at Nuremberg whenever they tried the same approach, and for good reasons: when an adult individual does something, even at the prompting of somebody else, that individual is primarily responsible for what he has done. In the United States, it is common to try children as adults for all sorts of crimes, and one often hears calls for the death penalty in some such cases. But when it comes to our own "boys" (and "girls") doing awful things, all we have to do is to point the finger to whoever gave the order? What happened to one of the cornerstones of the American ethos, personal responsibility?

A second common refrain heard during

the past few weeks has been that "they were not properly trained." As if a mature adult actually needs special training to figure out that it is not moral to torture prisoners of war, that it is not ethical to humiliate people that are in one's custody, for example by forcing them to engage in acts that their culture or religion considers demeaning. On a much minor scale, of course, a similar attitude is behind the idea that if someone at the office sexually harasses one of his employees, the problem will be fixed with "sensitivity training," as if any reasonable man wouldn't know that touching, or even talking to, a woman in a certain manner without permission is simply not an acceptable thing to do.

Many of the friends and family of the accused soldiers have been understandably shocked and surprised at the news of the abuses. But, rather than accepting the reality of photos and testimonies, a common reaction has been along the lines of "he is such a nice boy, I simply can't believe he could do that sort of things." This, of course, is the same simplistic attitude that explains why the majority of crimes are committed by people who know the victim, the latter being simply unable to think that her nice uncle, neighbor, or friend could possibly do what they in fact went on to do. In several of the televised interviews with friends and family of the accused soldiers, the attitude was palpably not just one of disbelief at the reality of the events, but rather one insinuating the possibility that somebody, somewhere, was simply making all of this up.

To continue with our brief analysis, consider Donald Rumsfeld, the (too) briefly embattled Secretary of Defense: he immediately went on television to "take full

responsibility" for the abuses, and then gingerly (even contemptuously) ignored calls for his resignation. What exactly does it mean to "take responsibility," then? I thought, naively as it turns out, that it would mean that someone at the top of the chain of command (say, Rumsfeld) would resign because he had not been able to correct a problem of which he had been aware for months before the scandal erupted. But I guess Mr. Rumsfeld's dictionary includes some other, hitherto unknown, definition of "taking responsibility."

We then come to President Bush, who has been quoted saying, after viewing the photos of the prisoners' maltreatment, "this does not reflect the America I know." Well, the problem is that, contrary to what Mr. Bush and his cronies have been saying for years, there is no such thing as "the" America they know. The United States of America is, like many other places in the world, sometime a wonderful and sometime an awful place to live, depending on the circumstances. Americans, like any other people in the world, don't have a monopoly on goodness (or on evil, for that matter), but are simply a bunch of human beings, with all the great potential and faults that human beings typically have. That is why it is equally silly to say that one is "proud to be an American" (how can one be proud of a birth accident?), as that one "hates America" (how can one meaningfully hate an abstract entity?). Rather, one should say that one is proud, ashamed of, or even hate, particular Americans, especially individual leaders and the policies they implement.

The Bush administration also tried to get some mileage out of the alleged fact that the US is "dealing" with the matter openly and swiftly, as opposed to some dictatorship that American blood has helped eliminating. Right, except of course that that dictatorship had actually been helped into place by the same American interests that later removed



Dr. Massimo
Pigliucci
ATHEIST ALLIANCE

Do you know of any Church/State separation violations?

Some things to look for are the posting of the ten commandment in public (government) buildings including public school buildings, city parks, municipal buildings, and libraries.

To voice your concerns, please email the Metroplex Atheist Director:

director@metroplexatheists.org

it, not to mention the maddening fact that the Bush administration tried to keep the news of the abuses out of the public eye for months, while at the same time doing absolutely nothing to stop the practice. Only when the news finally became public Rumsfeld "took responsibility".

Lastly, one of the most disturbing comments I've heard in the news about this whole horrible affair began appearing after the decapitation of Nick Berg was broadcast on the Internet: "well, see, at least we are not as barbaric as they are." Yes, there is no question that the decapitation of a human being is a barbaric act (although, let us remember that the US is the only Western country that still applies the death penalty - being killed by raw decapitation is surely worse than being fried on the electric chair, but at some point this becomes an academic matter for the person involved). And surely decapitating one prisoner outdoes abusing several by a long shot (then again, at least one prisoner did die under torture in American hands). But even to make the comparison, it seems to me, dramatically lowers our own moral standards. So now the US is no longer a knight in shining armor, interested only in bringing democracy and economic prosperity to the rest of the world. We are reduced to a picture of the US army doing awful things, yes, but at least not as awful as those of the other side. Have we completely lost our moral compass? Did we ever had it to begin with?

Dr. Pigliucci is an Associate Professor at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, where he teaches ecology and evolutionary biology. For more information visit www.rationallyspeaking.org.

CHURCH SIGNS



Metroplex Atheists

John Nicholson found out that Jesus really stinks at the UT-Arlington campus. It must be that walk from the car. Email your church signs to: editor@metroplexatheists.org

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Atheism may be defined as the mental attitude which unreservedly accepts the supremacy of reason and aims at establishing a lifestyle and ethical outlook verifiable by experience and the scientific method, independent of all arbitrary assumptions of authority and creeds.

Madelyn Murray O'Hair

The study of theology, as it stands in the Christian churches, is the study of nothing; it is founded on nothing, it rests on no principles; it proceeds by no authority; it has no data; it can draw outside no thing; and it admits of no conclusion.

Thomas Paine, American Patriot

In those parts of the world where it aims and so far have we walked, miracles have ceased, but in the paths of its error barbarous and ignorant, savages are still in vogue.

Ethan Allen, American Patriot

American Atheists, Inc.
www.atheists.org

An honest god is the noblest work of man.
Revised by atheist, 1980 Century Circle

Reason believes otherwise than that He, the infinite Father, expects or requires no worship or praise from us, but that He is eternally above it.

Benjamin Franklin, Founding Father

I believe in an America where religious intolerance will someday end... where every man has the same right to attend or not attend the church of his choice.

John F. Kennedy, U.S. President, 1961 - 1963

The Bible is not my Book and Christianity is not my religion. I could never give assent to the long complicated statements of Christian dogma.

We do not permit any inquisition either within or without the law or apply any religious test to the holding of office. The mind of America must be forever free.

Calvin Coolidge, U.S. President, 1923 - 1933

The United States have administered upon a great and noble experiment, which is believed to be hazardous in the absence of all previous precedent - that of the total separation of church and state - religious establishments by law with a view to the maintenance of the free exercise of all religions and the freedom of worship his own religion... Such is the great experiment which we tried, our system of free government would be in perfect without it.

John Tyler, U.S. President, 1841 - 1845

Shake off all the fears of servile prejudices, under which weak minds are servilely crouched. Fix reason firmly in her seat and call on her tribunal for every fact, every opinion. Ourselves with boldness even the existence of a God, because, if he be one, he must more approve of the homage of reason than that of blindfolded fear.

As I understand the Christian religion, it was, and is, a rebellion. Scripture has a happy tale to tell of the Jews and Christians, but the most bloody religion that ever existed?

Thomas Jefferson, U.S. President, 1801 - 1809

John Adams, U.S. President, 1797 - 1801

He is not in favor of the government making a profession in solemn because our country was founded on the particular religious faith would have a subordinate one or a preference to the other.

James Madison, U.S. President, 1809 - 1817

Jiminy Glick, U.S. President, 1961 - 1963

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NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS!

You may not have heard of the American Community Survey, but you will. The national census, which historically is taken every ten years, has expanded to quench the federal bureaucracy's ever-growing thirst to govern every aspect of American life. The new survey, unlike the traditional census, is taken each and every year at a cost of hundreds of millions of dollars. And it's not brief. It contains 24 pages of intrusive questions concerning matters that simply are none of the government's business, including your job, your income, your physical and emotional health, your family status, your dwelling, and your intimate personal habits.

The questions are both ludicrous and insulting. The survey asks, for instance, how many bathrooms you have in your house, how many miles you drive to work, how many days you were sick last year, and whether you have trouble getting up stairs. It goes on and on, mixing inane questions with highly detailed inquiries about your financial affairs. One can only imagine the countless malevolent ways our federal bureaucrats could use this information. At the very least the survey will be used to dole out pork, which is reason enough to oppose it.

Keep in mind the survey is not voluntary, nor is the Census Bureau asking politely. Americans are legally obligated to answer,

and can be fined up to \$1,000 per question if they refuse!



Ron Paul, M.D.
REP. TEXAS 14TH
CONGRESSIONAL
DISTRICT

www.house.gov/paul

I introduced an amendment last week that would have eliminated funds for this intrusive survey in a spending bill, explaining on the House floor that perhaps the American people don't appreciate being threatened by Big Brother. The amendment was met by either indifference or hostility, as most members of Congress either don't care about or actively support government snooping into the private affairs of citizens.

One of the worst aspects of the census is its focus on classifying people by race. When government tells us it wants information to "help" any

given group, it assumes every individual who shares certain physical characteristics has the same interests, or wants the same things from government. This is an inherently racist and offensive assumption. The census, like so many federal policies and programs, inflames racism by encouraging Americans to see themselves as members of racial groups fighting each other for a share of the federal pie.

The census also represents a form of corporate welfare, since the personal data collected on hundred of millions of Americans can be sold to private businesses. Surely business enjoys having such extensive information available from one source, but it's hardly the duty of taxpayers

to subsidize the cost of market research.

At least the national census has its origins in the Constitution, which is more than one can say about the vast majority of programs funded by Congress. Still, Article I makes it clear that the census should be taken every ten years for the sole purpose of congressional redistricting (and apportionment of taxes, prior to the disastrous 16th amendment). This means a simple count of the number of people living in a given area, so that numerically equal congressional districts can be maintained. The founders never authorized the federal government to continuously survey the American people.

More importantly, they never envisioned a nation where the people would roll over and submit to every government demand. The American Community Survey is patently offensive to all Americans who still embody that fundamental American virtue, namely a healthy mistrust of government. The information demanded in the new survey is none of the government's business, and the American people should insist that Congress reject it now before it becomes entrenched.

Dr. Paul serves the 14th Congressional District of Texas, which stretches from the Gulf Coast south of Houston almost to Corpus Christi; north through Victoria and west close to San Antonio; extending north to Hays county near Austin. From Hays county, the District stretches east to Fayette and Colorado counties, south through Wharton county, and back to the Gulf through the lower half of Brazoria county.



TEMPTED?
www.metroplexatheists.org

Kids – From page 6

I'm betting their reaction would have been different if the approach had been different. If only they had been told that they needed to know about their heritage, and told it was up to them what they wanted to do with it. Those parents or clergy who fear they must indoctrinate their children to keep them believing it are self-defeating. Not only that: they have a pretty flimsy faith in the power of the religion they claim to believe in.

Hair of the God That Bit Me

Chances are that many or even most readers of this article will themselves have lost most of their childhood faith. They may be one of the great number of young parents who are doing a very ironic thing: having rejected the faith of a particular religious community, they find themselves sending their children to the very same institutions for indoctrination! How does this happen? Such parents still don't believe. But they do feel the need to provide moral instruction for their kids, and for some reason they do not think themselves up to the task of giving it. So they figure, why not trust the professionals?

Good luck: I fear they run the risk of creating little evangelists or even inquisitors who will one day start pressing the question of why their parents do not share their faith. Parents will be asking to be regarded as hypocrites.

Some broad-minded parents raise their children without religion, resolving to "let them make their own choice when the time comes." This sounds good, but here, too, there are problems. For one thing, what they may actually be doing is to, in effect, raise their children to be nonreligious. They may learn they can get along fine without faith (many people do), and it may be hard for them ever to see the value others see in religion. The children will never make a choice between religions, only a choice against all of them. And in a sense this choice will have been made for them, as surely as if they had been baptized and catechized.

Suppose parents want to raise little secularists. Shielding them from religion may backfire in precisely the way hard-line catechism does. It may have the same effect as some parents' decision to forbid their children watching television. Chances are they will not lose their taste for the forbidden fruit and will indulge it all the more as soon as they get the chance.

My sister-in-law was not allowed to

watch television; once on her own, she was taping every single soap opera! I have met more than one child of atheist parents who turned to fundamentalism.

In this case, too, I think you owe your children some sort of introduction to available religions. That way it becomes clear you have no phobia against religion, and that you really trust your children to make up their own minds.

Your Faith or Mine?

Perhaps the most difficult and sensitive question we have to consider is what to do if you and your spouse come from different faith communities. Do you raise your children in no faith? Both, somehow? Some mix of the two?

Many clergy recommend that interfaith couples pick one of their inherited faiths and raise their children in it - even if that is not the faith of the clergyman who offers this advice! I think this is bad advice, since it must result in the children coming to view as an "outsider" or "one of them" whichever parent does not share the faith that has been chosen for the children.

If it is such bad advice, why do clergy give it? For the simple reason that the clergy feel the need to safeguard the boundaries of their communities. They don't want religious beliefs and loyalties to become blurred and relativized, which is what's going to happen when children are raised with one parent from Column A and one from Column B. Remember the analogy of ethnicity: the more nationalities you are descended from, the less loyalty you are likely to have to any one of them.

Judaism feels this danger more immediately than most religions because it is smaller and can afford to lose fewer people to the Mulligan Stew that is American pluralism. But all religious communities have the same fear to some degree.

As interfaith parents, you have to decide whether you share this agenda. And I want to suggest that you have already made your decision. If each of you were committed to some traditional dogma and considered it nonnegotiable, would you have gotten married in the first place? It is no recipe for domestic harmony for one spouse to be convinced the other is doomed to perdition!

If you are able to live and let live when it comes to your two religious backgrounds, I'd say you have already made the key step toward pluralism and relativized belief.

The clergy have made their choice, too. Priests, ministers, and rabbis are many things, and, as unspiritual as it may sound, among

these they are representatives of corporate institutions. Institutions tend to perpetuate themselves, whether they still serve a purpose or not. It would be suicidal for the great religious organizations to open the floodgates to pluralism.

That flood already rages around them. People pick and choose and create their own versions of religion. The scriptures of all the world

religions are readily available on the bookstore shelves at every shopping mall. Attendance is declining in what were once mainstream denominations. Secular resources such as psychotherapy and recovery groups have moved in on the territory churches and synagogues once claimed as their own. The religious institutions, understandably, feel threatened by these trends.

Down This Road Before

You, on the other hand, may find them quite liberating. You may welcome the prospect of a pluralistic society where religious identities easily coexist because people are not as exclusively tied to them as they once were. Your own mixed marriage implies that.

You have already decided which you think is the way to go. So there is no particular reason for you to balk at the path you have already chosen.

Make your family a microcosm of the pluralistic society around you. Train your children to respect all traditions and to yield uncritical allegiance to none. You made that decision when you tied the knot, and now you only have to live with it.

"Perhaps the most difficult and sensitive question we have to consider is what to do if you and your spouse come from different faith communities."

Robert M. Price is Director of the Center for Inquiry (the New Jersey / New York City branch of the Council for Secular Humanism) and Professor of Biblical Criticism for the Center for Inquiry Institute (Amherst, NY). A former Baptist minister, Dr. Price is a fellow of the Westar Institute and a scholar participant in the Jesus Seminar.

UPCOMING EVENTS

BUSINESS MEETING

Regular Monthly Meeting:

What: Meeting to decide general business of the group and to discuss current events.

Date: Third Sunday of the month

Time: 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM

Place: Heritage Park
217 Main St. at Second St., Irving

SOCIAL MEETINGS

Atheists Meetup Day:

What: Meet with other local Atheists to talk about your beliefs.

Date: Third Tuesday of the month

Time: 7:00 PM

Place: TBA; For locations near you visit: atheist.meetup.com

J. Gilligan's:

What: “My dinner with Atheists,” social time with a bunch of heathens.

Date: Every Wednesday

Time: 6:30 PM – 9:00 PM

Place: J. Gilligan's Bar & Grill (Meet on the grill side)
400 E. Abram Street, Arlington

Humanist Church of N. TX:

What: All the things you want in a church, without the gods.

Date: Third Saturday of the month

Time: 11:30 a.m.

Place: Unitarian Universalist Church of Oak Cliff
3839 W. Kiest Blvd, Dallas

MARG:

What: The Metroplex Atheists Reading Group discusses selected books. For the latest book, visit:
www.metroplexatheists.org/read/

Date: Third Sunday of the month

Time: After the regular meeting

Place: Heritage Park
217 Main St. at Second, Irving

To have your events listed email:

The Atheist Voice Editor at editor@metroplexatheists.org

Nuts – From page 7

anything, and that includes Santa. Others, including her mother, are going to tell her that Santa is real, but I won't. I'm not worried that she'll be upset by that. I am actually a little curious to watch her deal with the conflicting information as she grows up. That's something she'll be doing for the rest of her life, and I think it'll be a good lesson for her that she needs to consider everything, and use her little noodle to make a decision. And finally when it's all done, I will be able to tell her that I never lied to her about anything.

–P.D.

I primarily just instill critical thinking, and deal with “god” questions frankly, as they come up. Fantasy crops up lots of times in everyday life, and a productive tack is to instruct how many people do in fact believe certain fantasies, many mostly because their parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, etc, believed them. Also spend a little time with materials about “dead” religions, like the well-documented ancient Egyptians, Vikings, etc, and their disparate afterlife myths (some of which demonstrably didn't work

out). When intellectual maturity warrants, the pitfalls of human psychology can be introduced, such as “confirmation bias” which so many rely on to reinforce pre-conceptions, such as about the function of prayer.

It's not academic to me, either: my children are almost 5 and almost 7. The 2nd grader is pretty much with the program, but the kindergartner yet might not be at all surprised if a family of hobbits moved in next door or Harry Potter flew by the house on a broom, despite his older brother's lectures about actors and movies. Unfortunately, I think my mystique as a wizard is finally gone from his malleable little mind; try as I might to keep up the facade. We've got various scriptures on our shelves within easy reach for whenever they might be curious. The older one has asked about his friends going to church, and we've told him he can go with them sometime if he wants, to which he invariably wrinkles his nose. We tell him when asked “what we believe,” how it differs from “what they believe,” and pretty much have left it at that so far.

It's no big deal, really. We aren't “teaching atheism” per se, but empiricism, natural causation, critical thinking, etc. The

hard job is trying to inculcate one of those outrageous fantasies that most of the world latches onto as a crutch to avoid facing their own limitations and avoid responsibility for the shape the world takes. There's no Big Sugar Daddy in the sky to rescue us from a cesspool of our own making and erase all of our mistakes; we have to do it ourselves.

You're in for a real treat, watching that young mind gradually apprehend the world. I wouldn't trade the experience for anything.

–J.R.

I have raised my children to think as critically as possible just by talking to them about the things we encountered in daily life. The National Enquirer and its ilk can be excellent teaching tools while waiting in line (even a 5 year old recognizes bat-boy for what he is). We have had in-depth discussions about any and all religions, and fanatics in general. As they got older, I introduced them to philosophy and history. They have grown to be young adults who are quite capable of making their own decisions based upon facts and logically derived outcomes.

–J.K.

July 2004

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7 J. Gilligan's	8	9	10
11	12	13	14 J. Gilligan's	15	16	17 Humanist
18 Reg. Meeting & MARG	19	20 Atheist Meetup	21 J. Gilligan's	22	23	24
25	26	27	28 J. Gilligan's	29	30	31

August 2004

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4 J. Gilligan's	5	6	7
8	9	10	11 J. Gilligan's	12	13	14
15 Reg. Meeting & MARG	16	17 Atheist Meetup	18 J. Gilligan's	19	20	21 Humanist
22	23	24	25 J. Gilligan's	26	27	28
29	30	31				

September 2004

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 J. Gilligan's	2	3	4
5	6	7	8 J. Gilligan's	9	10	11
12	13	14	15 J. Gilligan's	16	17	18 Humanist
19 Reg. Meeting & MARG	20	21 Atheist Meetup	22 J. Gilligan's	23	24	25
26	27	28	29 J. Gilligan's	30		

***THE ATHEIST VOICE* is a bi-monthly publication of Metroplex Atheists.**

For more information, please visit our website: www.metroplexatheists.org

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Watauga, TX 76148

Deliver to:

“Because we must. Because we have the call. Because it is nobler to fight for rationality without winning than to give up in the face of continued defeats. Because whatever true progress humanity makes is through the rationality of the occasional individual and because any one individual we may win for the cause may do more for humanity than a hundred thousand who hug superstition to their breasts.”
— Isaac Asimov, when asked why he fights religion with no hope for victory

WHY DO WE FIGHT?