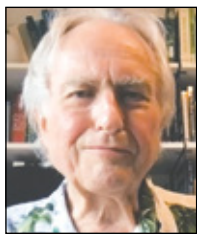


FREETHOUGHT TODAY



'Freethought Matters'
is back on the
air Sept. 5

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**High school essay
contest winners
announced**

PAGE 12-18



**Happy birthday
to our secular
Constitution**

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Vol. 38 No. 7

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September 2021

'Notorious RBG' gains a home at FFRF



The Freedom From Religion Foundation is thrilled and honored to have been chosen as the recipient of a sculpted bust of the late Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, created and gifted by world-renowned sculptor and FFRF member Zenos Frudakis. The sculpture now adorns the Anne Nicol Gaylor Lobby and greets visitors to FFRF's office, Freethought Hall, in downtown Madison, Wis.

The sculpture features RBG's iconic dissent collar. Ginsburg, who prevailed in many cases, had increasingly become the voice of dissent on the high court. She noted: "Dissents speak to a future age. It's not simply to say, 'My colleagues are wrong and I would do it this way.' But the greatest dissents do become court opinions and gradually over time their views become the dominant view. So that's the dissenter's hope: that they are writing not for today, but for tomorrow."

"It will encourage and inspire FFRF staff and members to double down in our work to protect constitutional rights for tomorrow," says FFRF Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor, who is pictured above with FFRF Co-President Dan Barker.

Zenos fashioned the bust out of clay to mourn Ginsburg's death at 87 last fall. It was then completed in bronze. An official unveiling will take place in the future.

Jan. 6 insurrection

Committee can't ignore Christian nationalism

This column was first published on Religion Dispatches on July 28 and is reprinted with permission.

By Andrew L. Seidel

On July 27, for the first time, we heard about Christian nationalism in a government conversation about the Jan. 6 insurrection. The conversation some of us had been having about Christian nationalism may have entered the mainstream in the wake of that attack, but politicians — even those promising to get to the bottom of the attacks — ignored the role this political theology played in the attack. They can ignore it no longer.

Christian nationalism is an identity based around the claim that America was founded as a Christian nation, that it's based on Judeo-Christian principles, and, most importantly, that it has strayed from that foundation. It's a political identity based on lies and myths. It's a permission structure that uses the language of return, of getting back to our godly roots, to justify all manner of hateful public policy — and even attacks on our democracy.

On Jan. 6, I watched in horror as this wave of Christian nationalism broke over our Capitol, threatening the peaceful



Photo by Shutterstock

A man wears a hat showing his priorities during the Jan. 6 insurrection on the U.S. Capitol grounds.

transfer of presidential power for the first time in American history. I've been deeply immersed in the insurrection investigation ever since, seeking to understand and write about the role Christian nationalism played on that horrible day. Some of that work will appear in a new epilogue for the paperback of my book, *The Founding Myth: Why Christian Nationalism Is Un-American*, which focuses on the Jan. 6 terrorist attack. Every day I learn more about how the permission structures within Christian nationalism motivated the terrorists and how it cuts across the other motivations and identities we saw that day, including the absurd QAnon conspiracy. They believed that they were fighting for God's chosen one. And if God was on their side, who could be

See Committee on page 6

Religious objections to vaccine shouldn't matter

This column first appeared in the Los Angeles Times on July 23 and is reprinted with permission.

By Erwin Chemerinsky

Policies requiring vaccination against Covid-19 need not include, and should not include, exceptions for those who have religious objections to vaccinations.

Many universities, including the University of California, are requiring vaccination for all students, staff and faculty returning to campus. Many employers, public and private, are doing so as well. These policies are essential to protect public health. The virulent delta variant of the coronavirus has made it imperative to ensure vaccination of as many people as possible.

Unfortunately, though, many of these policies



Erwin
Chemerinsky

for those who object on religious grounds. It states that this is because the law requires such an exemption, declaring: "The University is required by law to offer reasonable accommodations to . . . employees who object to vaccination based on their sincerely held religious belief, practice, or observance."

have an exception for those who have a religious objection to vaccination. These are neither required by the law nor are they desirable as a matter of policy because they make it possible for anyone to circumvent the vaccine mandate.

The University of California's mandatory vaccination policy, for example, has an exception for those who object on religious grounds. It states that this is because the law requires such an exemption, declaring: "The University is required by law to offer reasonable accommodations to . . . employees who object to vaccination based on their sincerely held religious belief, practice, or observance."

See Chemerinsky on page 2

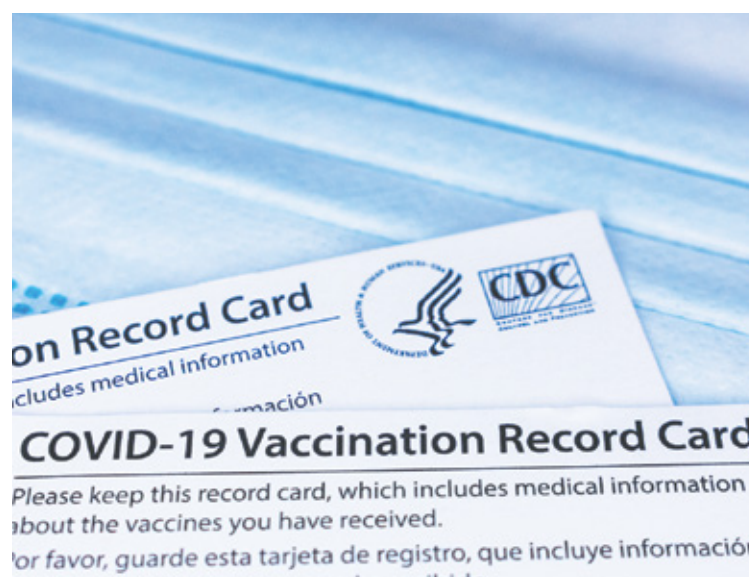


Image by Shutterstock

IN MEMORIAM

Weinberg was first Emperor recipient

Nobel Prize laureate and theoretical physicist Steven Weinberg, 88, died in Austin, Texas, on July 24.

Weinberg was the first official recipient of FFRF’s Emperor Has No Clothes Award, which he accepted in November 1999 at the annual convention in San Antonio, Texas.

Weinberg received the honor for a widely reprinted remark at a conference in April 1999 in Washington, D.C.: “Religion is an insult to human dignity. With or without it, you would have good people doing good things and evil people doing evil things. But for good people to do evil things, that takes religion.”

Weinberg was born May 3, 1933, in Bronx, N.Y., the only child of Frederick and Eva (Israel) Weinberg. He received his undergraduate degree in physics from Cornell University in 1954. There he met Louise Goldwasser, his future wife, who became a University of Texas law professor. They married in 1954 and had a daughter, Elizabeth.

Weinberg began his graduate study at the Institute for Theoretical Physics in Copenhagen (now the Niels Bohr Institute). He completed his Ph.D. at Princeton in 1957.

In 1979, Weinberg was awarded the Nobel Prize in physics along with Abdus Salam and Sheldon Lee Glashow “for their contributions to the theory of the unified weak and electromagnetic interaction between elementary particles, including inter alia, the prediction of the

weak neutral current.” This was one of the most significant scientific advances in the second half of the 20th century.

He has received many other awards, including the national Medal of Science in 1991. He was also a foreign member of the Royal Society of London. Known for his writing, Weinberg received the Lewis Thomas Prize, which is awarded to the researcher who best embodies “the scientist as poet.”

Weinberg has written hundreds of scholarly articles and textbooks such as *The Quantum Theory of Fields and Cosmology*; the more popular works *The First Three Minutes: A Modern View of the Origin of the Universe* and *Dreams of a Final Theory* (which contains a chapter called “What About God?”).

Weinberg was outspoken about his lack of religion and encouraged other scientists to be more vocal in their opposition to religious ideas. He said, “As you learn more and more about the universe, you find you can understand more and more without any reference to supernatural intervention, so you lose interest in that possibility. Most scientists I know don’t care enough about religion even to call themselves atheists. And that, I think, is one of the great things about science — that it has made it possible for people not to be religious.”

He added, “The whole history of the last thousands of years has been a history of religious persecutions and wars, pogroms, jihads, crusades. I find it all very regrettable, to say the least.” He wrote in *The*



Steven Weinberg accepts FFRF’s Emperor Has No clothes Award from FFRF founder and President Anne Nicol Gaylor in 1999.

First Three Minutes: “Anything that we scientists can do to weaken the hold of religion should be done and may in the end be our greatest contribution to civilization.”

In 1999 he became the first recipient of FFRF’s Emperor Has No Clothes Award, reserved for public figures who make known their dissent from religion.

He began his acceptance speech, “I enjoy being at a meeting that doesn’t start with an invocation!” He said, “Nothing has been more important in the history of science than the work of Darwin and Wallace pointing out that not only the planets, but even life can be understood in this naturalistic way.”

Bobbie Vandegriff was social justice champion

Lifetime Member Roberta “Bobbie” C. Vandegriff, 78, of Tucson, Ariz., died May 21.



Bobbie Vandegriff

Roberta was born in Los Angeles on Dec. 8, 1942. She attended public schools in L.A. County before going to La Verne College. She earned a bachelor’s degree in education in 1964 and a master’s degree in teaching science in 1976. From college, she went into teaching physical education

for 17 years and then became a financial planner, specializing in annuities. After 14 years in her annuity business, she moved to Tucson and retired from the corporate world to pursue her true passions. During last 27 years, she was a champion for social justice, equality for all genders and stewardship of the environment.

When remembering Bobbie, family and friends say she was a special person who was always positive, cheerful and shined light into their lives.

She is survived her husband, Don; daughter, Cathy and granddaughter, Lauren and grandson-in-law, Will. She is also survived by sister, Nancy and close cousins, Terry, Lynn and Linda.

Chemerinsky

Continued from page 1

This is simply wrong as a matter of law. No law requires such a religious exemption. In terms of free exercise of religion under the First Amendment, the Supreme Court ruled more than 30 years ago in *Employment Division vs. Smith* that the Constitution does not require exceptions to general laws for religious beliefs. In an opinion by Justice Antonin Scalia, the court said that as long as a law is neutral, not motivated by a desire to interfere with religion and of general applicability to all individuals, it cannot be challenged based on free exercise of religion. In June, in *Fulton vs. City of Philadelphia*, the court reaffirmed this legal test.

Laws that require vaccination are the epitome of a neutral law of general applicability: a requirement that applies to everyone and that was not motivated by a desire to interfere with religion. Even if this were not so, the government can infringe on religious freedom if its action is necessary to achieve a compelling interest.

Stopping the spread of a deadly communicable disease is obviously a compelling interest and vaccinations are the best way to reach that goal. No one, in practicing his or her religion, has a constitutional right to endanger others.

Indeed, a number of states, before Covid-19, created mandates for children to be vaccinated against other communicable diseases without making exemptions for religious beliefs. Without exception, the lower courts have upheld these mandates as constitutional.

Nor do federal employment discrimination laws require a religious exception for employees. In the 1977 case *Trans World Airlines vs. Hardison*, the Su-

preme Court said that employers do not have to bear more than a “de minimus” cost in accommodating employees’ religious beliefs. Vaccine exemptions could impose a significant cost on employers in terms of illness and therefore clearly are not required.

Religious exemptions, like in the University of California policy, are for those with “sincerely held religious beliefs.” But how can this possibly be determined?

The Supreme Court has said that religious beliefs are personal, and it does not matter whether they are in accord with the teachings and dictates of a particular faith. Under this broad principle, any person could get a vaccination exemption merely by stating that he or she has a religious objection against it.

Such an easy opt-out could make the mandate illusory. That is why the only way to have a meaningful vaccination requirement is to apply it to everyone — except those for whom vaccination is not medically advisable.

As people return to the workplace and to campuses the spread of Covid-19 remains a great danger, especially with the highly transmissible delta variant circulating. The unvaccinated not only endanger themselves and other unvaccinated people, but also those who cannot get the vaccine for medical reasons. And now, there are growing reports of breakthrough infections of fully vaccinated individuals.

Universities and employers have the legal right to make sure that everyone is vaccinated. And they have the moral duty to protect health and lives.

Erwin Chemerinsky is dean of the University of California - Berkeley School of Law. He is the author of a forthcoming book, Presumed Guilty: How the Supreme Court Empowered the Police and Subverted Civil Rights.

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TODAY

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Randa Black



Christopher Cameron



Ann Druyan



Sikivu Hutchinson



Megan Phelps-Roper



Steven Pinker



Sasha Sagan



Sushant Singh



Gloria Steinem



Katherine Stewart



David Tamayo



Jay Wexler



David Williamson



Phil Zuckerman

FFRF convention in Boston, Nov. 19-21

Speaker lineup features star-studded cast

You aren’t going to want to miss this year’s incredible lineup of speakers at FFRF’s 44th annual convention happening Friday, Nov. 19–Sunday, Nov. 21 at the Boston Park Plaza Hotel. (The event is limited to those who are fully vaccinated for Covid-19. See page 24.)

The conference will open informally on Thursday night, Nov. 18, with early registration and a two-hour appetizer reception. Registration resumes at 7 a.m. Friday, Nov. 19. The full, two-day program formally opens at 9 a.m. Friday. The membership meeting will take place at 9 a.m. Sunday, followed by a short meeting of the State Representatives, ending by noon.

The convention will include a report on FFRF accomplishments by Annie Laurie Gaylor and Co-President Dan Barker, an hour-long legal report by FFRF Legal Director Rebecca Markert and FFRF’s attorneys, a little music at the piano by Barker, FFRF book and product tables, the traditional drawing for “clean,” pre-“In God We Trust” currency, and some complimentary food receptions.

FFRF Director of Strategic Response Andrew Seidel will lead a workshop on Christian nationalism and its ties to Jan. 6.

Speakers

To read more about each speaker, please go to ffrf.org/convention-2021.

Margaret Atwood is the author of *The Handmaid’s Tale*, *The Edible Woman*, *The Robber Bride*, *The Blind Assassin*, *Oryx and Crake*. Atwood will receive FFRF’s “Forward” Award.

Randa Black of Florida has won FFRF’s Nothing Fails Like Prayer contest and will recite her secular invocation. Black is a professional actor, appearing in hundreds of commercials and TV shows.

Christopher Cameron, associate professor of history at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, is author of the new book, *Black Freethinkers: A History of African American Secularism*.

Ann Druyan is a Peabody and Emmy Award-winning writer, producer and director specializing in the communication of science. She was the creative director of NASA’s Voyager Interstellar Message Project and program director of the first solar sail deep space mission.

Sikivu Hutchinson, Ph.D. is an educator, author, playwright and director. She is the author of *Humanists in the Hood: Unapologetically Black, Feminist, and Heretical*. Hutchinson will receive FFRF’s “Freethought Heroine” Award.

Megan Phelps-Roper, author of *Unfollow: On Loving and Leaving the Westboro Baptist Church*, was raised in the Topeka, Kan.-based church known for its protests.

Phelps-Roper will receive the \$10,000 “Henry Zumach Freedom From Religious Fundamentalism” award.

Steven Pinker is a cognitive scientist, experimental psychologist, linguist and popular science author. He is a Johnstone Family Professor in the Department of Psychology at Harvard University.

Sasha Sagan is author of the new book, *For Small Creatures Such as We: Rituals for Finding Meaning in Our Unlikely World*. She has worked as a television producer, filmmaker, writer and speaker.

Sushant Singh is an Indian actor and presenter known for his work predominantly in Hindi cinema. Singh will be receiving the Avijit Roy Courage Award.

Gloria Steinem is a writer, lecturer, political activist, and feminist organizer. Steinem, who’s been billed as “the world’s most famous feminist,” is a journalist who co-founded Ms. Magazine in 1972. Steinem will receive FFRF’s “Forward” Award.

Katherine Stewart is the author of *The Power Worshippers: Inside the Dangerous Rise of Religious Nationalism*.

David Tamayo is cofounder and president of Hispanic American Freethinkers in 2010.

Jay Wexler is a professor at Boston University School of Law.

David Williamson is co-founder of the Central Florida Freethought Community (CFFC). Williamson will accept FFRF’s Freethinker of the Year Award.

Phil Zuckerman is the associate dean and professor of sociology at Pitzer College, and the founding chair of the nation’s first Secular Studies Program.

Receptions

There will also be two optional author receptions. After “An evening with Margaret Atwood” Friday night, a short private reception for Ms. Atwood will take place, limited to 100 individuals. Tickets to the reception are \$500 and will include a copy of *The Testaments*, her sequel to *The Handmaid’s Tale*.

Friday evening will end with a complimentary dessert reception and hot beverages for all participants.

Gloria Steinem will be interviewed by FFRF Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor on Saturday afternoon, taking some audience questions, followed by a half-hour reception limited to 50 individuals. That \$500 ticket will include a copy of Ms. Steinem’s newest book, *The Truth Will Set You Free, But First It Will Piss You Off! Thoughts on Life, Love, and Rebellion*.

Mail in the handy registration on Page 24 or register online at ffrf.org/convention-2021.

Pre-registration deadline is Oct. 31, unless the convention sells out earlier.

FFRF’s 44th annual convention schedule

(Tentative schedule subject to minor change)

Thursday, November 18

7-9 PM REGISTRATION OPENS

Book & sales tables open
Reception with appetizers, drinks

Friday, November 19

7-9 AM REGISTRATION RE-OPENS

Complimentary pastries, hot beverages, fruit juices (Registration remains open throughout convention)

9 AM Welcome

Lisa Strand, Director of Operations

Year in Review

FFRF Co-Presidents Dan Barker & Annie Laurie Gaylor

Nothing Fails Like Prayer Award/ Secular “Invocation”
Randa Black

9:30 Legal Report by FFRF Attorneys

Legal Director Rebecca Markert & Attorneys TBA

10:30 “Our Non-Christian Nation”

Law Professor Jay Wexler

11:00 BREAK

11:15 “Rationality: What It Is, Why It Seems Scarce, Why It Matters”
Steven Pinker

NOON Pinker/Wexler Book signings

NOON - 1:30 PM LUNCH BREAK

Optional Box Lunches

12:30 Workshop on Christian Nationalism

FFRF Director of Strategic Response Andrew Seidel

1:15 PM BREAK

1:30 Freethinkers of Year
David Williamson TBA

2:30 “The Power Worshippers: Inside the Dangerous Rise of Religious Nationalism”
Katherine Stewart

3:00 Stewart book signing

3:00 - 4:00 BREAK
Snacks, beverages

4:00 Clarence Darrow Award
Linda Greenhouse

Greenhouse book signing

5-7 PM Buffet Dinner
(Ticketed event)

7:00 An Evening with Margaret Atwood
(in conversation with Katherine Stewart)

8:45 Atwood book signing (Ballroom A)

Concurrent with Cupcake/Hot Beverages Reception

9:00 Atwood Reception
(Ticketed event)

Saturday, November 20

8:00 AM Non-Prayer Breakfast
(Ticketed event)

MUSIC Dan Barker

9:30 Avijit Roy Courage Award
Sushant Singh (with Bonya Ahmed)

10:00 “Living the Secular Life”
Phil Zuckerman

10:30 “Black Freethinkers”
Chris Cameron

11:00 Freethought Heroine Award
Sikivu Hutchinson

11:30 Henry Zumach Freedom From Religious Fundamentalism Award
Megan Phelps-Roper

NOON Zuckerman/Cameron/Hutchinson/Phelps-Roper book signings

NOON - 2 PM LUNCH BREAK
Chapter Lunch

2:00 PM Student Honorees

2:30 Hispanic American Freethinkers
David Tamayo, Founder

3:00 Forward Award
Gloria Steinem (In conversation with Annie Laurie Gaylor)

4:00 BREAK

4 - 4:30 Ticketed Steinem Reception

4:15 “Ask an Attorney” Workshop

6:00 PM SATURDAY NIGHT DINNER
(Ticketed event)

8:00 “Clean Money” drawing

8:30 An Evening with Ann Druyan and Sasha Sagan
“For Small Creatures Such As We”
Sasha Sagan

Emperor Has No Clothes Award
Ann Druyan

Druyan/Sagan book signings

Sunday, November 21

8:30 AM Pastries, coffee served

9 Annual Membership meeting
Open to all current FFRF members

11ish Annual State Representatives Meeting

ADJOURN BY NOON

MEET A MEMBER

Journalist tries to keep politicians honest

Name: Eric Carlson.
Where I live: Leelanau County, Mich.
Where and when I was born: Detroit, 1954.

Family: My wife works as a registered nurse. Our daughter, 26, is a graduate of Michigan State University, now living and working in the United Arab Emirates. Our son, 24, is a graduate of the U.S. Military Academy, West Point, now a platoon leader in the 101st Airborne Division. We are all atheists.

Education: I earned a bachelor’s degree in journalism from Syracuse University and a master’s degree in communication from the University of Oklahoma.

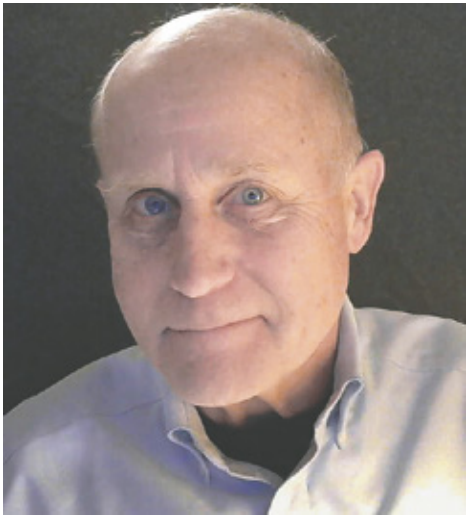
Occupation: Since 1998, I have been working as a newspaper reporter for a community weekly newspaper that has been named Michigan Newspaper of the Year for the last four years.

Military service: I retired from the U.S. Marine Corps in 1998 after a 25-year career as a combat correspondent and a public affairs officer. I am a veteran of the Vietnam War, the Persian Gulf War and the Somali Civil War.

Where I’m headed: We intend to remain in our community here in Michigan. I will throttle down from being a full-time local newspaper reporter eventually.

Person in history I admire and why: I have always enjoyed fantasizing that I am having conversations with Benjamin Franklin. The archetypal American newspaperman, he was a smart guy who made a big difference.

A quotation I like: “Life is tough. But it’s tougher if you’re stupid.” In the Marines, you’d usually see this quotation emblazoned below a picture of John Wayne playing a Marine in the movie “The Sands of Iwo Jima.”



Eric Carlson

Things I like: Ice cream. Boats.
Things I smite: Dishonest and unthinking politicians and public officials. I smite them in the newspaper I work for.

My doubts about religion started: When I was about 14 years old and was beginning a four-year stay at a Christian boarding school in Illinois. After four years of serious bible study, prayer and chapel services every day, I finally became ready to call myself an atheist.

Before I die: I would like to have just a little more fun.

Ways I promote freethought: Lately, I’ve been shining our newspaper’s spotlight on how our county Board of Commissioners wants prayer to be on the agenda of every meeting. In my private life, I am an alcoholic who has remained sober for 38 years with help from an anonymous fellowship of men and women. I am a founding member of a local group known as the Secular Sobriety Group, which is part of a growing worldwide movement within the fellowship.



Carl Sagan

I have a foreboding of an America in my children’s or grandchildren’s time — when the United States is a service and information economy; when nearly all the manufacturing industries have slipped away to other countries; when awesome technological powers are in the hands of a very few, and no one representing the public interest can even grasp the issues; when the people have lost the ability to set their own agendas or knowledgeably question those in authority; when, clutching our crystals and nervously consulting our horoscopes, our critical faculties in decline, unable to distinguish between what feels good and what’s true, we slide, almost without noticing, back into superstition and darkness. . .

The dumbing down of America is most evident in the slow decay of substantive content in the enormously influential media, the 30 second sound bites (now down to 10 seconds or less), lowest common denominator programming, credulous presentations on pseudoscience and superstition, but especially a kind of celebration of ignorance.

— Carl Sagan, from his book, *The Demon-Haunted World: Science as a Candle in the Dark*, published in 1996.

Freethought Today Crossword

1	2	3	4	5		6	7	8		9	10	11	12	
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71						72				73				

Answers on page 21 Puzzle courtesy of Katya Maes for FFRF

- Across
1. Lick one’s ____

6. Boring piece

9. *The Fab Four’s original number

13. Hawaiian veranda

14. Old fashioned “before”

15. ____man or ____woman of city council

16. Creme de la creme

17. St. Louis player

18. A lighter shade of pale?

19. *____ Fails Like Prayer contest

21. *Steven ____, author of *Enlightenment Now: The Case for Reason, Science, Humanism, and Progress*

23. Santa ____, CA

24. Customary practice

25. Active pharmaceutical ingredient, acr.

28. Hurtful remark

30. *Phillis ____, stand-up comedian, actress and atheist

35. Mountain in France

37. One of the Rs in R&R

39. ____ and desist

40. ____-China

41. Top dog

43. Much ado

44. “Beat it!”

46. Pinocchio’s claims

47. Genealogy plant

48. *Andrew ____, FFRF’s Director of Strategic Response

50. Bulletin board fastener

52. “Stand and Deliver” rocker Adam ____

53. Hitchhiker’s quest

55. Quaker Man’s porridge grain

57. *Margaret ____, birth control pioneer

60. **Ask an ____, FFRF’s weekly Facebook live show

64. Ranee’s wrap

65. On #2 button

67. Beyond normal limits

68. Plumber’s snake

69. Skin cyst

70. “____ in sight”

71. Stumblebum

72. Maiden name indicator

73. Middle Eastern vodka, pl.

15. Relating to apnea

20. Nigerian money

22. It would

24. Break

25. Not quite right

26. ____ de Leon

27. Lemur from Madagascar

29. *Kristen ____, free-thinking “Bad Moms” star

31. Hit the road

32. “Little House on the Prairie” protagonist

33. Industrial center of the Ruhr

34. Set to zero

36. Frog’s cousin

38. Short for Dorothea

42. Fancy necktie

45. Corporate event

49. Let sleeping dogs do what?

51. V.I.P. in Hawaii

54. Like closed curtains

56. Between countertenor and baritone

57. *Agnostic Nobel Prize-winning author Bellow

58. Mythological ship

59. Opposite of want

60. Bane of teenager’s existence

61. Personal view

62. A Titanic description

63. Theodors, to friends

64. Anatomical pouch

66. “Busy” insect
- Down
1. Reunion group

2. Ring around the sun

3. “Don’t bet ____ !”

4. Turkish bigwig

5. Placing

6. Shipping hazard

7. *Gershwin of “De t’ings dat yo’ li’ble to read in de Bible it ain’t necessarily so.”

8. Adagio and allegro

9. Criticism

10. In neutral

11. Swerve

12. To do this is human

Freethought Today Cryptogram

X SQYH HVQAXMHZ QII KSH DMPTM NGCHENKXXKXPMN PU KSH

TPEIZ, QMZ X ZP MPK UXMZ XM PGE COEKXLGIQE NGCHENKXXKXPM

PU LSEXNKXQMXXKB PMH EHZHHAXMJ UHOKGEH.

- KSPAQN WHUUHENPM

This puzzle is from *Freethinking Cryptograms* by FFRF member Brooks Rimes, available on Amazon.com for \$8.95. See bottom of page for description and hint for this puzzle. Answer is on page 21.

Cryptogram hint

A cryptogram is a substitution puzzle in which one letter stands for another. If U equals T, it will equal T throughout the puzzle.

Example:

UOG RLQTM HYVBF DVP SLACN VWGY UOG KJEZ XVI.
THE QUICK BROWN FOX JUMPS OVER THE LAZY DOG.
This month’s clue: A => M.

IN THE NEWS

Ancient tablet seized from Hobby Lobby

A 3,600-year-old tablet showing part of the epic of Gilgamesh, which had been acquired by Christian retailer Hobby Lobby for display in its museum of biblical artifacts, was seized by the U.S. government.

Experts say the “Gilgamesh Dream Tablet” shows a portion of the Gilgamesh epic, one of the world’s oldest works of literature, in the Akkadian language.

Hobby Lobby bought it from a London auction house in 2014 and put it on display in the Museum of the Bible. The museum was conceived by evangelical Christian Steve Green, the billionaire president of Hobby Lobby.

The forfeiture is part of efforts to return thousands of smuggled ancient Iraqi artifacts that were purchased by Hobby Lobby. In 2017, Hobby Lobby agreed to pay a \$3 million fine and forfeit thousands of artifacts.

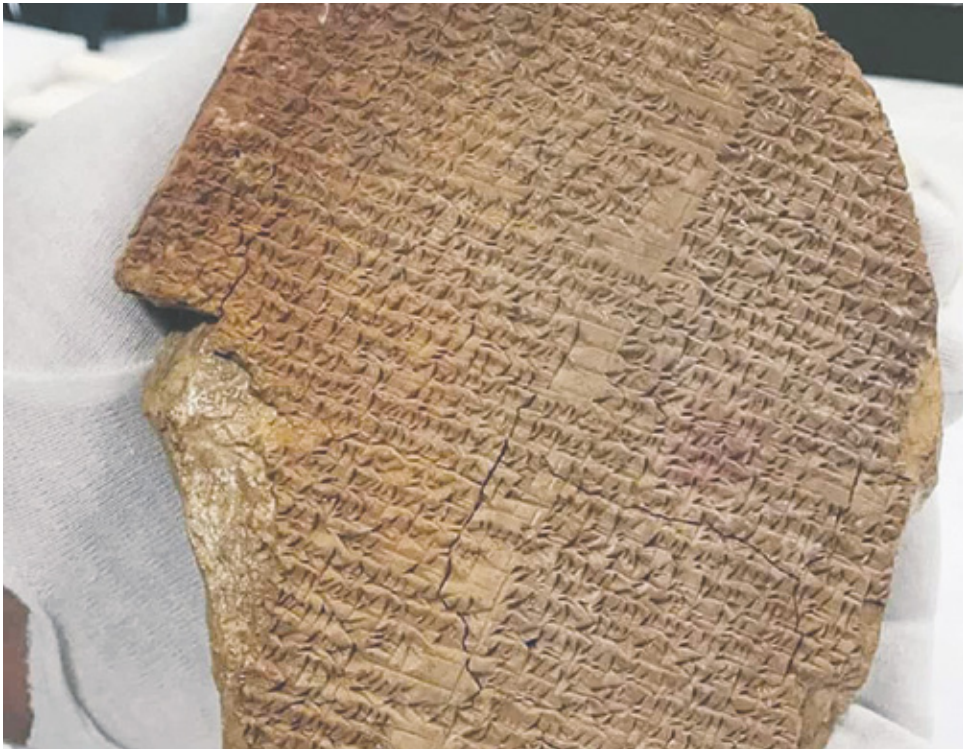


Photo from U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement
The Gilgamesh Dream Tablet was seized by U.S. authorities.

High court’s emergency reviews favored religion

The Supreme Court agreed to and granted all 10 emergency reviews by religious groups challenging Covid-19 restrictions last year, a Reuters analysis found.

The analysis, reported on July 28 by Religion News Service, found the court’s “shadow docket” — in which emergency applications are decided quickly without oral arguments or lengthy written decisions — provided religious applicants a win in every case.

Shadow dockets do not reveal how the justices voted.

Duke voucher report shows major problems

A new report from Duke University’s Children’s Law Clinic shows how North Carolina’s largest school voucher program continues to suffer from major policy problems, including that voucher students are receiving an inferior education compared to their peers in public schools.

The report finds that the Opportunity Scholarship voucher program fails to provide the public or policy-makers with information on whether voucher students are making academic progress. It also shows that nearly all voucher students (92 percent) are

attending religious schools, more than three-quarters of which use a biblically based curriculum presenting concepts that directly contradict the state’s educational standards.

North Carolina places no requirements on voucher schools in terms of accreditation, curriculum, teacher licensure or accountability.

Atheists both positively, negatively stereotyped

Research published in Social Psychological and Personality Science suggests that people stereotype atheists as immoral — unconsciously believing a serial killer is more likely to be an atheist than a religious person — while simultaneously stereotyping atheists as more open-minded, scientific and fun at parties.

The study, “Is There Anything Good About Atheists? Exploring Positive and Negative Stereotypes of the Religious and Nonreligious,” was authored by Jordan W. Moon, Jaimie Krems, and Adam Cohen.

Biden’s victory aided by the nonreligious

A new analysis of 2020 voters from Pew Research Center’s American Trends Panel found that Joe Biden got more support among atheists and agnostics than Hillary Clinton

did in 2016.

Biden drew strong support from religiously unaffiliated voters — atheists, agnostics, and those who say their religion is “nothing in particular.” Together, these voters made up 25 percent of voters, which is a larger share of the total electorate than white evangelicals (19 percent). But support for Biden among the unaffiliated was not quite as lopsided as Trump’s support among white evangelicals (a 45-point margin for Biden among the unaffiliated vs. a 69-point margin for Trump among white evangelicals).

Without the religiously unaffiliated, Trump would have had a 9-point popular vote margin over Biden.

Dem, GOP confidence in science diverges

Sixty-four percent of U.S. adults say they have “a great deal” or “quite a lot” of confidence in science, compared with 70 percent when Gallup last measured it more than four decades ago.

The decline overall obscures more significant changes among political partisans. Republicans today are much less likely than their predecessors in 1975 to have confidence in science. Meanwhile, Democrats now have more confidence than they did in the past.

Confidence in science is among the highest of the 17 institutions tested in the 2021 survey, behind small business (70 percent) and the military (69 percent).

Compared with that earlier survey, Republican confidence in science has fallen 27 percentage points, and independents have dropped eight points, while Democrats’ confidence has increased by 12 points.

Satanic Temple suit against city moves ahead

U.S. District Court Judge Allison Burroughs allowed several of the complaints from The Satanic Temple to move forward after it was not allowed to give the opening “prayer” for a Boston City Council meeting.

The Satanic Temple initially tried to sue the city in January, arguing that since the council allows various mainstream religions to speak, it’s against the First Amendment to pick and choose who gets to give invocations.

The city said it’s not about discriminating against any religion, it just enabling council members to invite pastors, rabbis, priests or imams from Boston’s communities to address the body.

The judge said the argument that this runs afoul of the Establishment Clause can continue.

3 Witnesses imprisoned in Russia for their faith

Three Jehovah’s Witnesses in Russia on July 29 were convicted and sentenced to prison for practicing their faith. All three men have already spent more than two years in pretrial detention.

They were detained in May 2019 and accused of continuing the operations of a Jehovah’s Witness organization that had been liquidated. All three were charged with organizing extremist activities.

“The sentences for the three men are considered particularly harsh in a country where rape is punishable by three years in prison and kidnapping by five,” writes Kathryn Post of the Religion News Service.

Court won’t hear case on church restrictions

On Aug. 2, the U.S. Supreme Court declined to hear a lawsuit by a Maine church that sought to take a pre-emptive strike against future restrictions associated with the coronavirus, the Associated Press reports.

Calvary Chapel in Orrington asked the court to stop Gov. Janet Mills from enforcing or reinstating any pandemic-related restrictions due to the delta variant of the coronavirus.

The request was denied by Justice Stephen Breyer. The Maine attorney general’s office previously said that the governor’s civil emergency already expired, making the lawsuit unnecessary. But church officials were worried that restrictions could be reinstated, violating their religious liberties protected by the Constitution.

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FFRF NEWS

Court: Judge can pray while case pending

An appeals court has disappointingly issued a stay order in a case that the Freedom From Religion Foundation recently won over a praying Texas judge.

A panel of judges from the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals on July 9 ruled that a Texas judge could continue his courtroom prayers while his appeal is pending. FFRF and its attorney plaintiff “John Roe” have so far prevailed in the challenge of Judge Wayne Mack’s practice of hosting chaplains to deliver prayers to open court sessions.

On May 20, U.S. District Court Judge Kenneth Hoyt ruled that the prayers were coercive and violated the Establishment Clause. The constitutionally sound decision had declared: “The court is of the view that the defendant violates the Establishment Clause when, before a captured audience of litigants and their counsel, he presents himself as theopneustically inspired, enabling him to advance, through the chaplaincy program, God’s ‘larger purpose.’ Such a magnanimous goal flies in the face of historical tradition, and makes a



Wayne Mack

mockery of both religion and law.”

However, the stay order freezes that decision. Judge Andrew Oldham, a President Trump appointee, authored the July 9 opinion, which states, “The judge has made a strong showing that the district court erred.” The three-judge panel issued a stay of the district court’s order and found that Mack was

likely to prevail on the merits.

“We are disheartened that people who have cases before Mack will continue to have to participate in unconstitutional prayers while this case proceeds,” says FFRF Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor. “The First Amendment must protect individuals from judges who wield their power to coerce participation in religious exercises.”

Mack, a formerly ordained minister who attended Jackson College of Ministries, made the unprecedented decision to solicit chaplains to open his court sessions with prayer, a practice not replicated by any other court in the country. Attendees have reported Mack surveying the courtroom during prayers, causing concern that their cases would be affected if they did not participate. Mack’s bailiff announced the prayers,

stating that anyone could leave during the prayer, but then locked the courtroom doors. Mack entered, talked about his chaplaincy program, introduced a chaplain, and gave the name and location of the chaplain’s church. While everyone in the courtroom remained standing, the chaplain, who was almost always Christian, delivered a prayer, with no guidelines regarding permissible content.

The stay decision is not a final ruling on the case.

Mack and FFRF will file briefs with the 5th Circuit on the appeal later this year.

FFRF and Roe are being represented by FFRF Associate Counsel Sam Grover, with FFRF Associate Counsel Elizabeth Cavell and Attorney Ayesha Khan of Washington, D.C., serving as co-counsel.

“The First Amendment must protect individuals from judges who wield their power to coerce participation in religious exercises.”
— Annie Laurie Gaylor

Committee

Continued from page 1

against them?

Trump’s second impeachment featured the first full airing of the Jan. 6 attacks. But, despite the conversation entering the mainstream, nothing was said about the Christian nationalist aspect of this assault. I feared — and still fear — that the Jan. 6 Select Committee would do the same.

When Rep. Liz Cheney trotted out in her opening statement the Christian nationalist war cry frequently heard in the lead up to Jan. 6, “One nation, under God,” I was worried all over again that they were going to ignore, or cover for, Christian nationalism.

But then the politicians listened to testimony of four police officers who were on the front lines that day. They spoke of the violence inflicted upon them. The injuries they suffered. The number of times they were electrocuted. The fingers trying to gouge out their eyes and seize their guns. How they were dragged into the mob and beaten. The chemicals they were doused with. The surgeries they’ve endured. The many colleagues that have resigned. One of their fellow officers took his own life.

They spoke about their anger with the cowardice and indifference of the politicians who deny the seriousness of the assault, many of whose lives were saved by these very officers. They spoke about the odious racial slurs and racism they faced that day. And finally, one of them, Officer Daniel Hodges, who was the officer trapped and nearly crushed to death between the doors as the mob surged through the Capitol, spoke about the Christian nationalist aspect of this assault, though not in those terms:

“It was clear the terrorists perceived themselves to be Christians,” Hodges said. “I saw the Christian flag directly to my front. Another read ‘Jesus is my savior, Trump is my president.’

Another, ‘Jesus is King.’”

That Christian flag was carried into battle against America — carried alongside the Confederate flag. It was carried against the police officers protecting the beating heart of our democracy. The terrorists didn’t just parade the flag on the battle lines opposite Hodges, they carried that Christian flag onto the floor of the U.S. Senate. They attacked, they conquered, they paraded their flag on the vanquished ground . . . and then they said a prayer to Jesus in that Senate:

“Thank you for allowing the United States of America to be reborn. Thank you for allowing us to get rid of the communists, the globalists, and the traitors within our government. We love you and we thank you. In Christ’s holy name we pray. Amen.”

The idea that “the United States of America [should] be reborn” and reborn “in Christ’s holy name,” which is how the prayer concluded, is central to Christian nationalism. We cannot understand what happened on Jan. 6 without understanding Christian nationalism.

The officers who testified demanded justice. They demanded accountability. They turned to this committee, made up of U.S. representatives whose lives they saved, who represent the democracy they saved, and they asked for justice and accountability. Our country needs it.

But we will only get that reckoning if we grapple with the role that Christian nationalism played in violently assaulting our democracy. Let’s hope this select committee doesn’t ignore, or worse, cover for, Christian nationalism. Let’s hope this select committee listens to Officer Hodges. Because on Jan. 6, Christian nationalism proved that it is indeed un-American and that it will not go gently into the obsolescence for which it is bound. If we refuse to identify and confront this threat, it will strike again. The terrorists made that clear.

Andrew L. Seidel is FFRF’s director of strategic response.

“We cannot understand what happened on Jan. 6 without understanding Christian nationalism.”



FFRF to Biden: Vaccine mandates are needed

FFRF is asking President Biden to wield the influence and authority of the federal government to incentivize vaccination mandates.

While praising the recent federal employee and military Covid-19 vaccination mandates, FFRF Co-Presidents Dan Barker and Annie Laurie Gaylor assert in a letter to the president that “these steps are still not nearly enough.”

Their letter lays out common-sense recommendations that the government can adopt to mitigate the spread of the Covid-19 virus, including: require vaccinations for air travel; withhold federal funding for schools that do not require vaccinations for all eligible and refuse to award federal contracts with businesses that do not require Covid-19 vaccinations.

Additionally, FFRF suggests requiring that local and state governments, particularly police departments, be eligible to purchase decommissioned gear and materials only if they have mandated vaccinations for their staff.

“Urging, begging, bribing, and, sadly, reasoning with many unvaccinated Americans has had too little effect,” FFRF writes.

The Centers for Disease Control

and Prevention has altered its advice to encourage indoor masking in areas of the country with low vaccination rates — and that’s, unfortunately, a majority of counties. While that’s good advice, the real answer is to require vaccinations.

Even Alabama’s famously evangelical and anti-abortion governor, Kay Ivey, has had enough. She recently commented that it’s “time to start blaming the unvaccinated folks. . . . It’s the unvaccinated folks that are letting us down.”

Two other pro-vaccine Republican governors, Arkansas’ Asa Hutchinson and Ohio’s Mike DeWine, have called on the Food and Drug Administration to finalize approval of the Covid-19 vaccines in use in the United States. As Janet Woodcock, FDA’s acting commissioner, has noted, no corners were cut over development, testing and tracking of these vaccines. It’s time to approve!

Biden must take executive and large-scale action to help rid the United States of Covid-19, as even dollar incentivization has not worked. Under the Preamble to the U.S. Constitution, the federal government is entrusted to take care of its citizens and ensure the general welfare of the nation.

‘Freethought Matters’ is back on the air!

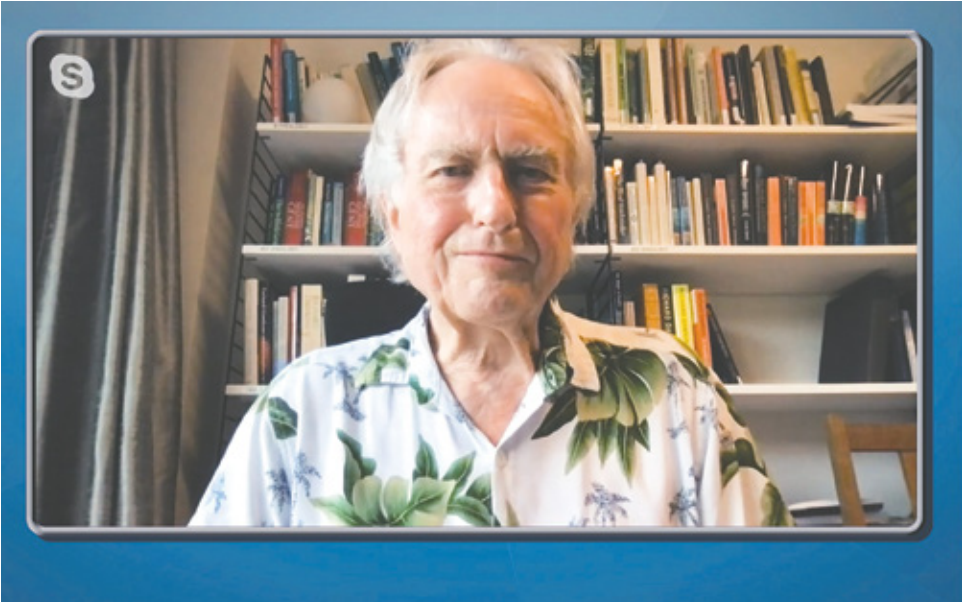
The 2021 season of FFRF’s lively TV show “Freethought Matters” debuts on Sept. 5 in 12 cities.

A “Best of” show begins the season with diverse highlights from previous seasons that you may have missed.

The following week (Sept. 12), FFRF hosts famed geneticist Richard Dawkins. Dawkins, the world’s most famous atheist and author of the blockbuster, *The God Delusion*, is interviewed about a range of topics, including his latest book, *Books Do Furnish a Life: Reading and Writing Science*. He talks about doing the last interview of Christopher Hitchens before his death, the evolving life of “memes,” a word he coined, anti-science U.S. attitudes and, yes, why God is a delusion.

Other new guests for the 2021-22 season include Candace R.M. Gorham, a former minister who is now a mental health counselor and author of the forthcoming book, *On Death, Dying, and Disbelief*, and is author of the earlier book, *The Ebony Exodus Project: Why Some Black Women Are Walking Out on Religion and Others Should Too*.

And Professor Jay Rosenstein, recipient of the Peabody Award for his fascinating documentary “The Lord Is Not On Trial Here Today,” about the dramatic challenge of religious indoctrination



Scientist, author and atheist Richard Dawkins appears as FFRF’s guest on the Sept. 12 episode of “Freethought Matters.”

in the public schools taken by Vashti McCollum and her family in the late 1940s, resulting in a landmark ruling in her favor by the Supreme Court. The show will include clips from the riveting film.

For those who don’t get a chance to view it live on television, all episodes are available to watch on FFRF’s YouTube channel or through FFRF’s updated website at ffrf.org/news/freethought-matters.

(You can find it under the “News” category and then under “Videos.”)

“Freethought Matters” airs Sundays in:

- Chicago, WPWR-CW (Ch. 50), 9 a.m.
- Denver, KWGN-CW (Ch. 2), 7 a.m.
- Houston, KUBE-IND (Ch. 57), 9 a.m.
- Los Angeles, KCOP-MY (Ch. 13), 8:30 a.m.

- Madison, Wis., WISC-TV (Ch. 3), 11 p.m.
- Minneapolis, KSTC-IND (Ch. 45), 9:30 a.m.
- New York City, WPIX-IND (Ch. 11), 8:30 a.m.
- Phoenix, KASW-CW (Ch. 61, or 6 or 1006 for HD), 8:30 a.m.
- Portland, Ore., KRCW-CW (Ch. 32), 9 a.m. Comcast channel 703 for High Def, or Channel 3.
- Sacramento, KQCA-MY (Ch. 58), 8:30 a.m.
- San Francisco, KICU-IND (Ch. 36), 10 a.m.
- Seattle, KONG-IND (Ch. 16 or Ch. 106 on Comcast), 8 a.m.
- Washington, D.C., WDCW-CW (Ch. 50), 8 a.m.

P.S. Please tune in or record according to the times given above regardless of what is listed in your TV guide (it may be listed simply as “paid programming” or even be misidentified). To set up an automatic weekly recording, try taping manually by time or channel. And spread the word to freethinking friends, family or colleagues about a TV show, finally, that is dedicated to providing programming for freethinkers!

FFRF website gets new look



Check out FFRF’s updated and improved website at ffrf.org.

Because it’s now built with a responsive, mobile first design, it works great on portable devices such as phones and tablets, as well as on desktop computers.

You can now find recent (and archived) episodes of FFRF’s TV show “Freethought Matters” and its weekly Facebook Live show, “Ask an Atheist,” under the “News” category.

Looking for merch? Go to the new and improved “Shop” for your favorite freethinking gear, including apparel, books, music, cards and so much more.

If you find that a page isn’t working properly or any other site glitches, please send an email to ffrf.us/website-feedback letting us know of the issue.

FFRF report

School ‘prayer walks’ walk over Constitution

What is a “prayer walk” and what’s wrong when they are performed in some public schools around the nation?

The Freedom From Religion Foundation has just released a short report about prayer walks in public schools, a bizarre but growing phenomenon. FFRF’s report shows why such events — typically involving religious leaders praying, sermonizing and even sprinkling “holy water” over school grounds — are constitutionally impermissible.

The report details complaints received by the state/church watchdog in which public school officials may host, organize, participate in and even promote such religious worship on official social media pages. As an example, Summer Creek High School in Texas hosted a prayer walk to celebrate a merger between two area high schools, using the slogan “Two Schools. One God.”

Public schools have an obligation under the law, the report points out, “to make

certain that subsidized teachers do not inculcate religion, or otherwise blur the lines between religion and the public schools.

“It is a constitutional violation for a public school to organize, or join forces with a church to host an inherently religious event such as a prayer walk,” FFRF notes.

The report also documents the significant 43 percent of millennials and younger Americans who are non-Christian, most practicing no religion at all.

While concentrating on this violation in public schools, the report notes that FFRF has received reports of prayer walks being inappropriately hosted by police departments and other government agencies.

“Government officials can worship, pray, and participate in religious events in their personal capacities. But they are not permitted to provide credibility or prestige to their religion by lending a government office and government title to religious events.”

Note to members

For those of you who get the PDF version of Freethought Today, there have been a few changes to the content you can see.

Because of privacy concerns — the PDF can be easily forwarded to non-members — FFRF has stopped including in the PDF version the Black Collar Crime report, names of new Lifetime members, and the names of the Letterbox contributors.

The online version at freethoughttoday.com also follows this protocol. Only the actual print newspaper contains all of these items.

If you would like to continue read-

ing Black Collar Crime, see the names of FFRF’s newest Lifetime members, or see the names of those who contributed to our Letterbox, you will need to change your preferences in how you receive Freethought Today.

In order to do that, follow these simple steps:

Log into your FFRF.org account. Click on “Update your contact information.”

Go down to “Deliver Freethought Today by” and click on either “Newspaper by mail” or “Both PDF and paper copy.”

Click “Submit.”

FFRF VICTORIES

By Casandra Zimmerman

Cross display removed by Pennsylvania DOT

The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation has removed a cross display on a state-owned utility pole. A concerned resident reported to FFRF that a Christian cross was displayed on public school property. Upon further inspection, the cross was found to be on state property and FFRF Staff Attorney Christopher Line wrote to the DOT insisting that a sign saying “Jesus still saves” be taken down. Assistant District Executive Thomas J. McClelland said the cross display had been removed from the utility pole, and the electric company deemed it a potential safety issue, as well.

Bible verse taken off jury summonses in Pa.

A resident in Fayette County, Pa., reported receiving a jury summons containing the bible verse, “Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established.” Staff Attorney Christopher Line sent a letter to Commissioners Janet Trees and Lauren Mahoney-Yohman asking for the bible verse to be removed from all jury summonses. Trees responded in July and said that upon receiving the FFRF letter, the bible verse was immediately removed from all jury summonses.

Prayers ended at Alaska school board meetings

The school board in Yupit, Alaska, has stopped scheduling prayers at school meetings after receiving a letter from FFRF Staff Attorney Christopher Line. The letter was sent to Yupit School District Superintendent Cassandra Bennett and Board President Willie Kasayulie. The response received was, “Cassandra is no longer with the district. They stopped including the invocation.”

Faculty member removes religious quote on email

A faculty member at Anoka Ramsey Community College in Minnesota has removed a religious quote from an email signature after being informed by FFRF that it is unconstitutional to promote personal religious beliefs in an official capacity. FFRF Legal Fellow Joseph McDonald wrote to President Kent Hanson, urging him to tell the faculty member to remove the bible verse: “We write to ask that this email signature be changed so as not to create the impression of university en-

dorsement of Christianity over all other religions, or religion over nonreligion.” Hanson responded, assuring FFRF that the faculty member voluntarily agreed to remove the quote from the email signature.

School no longer requires standing for the pledge

An elementary school in Silver Consolidated Schools in New Mexico has stopped requiring students to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance after receiving a letter from FFRF. A concerned parent from Jose Barrios Elementary contacted FFRF explaining that their child was reprimanded for declining to stand for the pledge, which is recited over the school’s loudspeaker every morning. Staff Attorney Christopher Line sent a letter to Superintendent William Hawkins, reminding him of the many court cases ruling that forcing children to recite the pledge in school infringes upon a student’s First Amendment rights. The superintendent responded, saying that all principals, including Joe Barrios Elementary school, will be reminded they cannot disrespect a student’s right to freedom of speech by requiring them to stand for the pledge.

Ga. commission removes creationism module

The Georgia Professional Standards Commission has removed a module in the Georgia Educator Ethics Assessment indicating that a teacher should teach creationism regardless of their beliefs. To obtain a license to teach in the state, a certain set of ethical standards must be tested and one question posed was about whether teaching intelligent design in schools is illegal. FFRF Staff Attorney Christopher Line sent a letter to Brian Sirmans, commission chair, asking that the module be removed from the assessment. Director of Rules Management and Educator Assessment, Anne Marie Fenton, responded to FFRF, saying that the module has been removed.

Union Station stops playing Christian music

Union Station in Raleigh, N.C., has stopped playing Christian music through its PA system. A patron of Union Station reported to FFRF that a Christian radio station was being played over the PA system. FFRF Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor wrote a letter to Manager Richard Costello, urging him to keep in mind that the public train station serves all types of religious and nonreligious people. She also assert-

ed that Christian music will very easily alienate patrons who are not Christian. Costello responded to FFRF, writing that the matter was being addressed and assured that no further occurrences would take place.

Superintendent ends religious remarks

The Ohio Hi-Point Career Center superintendent has stopped including religious remarks in convocation speeches after hearing from FFRF on the matter. FFRF Legal Fellow Joseph McDonald wrote to Superintendent Rick Smith about the religious speech he gave at the convocation ceremony, asking him to cease promoting his own beliefs and religion. McDonald reminded Smith that this case had already been settled in the Supreme Court, where “high school graduations must be secular to protect the freedom of conscience of all students.” Smith responded, saying he plans to avoid making religious remarks in the future.

FFRF ensures that Ga. deputy behaves lawfully

FFRF has made certain that a Georgia deputy ceases to behave in an unlawful manner. Chief Deputy Jonathan Blackmon had been using his position within the Polk County Sheriff’s Office to promote and endorse his personal religious beliefs, and the Polk County Sheriff’s Office was regularly posting Blackmon’s religious messages on its official Facebook page. FFRF Staff Attorney Chris Line wrote to Polk County Sheriff Johnny Moats. “I was advised by our administration to inform you that all the Facebook posts would be removed and that there will not be any future posts placed on the sheriff’s office official page,” says a recent email from the sheriff’s office.

School district to stop religious messages

A Georgia school district is rectifying a constitutional breach, thanks to the FFRF. A concerned local resident informed FFRF that Graysville Elementary School gave students backpacks containing bibles and other religious materials. Children came home from school with a bible, a list of local Baptist churches, and a note asking them to “visit them and become part of the Catoosa Baptist Association family.” After FFRF Staff Attorney Chris Line wrote to Superintendent Denia Reese, the district’s legal counsel replied, “The school has been instructed to physical-

ly view the inside of any bags or similar items and to remove religious endorsements before giving them to any other students.”

N.C. employee stops giving out pamphlets

After hearing from FFRF, a license plate renewal office in North Carolina told an employee to stop giving out pamphlets containing bible verses and “how-to” guides on “gaining salvation.” FFRF was informed by a concerned Morehead City community member about the unconstitutional religious distribution. Staff Attorney Christopher Line wrote to the office, asking that it ensures that religious literature no longer be distributed in its office and to remind employees of their obligation to remain neutral toward religion. FFRF received a response from Sandra Cannon of the Morehead City License Plate Agency, who assured FFRF that she did not condone the distribution of religious materials, told the employee to remove all religious literature from the office and promised that it would not happen again.

School stops forcing religion on art projects

A Tallassee, Ala., art teacher has stopped an art project requiring students to participate in religious assignments, such as making students draw a picture of a cross with graphite pencils. A concerned Tallassee community member notified FFRF that religious indoctrination could be occurring in an art teacher’s classroom, including encouraging kids to “add a creative saying or bible verse on top” of projects. Staff Attorney Christopher Line’s letter to the Superintendent of Tallassee City schools asked it to “take immediate action to ensure that (the teacher) is no longer giving religious assignments to students or in any way promoting or endorsing religion through their role as a district employee.” In response to FFRF’s letter, the school district sent teachers a guide regarding religion in schools, and the teacher that was noted in the letter has retired.




The Born Again Skeptic's Guide to the Bible
By Ruth Hurmence Green
A Missouri grandmother debunks the bible as no one has debunked it since Thomas Paine.

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FFRF hails survey showing rise of ‘Nones’

The Freedom From Religion Foundation is celebrating findings that show a shrinking white Christian majority and a stable percentage of religiously unaffiliated Americans.

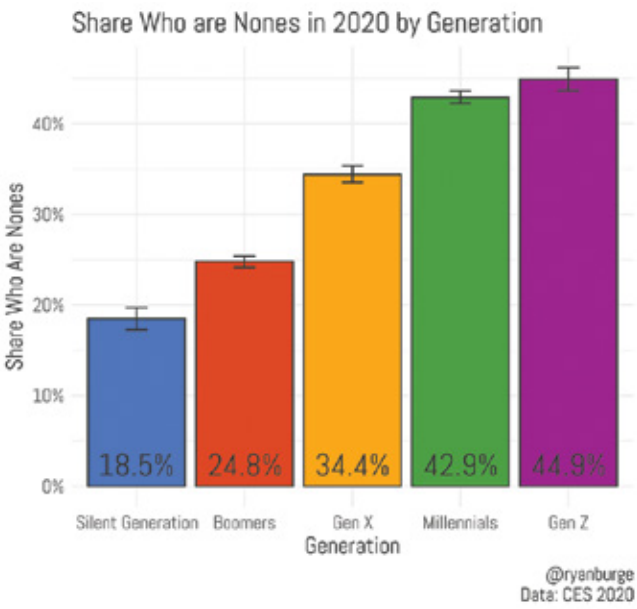
The Public Religion Research Institute’s “2020 Census of American Religion” documents that white Christians, previously a supermajority, have declined by nearly a third in the last few decades, from 65 percent in 1996 to a low of 43 percent in 2017. Today, white Christians comprise 44 percent of the population.

The number of “Nones,” those with no religious affiliation, has tripled since the 1990s, to comprise 23 percent of the U.S. population in 2020. “The increase in proportion of religiously unaffiliated Americans has occurred across all age groups but has been most pronounced among young Americans,” the report states.

Ryan Burge, a researcher from Eastern Illinois University, said that Generation Z, those born after 1996, are “the least religious generation we’ve had in American history.”

“At the same time, the rate of disaffiliation is continuing,” he continues. “However, Gen Z has a long way to go before they all show up in the data. It will be eight more years until the youngest members of this cohort reach adulthood.”

The “Nones” have made substantial inroads in all sectors. One in five Black Americans and one in five



Hispanic Americans today is religiously unaffiliated. More than a third of multiracial Americans are religiously unaffiliated, as are 28 percent of Native Americans. Asian-Americans and Pacific Islander Americans are overall the most likely to be religiously unaffiliated, at 34 percent.

Burge says the age factor will only increase the

number of Nones in the future.

“Consider this: every day in America, hundreds of people from the Silent Generation (19 percent Nones) and the Boomers (25 percent Nones) die off and are replaced by members of Generation Z (45 percent Nones) having their 18th birthday,” writes Burge. “This, by itself, will make the United States much less religious in 2030 than it was in 2020.”

A majority of white Americans still identify as Christian, breaking down as 50 percent Protestant, 23 percent evangelical, 27 percent mainline Protestant and 19 percent Catholic. Jews are at 2 percent and Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu or other religions make up less than 1 percent of the white U.S. population.

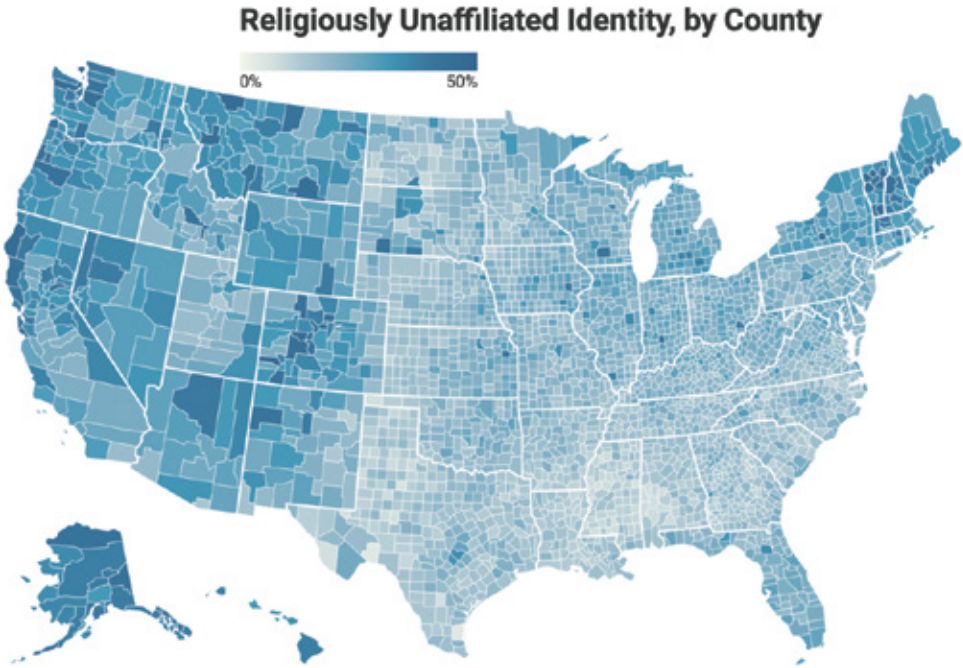
Seventy-two percent of Black Americans, three-quarters of Hispanic Americans, 34 percent of Asian American and Pacific Islander Americans and 60 percent of Native Americans identify as Christian.

“This groundbreaking study shows how important it is that we ‘Nones’ must flex our collective muscle, through our ballots and our lobbying presence, to ensure that our government and courts know we are here,” says FFRF Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor. “White Protestant evangelicals represent only 14 percent of the population, yet their views, which are often Christian nationalist, are so disproportionately represented in Congress, statehouses and on court benches.”

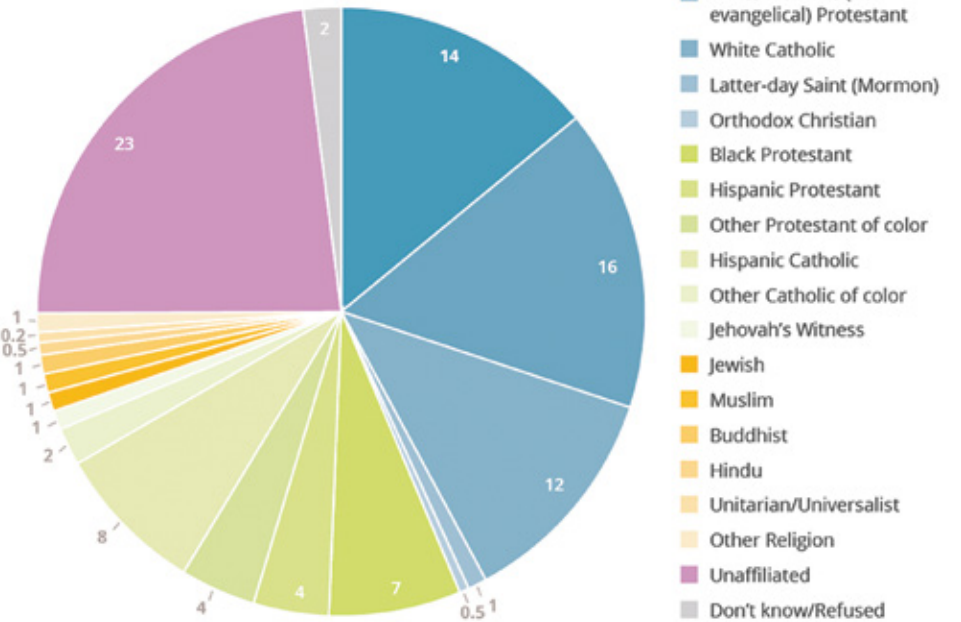
Survey stats

- Over the last few decades, the proportion of the U.S. population that is white Christian has declined by nearly one-third. As recently as 1996, nearly two-thirds of Americans (65 percent) identified as white and Christian. By 2006, that had declined to 54 percent, and by 2017 it was down to 43 percent.
- Since 2006, white evangelical Protestants have experienced the most precipitous drop in affiliation, shrinking from 23 percent of Americans in 2006 to 14 percent in 2020.
- Only 16 percent of Americans reported being religiously unaffiliated in 2007; this proportion rose to 19 percent by 2012, and then gained roughly a percentage point each year from 2012 to 2017. The proportion of religiously unaffiliated Americans hit a high point of 26 percent in 2018 but has since slightly declined, to 23 percent in 2020.
- Americans ages 18–29 are the most religiously diverse age group. More than one-third of young Americans (36 percent) are religiously unaffiliated.

- White evangelical Protestants are the oldest religious group in the U.S., with a median age of 56, compared to the median age in the country of 47. Religiously unaffiliated people are among the youngest median age at 38, just behind Muslims (33), Buddhists (36) and Hindus (36).
- Both major political parties are majority Christian, with 83 percent of Republicans and 69 percent of Democrats identifying as Christian. Two-thirds of Republicans (68 percent) identify as white and Christian, compared to 39 percent of Democrats
- The share of religiously unaffiliated people among Republicans has increased dramatically. In 2006, just 4 percent of Republicans identified as unaffiliated. That proportion more than doubled to 10 percent in 2013 and continued to grow to 13 percent in 2020.
- The share of unaffiliated Democrats also more than doubled between 2006 (9 percent) and 2013 (22 percent). From 2013 to 2018 (28 percent), the share of unaffiliated Democrats grew slightly each year, before dropping to 23 percent in 2020.



The American Religious Landscape in 2020
Percent who identify as:



Source: PRRI 2020 American Values Atlas.

About this survey

The Public Religion Research Institute has been collecting and aggregating data on religious diversity in America continuously since 2013. The combined dataset contains interviews with 459,822 Americans across all 50 states from 2013 to 2019. This dataset was merged with American

Community Survey data on 3,142 counties across all 50 states to produce a rigorous estimate of the religious demographics of every county in the U.S. This PRRI Census of American Religion is the most comprehensive resource available on religious diversity in America.

Religious diversity

The religious diversity index is calculated so that a score of 1 signifies complete diversity — every religious group is of equal size — and a score of 0 indicates a complete lack of diversity and one religious group comprises the entire population of a given county.

The average religious diversity score by county in the U.S. is 0.625.

Religious diversity is highest in urban areas. The five highest religious diversity scores are:

- Kings County, N.Y. (0.897)
- Queens County, N.Y. (0.896)
- Montgomery County, Md. (0.880)
- Navajo County, Ariz. (0.876)
- Santa Clara County, Calif. (0.876)

Religious diversity is lowest in the southern part of the U.S. and in rural areas. The lowest diversity scores among counties with more than 10,000 residents are:

- Noxubee County, Mississippi (0.228)
- Panola County, Mississippi (0.281)
- Conecuh County, Alabama (0.283)
- Amite County, Mississippi (0.284)
- Marion County, Mississippi (0.284)

Religiously unaffiliated Americans are spread throughout the country but are most concentrated in the West and the Northeast. The five highest concentrations of religiously unaffiliated Americans in counties with greater than 10,000 resi-

Median Age of Religious Groups

	Median Age
All Americans	47
White evangelical Protestant	56
White Catholic	54
Unitarian/Universalist	53
White mainline (non-evangelical) Protestant	50
Black Protestant	50
Jehovah's Witness	49
Jewish	48
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	47
Orthodox Christian	42
Hispanic Catholic	42
Hispanic Protestant	39
Unaffiliated	38
Buddhist	36
Hindu	36
Muslim	33

Source: PRRI 2020 American Values Atlas.

dents are (by percentage):

- San Juan County, Wash. (49)
- Multnomah County, Ore. (48)
| Glacier County, Mont. (45) | |
| Humboldt County, Calif. (45) | |
| Tompkins County, N.Y. (45) | |

Nearly four in ten (39 percent) religiously unaffiliated Americans live in urban areas, 44 percent live in suburban areas, and 17 percent live in rural areas.

Meet the FFRF Legal Team’s summer interns

Each summer, the FFRF Legal Team hires law school students as full-time interns to help with FFRF’s heavy workload in fighting state/church separation entanglements around the country. Here is a closer look at this year’s group.

James Aird

(University of Wisconsin Law School)
Where did you grow up?
Proctor, Minn., a small railroad town right outside of Duluth.
Were you raised in a religious household?

I was raised Catholic, although I wouldn’t describe my parents as especially religious. My mom just felt it was her duty to raise us at least with some religious education. Our priest growing up was very well-liked, but when he rotated out to a new church, the new priest was much more dogmatic and he (along with a similarly orthodox catechism teacher) opened my eyes to the problems with church doctrine. At some point around, then I picked up some Hitchens and Dawkins books and never looked back.

Where did you attend college as an undergrad?
Ironically enough, the College of St. Scholastica in Duluth. My sisters had all attended previously, and I received a generous scholarship. While the college was founded by nuns, it has in recent decades become much more secular in its day-to-day operations.

Why did you want to be a legal intern for FFRF?
FFRF excited me because of its impact litigation. Going from processing real estate transactions to assisting with civil rights litigation was a huge step for me in feeling like the work I do really matters.

What is your favorite part of working for FFRF?
I have really enjoyed working with the litigation team on their pending cases. Beyond learning a ton about the religion clauses and the merits of these cases, I have also learned a lot about civil procedure and motion practice in federal court.

What is one thing that you think people might not know about you?
I love to cook! On the menu this week: spicy korean bulgolgi lettuce wraps.

Matthew Hansen

(University of Wisconsin Law School)
Where did you grow up?
Wausau, Wis.
Were you raised in a religious household?

My father was raised Catholic and my mother was generally irreligious. I was fortunate that my parents gave me the education, freedom and tools I needed to decide for myself the lens through which I wanted to view the world.
Where did you attend college as an undergrad?

University of Wisconsin-Madison.
Why did you want to be a legal intern for FFRF?

One of the high school choir teachers in my hometown held a Christmas concert where he required the public school choir to sing exclusively Christian music. The issue ruffled a lot of feathers on the school board and animated the local religious and secular populations. The controversy gained enough attention for FFRF to get involved, which is where I first heard about the organization. While in law school, I have had the honor of serving as a teaching assistant for undergraduate classes on constitutional rights and political philosophy. Part of this experience allowed me to teach Establishment Clause jurisprudence to political science students, which opened my eyes to the energy and enthusiasm young people have for the topic and the frustration and confusion they have about more recent Supreme Court decisions. This experience solidified my passion for the topic and drove me to apply to FFRF to help combat Christian nationalism, the theft of the court system, and to oppose the degradation of the high wall which has historically separated state and church.

What is your favorite part of working for FFRF?

The staff at FFRF are all phenomenal, each one has a visible passion for what they do and want nothing more than to make their county a better, more tolerant and less dogmatic place. Being part of a meaningful movement is highly rewarding and instills a sense of purpose in everything I do at FFRF. In many ways, FFRF feels like the front line in a rapidly changing legal and social battle over the religious character of our nation and it’s an honor to be a part of that.

What is one thing that you think people might not know about you?
I used to be a nationally ranked Kubb player. Kubb is a Swedish lawn game, sometimes called Viking chess, with a growing following in the upper Midwest.

Raghen Lucy

(Hamline School of Law)
Where did you grow up?
Williston, N.D.
Were you raised in a religious household?

I was raised in a blended religious household (one Methodist parent and one Catholic parent).
Where did you attend college as an undergrad?
Minnesota State University, Mankato, where I studied philosophy, politics and economics.

Why did you want to be a legal intern for FFRF?

I was first introduced to FFRF when my Secular Student Alliance chapter in Mankato hosted Dan Barker for a debate in 2018. I wanted to spend my last summer before law school gaining practical experience in the legal field and contributing to the vital cause of state/church separation. This legal internship has allowed me to do both!

What is your favorite part of working for FFRF?
My favorite part of working for FFRF has been working with such a great staff.

Everyone has been nothing but friendly, helpful and forthcoming with advice for the future. I am thankful for this opportunity to work with individuals who serve as role models and inspirations for my own legal career.
What is one thing that you think people might not know about you?
I made a playlist on Spotify that has 57 hours worth of my favorite music.

Alex Moore

(University of Wisconsin Law School)
Where did you grow up?
I grew up in a small conservative community in East Texas.



Alex Moore

Were you raised in a religious household?
Yes, I attended multiple religious activities a week for most of my childhood.

Where did you attend college as an undergrad?
University of Texas at Tyler.
Why did you want to be a legal intern for FFRF?

Re-establishing the separation of state and church is vital to progress and equity in our country. I also deeply appreciate that FFRF makes a specific effort to protect the rights of children.
What is your favorite part of working for FFRF?
I know that everything I am working on provides support to nonreligious people who often do not have a voice in their community.
What is one thing that you think people might not know about you?
I recently fulfilled a lifelong dream of learning how to solve a Rubik’s cube. It is very exciting!

Michael Sayle

(University of Arizona College of Law)
Where did you grow up?
My family moved around a lot when I was growing up. But notable places would include Memphis, Washington (both state and D.C.), Texas (San Antonio and Longview), Arkansas, New Mexico, Arizona, and Suffolk (England). I also spent the first five years post-undergrad teaching English in Hunan Province, China.



Michael Sayle

After finishing my graduate degrees, I spent four years in Qingdao, China, as the head of the English for Academic Purposes Program at the University of Arizona Global Campus (in partnership with Ocean University of China). Home, however, is Tucson, Ariz.

Were you raised in a religious household?
Very. We attended church at least every Sunday, and for different stretches of time when my folks were feeling particularly compelled, we’d attend Sunday night and Wednesday night. I was baptized at the age of 16, which is late for a lot of people in that denomination. I felt I had to go through a questioning stage before believing I had good reasons for

“accepting the gospel,” and at the time, I thought reading through apologetics books was genuine questioning. I was, of course, mostly assuaging some cognitive dissonance by indulging in a heaping dose of confirmation bias.
Where did you attend college as an undergrad?
I went on to attend a private Christian university in Arkansas, where I studied mission work with the intent of becoming a missionary. The more I studied the academic literature about its central text, the more ecumenical my outlook became. I feel this had more to do with how increasingly untenable a literal interpretation of the text became. After graduation, as the years passed, I slowly came to realize that any truth in the religion was incidental to the human desire to understand the world they find themselves in.
Why did you want to be a legal intern for FFRF?
FFRF has been essential in protecting the Establishment Clause from erosion by religious actors, and I wanted to be helpful in that regard. I also knew it would give me good exposure to and experience in the way public interest law works.
What is your favorite part of working for FFRF?
I get to spend a lot of time researching religious incursions into government. It’s been fulfilling to be a part of holding government actors accountable for pushing their religious beliefs onto other people.

What is one thing that you think people might not know about you?
I love working with and learning about languages and linguistics, especially where syntax and semantics intersect with second language acquisition and psycholinguistics.

Sukhvir Singh

(Rutgers Law School)
Where did you grow up?
I was born and lived the first part of my life in Astoria, Queens, N.Y., and moved to Morris Plains, N.J., when I was 10.



Sukhvir Singh

Were you raised in a religious household?
Yes, I was raised in a Sikh household.
Where did you attend college as an undergrad?
I attended Rutgers University, majoring in cultural anthropology and American studies.
Why did you want to be a legal intern for FFRF?
I wanted to be an intern for FFRF because I wanted to contribute and be a part of its goals, but also to learn from very skilled attorneys who seek to advance secular objectives.

What is your favorite part of working for FFRF?
My favorite part of FFRF is when I receive an email presenting a victory in a case or challenge FFRF was involved in because it shows the success and hard work of everyone involved. It reminds me of the tangible difference we make in the lives of secular individuals across the country.
What is one thing that you think people might not know about you?
I love sports and one day hope to be in a position where I can have part ownership of a team of any kind.

OVERHEARD

If they're [the Catholic bishops] going to politically weaponize religion by 'rebuking' Democrats who support women's reproductive choice, then a 'rebuke' of their tax-exempt status may be in order.

U.S. Rep. Jared Huffman, in a tweet about the Catholic Church potentially not allowing communion to President Biden and other Catholic politicians who vote for pro-choice measures.
Twitter, 6-18-21

We're beyond apologies, we need to talk about accountability. If Nazi war criminals can be tried at an elderly age for their war crimes, I think we should be tracking down the living survivors of the church — being the priests and the nuns — who had a hand in this.

Chief Jason Louie, Lower Kootenay Band, commenting on Pope Francis' belated plans to meet in December with Canadian Indigenous leaders about the church's role in cultural genocide, neglect and abuse. Almost a thousand human remains recently have been found at Catholic-run residential schools for Indigenous children removed from their families.
The New York Times, 7-1-21

It's like choosing which side of the flat Earth we're going to jump off.

Infectious disease physician Luana Araujo, during Brazil's parliamentary inquiry into the government's (mis)handling of the pandemic. More than 520,000 Brazilians have died of Covid-19. but President Jair Bolsonaro has promoted hydroxychloroquine and other useless treatments.
The New York Times, 7-6-21

I need you to understand something and I say it without any hyperbole: White Evangelicals need to be stopped, now. We've seen this play out throughout history and we know how it ends. We know what unchecked religious extremist is capable of and we know the cost of the silence and inaction of good people.

John Pavlovitz, longtime Christian pastor, writer and activist.
Goodmenproject.com, 6-12-21



Michelle Goldberg, in her column, "The Christian Right is in decline, and it's taking America with it."
The New York Times, 7-9-21

It is a world in which demons are real, miracles are real, and the ultimate mission is not just transforming individual lives but also turning civilization itself into their version of God's Kingdom: one with two genders, no abortion, a free-market economy, bible-based education, church-based social programs and laws such as the ones curtailing LGBTQ rights now moving through statehouses around the country.

Stephanie McCrummen, author of the article "An American Kingdom: A new and rapidly growing Christian movement is openly political, wants a nation under God's authority, and is central to Donald Trump's GOP."
Washington Post, 7-11-21

I was frightened by the Religious Right in its triumphant phase. But it turns out that the movement is just as dangerous in decline.

Michelle Goldberg,

It isn't bringing me closer to Christ, it's giving me U.T.I.s.

Lindsay Perez, 34, a young Mormon woman baring all about the gynecological harm of itchy, scratchy, non-breathing Mormon "magic" underwear.
New York Times, 7-22-21

On almost every subject you can name, science is the answer, whether it's the climate crisis, whether it's a health crisis, whether it's our preeminence in the world of technology, science, science, science. To say that wearing a mask is not based on science, I think, is not wise, and that was my comment.

Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, after calling House Minority Leader Mike McCarthy a "moron" over his objection to the return of a mask mandate on Capitol Hill.
Yahoo News, 7-28-21

It was clear the terrorists perceived themselves to be Christians. I saw the Christian flag directly to my front. Another read 'Jesus is my savior, Trump is my president.' Another, 'Jesus is King.'"

Washington, D.C., Officer Daniel Hodges, describing the pervasiveness of Christian symbols among those who attacked him and other police officers during the Jan. 6 insurrection.
Washington Post, 7-27-21

You were concerned that the governor was imposing his own religious beliefs on others?

"I was. I had a problem with that being imposed upon 6.8 million Tennesseans."

Dr. Michelle Fiscus, in an interview with Phil Williams of Nashville television

station News Channel 5, on how Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee's delayed the rollout of a Covid-19 vaccine because he believed the Johnson & Johnson vaccine contained fetal tissue. Fiscus was fired on July 12 as the top vaccine official in Tennessee, allegedly to appease Republican state lawmakers who were angry about efforts to vaccinate teenagers.
NewsChannel5.com, 7-28-21

While most people to the left of the Christian Right view the Project Blitz playbook with revulsion, I see it as a gift to democracy. The playbook and their accompanying briefings and events laid bare their intentions and their game plan. We were handed a vital tool for the defense of democratic values and, arguably, the wider defense of democracy itself. The things that happened in response, I think, are underappreciated, even by some of those who should be taking great pride in their victories.

Researcher Frederick Clarkson, who first exposed the existence of Project Blitz, the secretive Christian nationalist playbook to enact Christian legislation in dozens of states.
Salon.com, 7-24-21

Today the question is whether these Christians only support democracy in instrumental ways. And the answer we are getting from many quarters is that they were supportive of democracy as long as they were in charge.

Robert Jones, CEO and founder of the Public Religion Research Institute, in an interview.
Religion Dispatches, 7-20-21

CRANKMAIL

Here is the month's assortment of letters and correspondence from the lesser side of humanity. Printed as received.

Losers: You are a bunch of atheist who get offended by religious people is absolutely hysterical. It sounds like you are all nothing but a bunch of lawyers trying to find ways to sue people and make money. As the saying goes., the only good lawyer is a dead lawyer! Now stop bothering people you fucking assholes! When the time does come you will get what is coming to you! — *John Barrington*

Y'all should just mind your own business: Please leave people that want ti pray alone y'all just give it a rest yiur poking your nose inti things thats best left alone if people want ti pray let them it dont matter where they are or when just let them do it im a nonpracticing jew and if i should chosse ti pray i will and dint care where i am at. — *Ed Cohen III*

God is real: Dear atheist every single one of you know that God does exist. The truth of that is in your dna. It is still their so you will have zero excuses when you stand before God. God is not sending you to hell. YOU YES YOU are choosing to go to hell. God is just giving what you want. Their is so much evidence of Gods Existence that you choose to ignore. More then just enough evidence will be made available that even you will know you are guilty. Come to your senses because you do know that GOD does exist. — *Charles Deneveau*

Get out: You may assist me--rather the RE-

SPECTABLE citizens of this country--by leaving it. Our forefathers came here, not to get away from religion, but to have the right to practice whatever RELIGION they believed in. Atheism is NOT a religion. You do have the right not to believe in God but you do NOT have the right to try to change the foundation of this country. If you don't like that religion is practiced here then GET THE FUCK OUT. I find it amusing that the only program that will air your ridiculous diatribe is that disgustingly liberal CBS Sunday Morning, which I was forced to watch by a dear, but ignorant, friend (ignorant to how unbelievably stupid the liberal left is & how they, like you, are a danger to our country). I wish you this--you get a terminal case of the drizzling shits & live forever with it, with only coarse sandpaper with which to wipe your sorry ass. — *Monica Bloedorn*

Atheist: You atheist is so out of control. I have friends that is atheist and their pissed off at the ones that gets offended all the time or has a problem with something. Or wait mainly wants media attention. I told every local and national tv network including radio network to not broadcast your lawsuit against the school. I will also tell the judge to throw out the lawsuit and do not allow any appeals for your side. Atheist can't win all the time. — *Mike Dunbar*

Stop Harassing Christians: You guys are pathetic! Stop harassing judges and Christians over their beliefs. You are fighting a losing battle! How

does it feel knowing that you pathetic scum are losing? You idiots enjoy killing babies? Well, your judgement will come and I hope you ALL burn in the pits of HELL for eternity! — *Daniel Davidson*

It's too late: I need to know your official views on the death shot Covid Vaccine which is not a vaccine. Also your views on extraterrestrial life, kundalini energy, reincarnation, telepathy. Moses was under the influence of ETs and displayed alien tech in his "miracles."

Also, anyone who has studied it knows astrology works. It is mathematics and physics and frequency and resonance. The USA is being swiftly taken over by Communists.. Every goddamn ad on TV promotes race mixing and marriage. Ads for death dealing drugs are rife on TV. White men are portrayed as dumb and weak oafs.

The USA has only a few months left to survive and in any case it will never go back to what it was. Stand to the line or be food for buzzards. — *Kent Meyer*

Your fate: Do you realize the founders could end up with the same fate as Madalyn Murray O'Hair? God is not mocked, what a man sows he shall reap! Google who she is and her fate. You'll be surprised. — *Connie Garvey*

your nosy nose: Mind your damn business & your own State's business & keep your fat nosy nose out of the Great State of Texas. You are now trying to bother UMC here in Lubbock, Tx. about a message they have on the UMC building & saying people who

worked there complained about it & if that happened, it was probably some idiot who moved from Wisconsin to Lubbock & they just couldn't accept what they were seeing. If you don't believe in God, then why does it bother you so much. This country was founded on Christianity & you can't convince me otherwise. Y'all are phony as the day is long, just shut up & mind your damn business! We don't care what YOU think!! Laughing at your ignorance. — *Sue Lankford*

We don't care!: Hate to break it to y'all but we literally do not care what y'all think of us in our little podunk town. Nobody is pressured into anything here I can assure you that, but at the same time.... How can you earn respect if you don't show it? This little town is built off that. It's hard to understand our lives in this little town, if you've never lived it. To say they were forced is over exaggerated... to say they were pressured is over exaggerated. — *Kevin Keen*

Sad: U know this is not the country I grow up and lived in it's a sad day when people turn their backs on praying in schools or anything else that has God in it . It's a sad day the people who want prayer at games bibles in school has rights to . U should be ashamed of yourselfs I'm not saying I'm sorry for believing in god he's my savior . What's going on here . Is wrong I'll pray for these people have mercy on their souls kids at this game prayed they did it bc that's what they wanted to do — *Bill Newman*

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FFRF awards \$21,350!

Winners of FFRF’s high school essay contest

The Freedom From Religion Foundation is proud to announce the winners of the 2021 William Schulz High School Essay Contest. FFRF is awarding \$21,350 in scholarship money for this year’s contest!

College-bound high school seniors were asked to write an essay based on this prompt: “Write a personal statement about why you trust science over faith, and why you think society should do the same. Please include an example of how religious faith has obstructed science or analyze a historic or current issue related to religion vs. science.”

After reviewing 220 essays, FFRF awarded 11 top prizes and 17 honorable mentions.

Winners are listed below and include the college or university they will be attending and the award amount. All students were 17 or 18 when they submitted their essays.

- FIRST PLACE**
Ava Bertolotti, Northeastern University, \$3,500.
- SECOND PLACE**
Ellianna Thayne, University of Washington, \$3,000.
- THIRD PLACE (tie)**
Jeremiah Brown, Rochester Institute of Technology, \$2,500.
- THIRD PLACE (tie)**
Elizabeth Getty, University of Minnesota, \$2,500.
- FOURTH PLACE**
Adam Pierce, University of California-Berkeley, \$2,000.



- FIFTH PLACE**
Andrew Delaney, University of California-Berkeley, \$1,500.
- SIXTH PLACE**
Alexis Martin, University of Miami, \$1,000.
- SEVENTH PLACE**
Laura Streminsky, Boston University, \$750.
- EIGHTH PLACE**
Caleb Buell, University of Alabama, \$500.
- NINTH PLACE**
Ashley Levstik, University of Texas-San Antonio, \$400.
- TENTH PLACE**
Alaina Adderley, Plymouth State

- University, \$300.
- Honorable mentions (\$200 each)**
Ainsley Anderson, Tulane University.
Elizabeth Andraschko, University of Wisconsin.
Benjamin Ash, Arizona State University.
Neil Dervis, University of Central Florida.
Shamsul Haque, University of Virginia.
Trinitey Hayward, University of Arkansas.
Anna Hendrick, College of William and Mary.
Neha Kumar, New York University.
Isabel Li, Scripps college.
Adrianna Martinez-Lainez, Seattle University.
Eliane Odefey, Middlebury College.

- Carlin Padgett, Western Washington University.
- Haden Ringel, University of Chicago.
- Gavin Ruby, University of Colorado-Boulder.
- Garret Snitchler, University of Nebraska.
- Josiah Wilson, Indiana State University.
- Ares Zhang, University of Washington-Tacoma.

Those who are not named winners receive a complimentary FFRF membership for a year and are offered a book or free-thought product as a thank-you for entering.

The high school contest is named for the late William J. Schulz, a Wisconsin member and life-long learner who died at 57 and left a generous bequest to FFRF.

FFRF thanks its “Director of First Impressions” Lisa Treu for managing the details of this and FFRF’s other annual student competitions. And we couldn’t judge these contests without our “faithful faithless” readers and judges, including: Don Ardell, Dan Barker, Darrell Barker, Bill Dunn, Annie Laurie Gaylor, Linda Josheff, Dan Kettner, Sammi Lawrence, Katya Maes, Amit Pal, Dave Petrashek, Sue Schuetz, Lauryn Seering, PJ Slinger, Karen Lee Weidig and Jenny Wilson.

FFRF has offered essay competitions to college students since 1979, high school students since 1994, grad students since 2010, students of color since 2016, and law school students since 2019.

FIRST PLACE

The prophets of doom have data

FFRF awarded Ava \$3,500 for this essay.

By Ava Bertolotti

Since I first read Carl Sagan’s *The Demon Haunted World: Science as a Candle in the Dark* in middle school, Sagan’s observation that “it is far better to grasp the universe as it really is than to persist in delusion, however satisfying and reassuring” has become my debate catch-all.

Science should be the bedrock of debating: It is objective, it is logical, it is evidence-driven and evolves with the facts. Especially in the emotionally fraught, combative political sphere, science clears the water rather than muddying it. Science is a self-correcting, self-critical process that professes no claim to perfection, unlike some religions.

Climate change used to keep me up at night. Praying — in English, in Arabic, staring at the ceiling, as branches were whipped past my window by the near-90 mile-per-hour winds of Hurricane Sandy — did not make me worry less about a tree crashing through the walls at any moment.

In my half-Catholic, half-Muslim family, religion was more often a source of conflict than of comfort. We visited my extended family in Turkey in 2018, two years after a violent coup attempt. Turkey’s 2017 ban on teaching evolution in schools was nearly as heavy a blow to my faith in the stability of its secular democracy as the 2016 press crackdown.

I trust in science because it can explain the disconcerting changes I see



Ava Bertolotti

in ecosystems: As mulberry groves and giant Turkish snails wither in the heat of record-hot summers, as frogs disappear from the pond behind my high school in New Jersey, I find that cataloging for citizen science databases feels more productive than wringing my hands.

In seventh grade, I surfed Science

News, only to plunge into debates over vaccines, abortion, stem-cell research, evolution and climate change in the comments sections. I could understand — not empathize with — moral objections to certain issues, but the religious climate-change deniers confounded me. They were impervious to facts and figures. Some invoked God’s will to justify their nonchalance; some argued my laptop use was an electricity-sucking sin; some touted the coming of Judgment Day. They didn’t bat a virtual eyelash when I cited distribution maps that showed U.S. emissions wreaking havoc on Global South countries, the Majority World that contributes almost nothing to the crisis. They vociferated about sin but said nothing

about justice. Internet trolls are not the worst offenders in the denial-sphere. Fossil-funded inactivists make the same arguments in Congress.

Prayers might make some feel better, but out of politicians’ mouths they are complacent platitudes. Science is a springboard for action; it is the best tool we have to combat climate change.

Ava, 17, is from Springfield, N.J., and attends Northeastern University.

“I’m a half-Italian-American, half-Karachai-Turkish climate justice and scientific literacy activist,” Ava writes. “I will be majoring (possibly on the pre-law track) in international affairs and environmental studies at Northeastern University next year, with minors in anthropology and sociology.”

“Science is a self-correcting, self-critical process that professes no claim to perfection, unlike some religions.”

What Is a Freethinker?

freethinker *n.*
1 A person who forms opinions about religion on the basis of reason, independently of tradition, authority, or established belief.

ffrf FREEDOM FROM RELIGION FOUNDATION
P.O. Box 750 • Madison, WI 53701 • (608) 256-8900 • FFRF.org

What is the Freedom From Religion Foundation?

Founded in 1978 as a national organization of freethinkers (atheists and agnostics), the Freedom From Religion Foundation, Inc., works to keep state and church separate and to educate the public about the views of nontheists. FFRF has more than 30,000 members. FFRF is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit and donations are tax deductible for income tax purposes.

FFRF’s email address is info@ffrf.org. Please include your name and physical mailing address with all email correspondence.

FFRF members wishing to receive online news releases, “action alerts” and “Freethought of the Day” should contact info@ffrf.org.

SECOND PLACE

Love in the face of faith

FFRF awarded Ellianna \$3,000.

By Ellianna Thayne

When I was a little girl, I spent many nights at my grandparents’ home. I was old enough to kneel at the foot of their bed for prayer, but still too young to decide truth from fiction, belief from instruction.

I would describe my relationship with the Christian god as short and sweet. Before the age of 10, I had bundled up the courage to stop praying, and when I didn’t fall victim to holy wrath, I moved past religion and developed an interest in science instead.

In the honors program at the University of Washington, I plan on pursuing a career in neuroscience. Despite moving forward into my future, I couldn’t help but feel that I’d plunged

“We should not, cannot, allow religion to dictate the morality of homosexuality when we know it is neurologically natural.”

back in time when I learned that my grandparents, whom I had spent so much of my childhood with, were homophobic.

I was undeterred, certain that when I told them about my girlfriend they would move past a few outdated verses and accept me. Instead, my grandparents stopped speaking to me. “It’s not like they don’t love you still,” my mom told me. “They just don’t think God does. It’s the church, honey. It’s the church.”

In the grand view of the world, I received a light punishment for my sexuality. Women like me have been persecuted in the name of the Christian doctrine for hundreds of years, executed for the supposed sin of homosexuality. When the church and state are one, we are victims of the law; when they are not, we are victims still of the church’s culture. While not all who follow Abrahamic religions believe that homosex-



Ellianna Thayne

uality is morally wrong, a significant number base their homophobia in faith. They say it’s not as God intended, that it’s unnatural.

In the eyes of science, however, homosexuality is entirely natural. Studies conducted over the past 50 years have found that human sexuality has many potential neurobiological sources, all of

which indicate that sexual orientation, whether gay, straight, or in between, is an innate result of being human. Homosexual relations have been observed in many other species of animals as well. In fact, not so long ago, two male penguins “adopted” an egg and raised it together in a Berlin zoo.

When it comes to acceptance of our sexual natures, I firmly believe that science should be the determining factor. We should not, cannot, allow religion to dictate the morality of homosexuality when we know it is neurologically natural. If we as a global community wish to truly evolve, we must move past the limitations of religion and realize that love is what binds humanity, no matter the orientation.

Ellianna, 18, is from Seattle and attends the University of Washington.

“I have won three awards for writing, one through the Seattle Public Library and two through my school, and I am a soon-to-be published author,” Ellianna writes. “My dream is to continue on to the neuroscience program and, after graduation, build a career as a trauma psychiatrist working with international organizations, such as Doctors Without Borders.”

THIRD PLACE (tie)

Religious obstruction of progress

FFRF awarded Jeremiah \$2,500.

By Jeremiah Brown

Religious institutions have hindered the spread of new ideas and knowledge for centuries. Catholicism wielded near absolutist power in Europe until the Enlightenment, crushing dissent, from science to schisms. Other religious institutions similarly fought against any ideas considered blasphemous. At its best, religion can motivate people to assist their community. However, at its worst, it can be used as justification to divide, subjugate or exterminate those who are deemed heretical.

Science often directly conflicts with religious ideas, especially in the United States, where religion is used to attack vulnerable groups. Christianity was used to justify slavery. Mormonism, a Christian religious institution, used the concept of the “Mark of Cain” to discriminate against Black Americans. Similarly, religion has been and is still used to attack and control LGBTQ+ people, regardless of scientific inquiry into



Jeremiah Brown

the normalcy of homosexuality.

In addition, following the publication of Charles Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species* and the theory of evolution, religion attacked and condemned the monumental advance in biological understanding. Religion in American policy has obstructed the natural progression of scientific understanding for the past century and longer.

At every turn, religion has attacked advances in sociology, neuroscience and biology, due to conflicts with its teachings.

Recently, regardless of public health guidelines and mandates, religious groups have attacked scientists and outright denied the existence of the global pandemic. From New York to Arizona, communities have had to face outbreaks from religious extremists who actively put others at risk.

In the United States, there has been a growing trend among religious groups increasingly distrusting the medical community. The country has seen this trend weaponized by those who seek to spread disinformation. QAnon is a prime example. QAnon’s merger of religious and political ideals was used to oppose health measures and attack the U.S. Capitol in the name of a figure associated with God.

Increasingly, religion is being used to dispose of facts and scientific data and to manipulate people and this is exacerbating

“Science exists to push humanity to a brighter tomorrow, while religious institutions have time and again sought to hold us in the dark.”

the issues caused by the pandemic.

Religious faith requires no backing for belief, no data, no evidence, no proof — which allows bad actors to hijack religion to manipulate people in the modern age, just as they have in the past. Scientific inquiry allows information to be gathered and disseminated to the masses for the betterment of society. Science exists to push humanity to a brighter tomorrow, while religious institutions have time and again sought to hold us in the dark.

Jeremiah, 18, is from Evans, Ga., and attends the Rochester Institute of Technology. “I’m a military kid and have lived from Rhode Island and Maryland to Washington and Virginia,” Jeremiah writes. “While in high school I maintained a 3.7 GPA, took 10 AP courses, and lettered in both lacrosse and football. I was a member of Beta, NHS, FLAIR, Spanish Honor Society, Space Club, Model United Nations, Principal’s Advisory Council, and was vice president of Young Democrats.”

THIRD PLACE (tie)

Truth and consequences

FFRF awarded Elizabeth \$2,500.

By Elizabeth Getty

Truth. The desire for a universal truth, the yearning for answers to the unknown is a deeply human affliction, and people have found different ways to satisfy this gnawing hunger.

I, for one, subscribe to science, as it

has provided me not only with rational explanations to my queries, but also peace of mind, since the doctrines of science are universal and adaptable, unlike the strict, autocratic tenets of religion.

We need only look to the Scientific Revolution to see the intellectually stifling nature of religion. At the forefront of scientific discovery and innovation was Antonie van Leeuwenhoek, who, with his letters on “the little

creatures,” became known as the “father of microbiology.” His discovery of bacteria and protozoa was not accepted during his lifetime due to existing religious beliefs on the origins of microbes. Credence was given to the idea that disease was caused not by these unviewable specks, but by God’s wrath following sinful activities.

Thus, Leeuwenhoek’s incredibly



Elizabeth Getty

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Getty

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important discovery was dismissed, and it would take centuries for his work to be praised. If this scientific breakthrough had been lauded appropriately during the late 17th century, we likely would have seen further developments in the study of germ theory, with great benefits to humankind, like the earlier implementation of sterilization and bacterial vaccination. But religion stood in the way.

The Catholic Church desired to

remain in power, and that meant the defenestration of potential threats, one of the biggest threats to religious sanctity being the emergence of scientific pioneers.

Rhazes (854-925 AD) was among the first to question the Church’s teachings and suffer the consequences. Persecuted and beaten to blindness for his medical teachings, Rhazes died disreputable and penniless. Similar abuse would be inflicted upon other

scientists, including Ibn Zuhr, Andreas Vesalius and Michael Servetus. History is oftentimes cyclical, and there have been many instances of scientific discoveries being spurned by religious officials to keep the status quo. But I believe that in the modern world, power should be vested in the hands of those who have proven themselves time and time again — the scientists.

From the discovery of bacteria to

the shift from geocentricity to heliocentricity, the hard work of researchers has provided veracity in a world filled with unanswered questions. If we are to progress as a society, we need to put our trust in science, not the people that have violated their own commandment, “Thou shalt not kill,” in order to silence the truth.

Elizabeth, 18, is from Minneapolis and attends the University of Minnesota. Elizabeth intends on pursuing a double major in history and political science before moving on to law school. Among her many hobbies are playing the cello, cycling with her dog, and rock climbing.

FOURTH PLACE

The strength of science is in change

FFRF awarded Adam \$2,000.

By Adam Pierce

Both religion and science require one to defer to those with more knowledge about the world. I, for instance, do not have a working knowledge of orbital dynamics. However, I still know that the Earth revolves around the sun, not the other way around. Because of this, it is often argued that science and religion have the same epistemological validity. Both require “faith,” so why should one be trusted over the other? The answer is quite simple. Science is worthy of deference. Religion is not.

A quote from the physicist Richard Feynman sums up the rationality behind this statement quite well: “Religion is a culture of faith; science is a culture of doubt.” Religion claims it has all the

“Religion claims it has all the answers. Science knows it does not.”

answers. Science knows it does not. It is this constant pursuit of self-correction and change in science that leads to true progress. When we blindly have faith in any ideas, progress halts.

The quintessential example of religious faith stopping science is Galileo Galilei’s house arrest by the Roman Catholic Inquisition when he began supporting heliocentrism (the Earth revolves around the sun) instead of the geocentric views supported by the church (the sun revolves around the Earth). Religious faith is an unreliable way to understand the world, as it is resistant to change, and correction. Galileo was officially prosecuted by the church in 1616. It was not until 1835 that the book in which Galileo promoted heliocentrism was unbanned by the church.

Science freely admits that it does not have all the answers. This is why it should be trusted over faith. Science has room to grow, room to correct itself, and



Adam Pierce

room to be further proven by the brightest minds of the world. Religion, on the other hand, often views any contradiction to its beliefs as an affront to its very nature. This is not conducive to any sort of system that can produce truths about the world.

Religion can have value in providing a unifying spirituality to communities. But when religion is extended to anything other than one’s personal spirituality, problems occur. When societies rely on religion rather than science to guide them, wars occur, progress is stalled, people are oppressed, and diversity is undermined. Faith cannot adapt, so conflicts occur. Science, meanwhile, is based on change, and questioning, and doubt. It can be proven false to allow for new theories, it can provide meaningful and current analysis to guide society, and it can give accurate ways to predict the natural world. Science’s strength is religion’s downfall: the ability to adapt.

Adam, 18, is from Camillus, N.Y., and attends the University of California-Berkeley. “In high school, I was an activist, advocating for increased staff diversity, increased anti-racist professional development, more districtwide support for students of color, and more,” Adam writes. “I was the salutatorian of my class, a member of the National Honor Society and the Spanish Honor Society, an AP Scholar with Distinction and the concertmaster of my high school’s symphony.”

FIFTH PLACE

‘Brainwashed’ into logic

FFRF awarded Andrew \$1,500.

By Andrew Delaney

“Of course, you don’t believe in God. You’ve been brainwashed your entire life by your atheist father,” said a Christian friend of mine, with absolutely no recognition of any irony. Nonetheless, her comment made me wonder, “What is the difference between brainwashing and educating?” My conclusion? One is based on fact.

While others attended bible camp, I watched science shows like “Myth-Busters” and “Nova,” and, from a young age, I would become entranced in scientific thought for hours. I became fascinated by science because principles would demonstrate themselves in reality, from realizing that crescent moons prove a spherical Earth to understanding that human tailbones insinuate evolution. Meanwhile, my Christian peers were convinced that a god created the universe in six days.

Science not only encourages questioning but requires it. In contrast, when a Christian inquires about the existence of God, they are told they lack “faith.”



Andrew Delaney

As someone who grew up with the nickname “Mr. What-If,” the imperviousness of religion to curiosity was depressing to me, while its embrace by science was exciting. Thus, I chose to trust science.

As I continue my education at the University of California-Berkeley, with a major in biochemistry, I am interested in a particular technology — CRISPR. However, I fear religion poses an obstacle to its success. CRISPR is a protein that acts

as a gene-editing tool with the potential to cure nearly all genetic diseases. Despite its promising results thus far, CRISPR remains underfunded, and the public is widely hesitant. Much of this skepticism is because CRISPR does not fall in line with Christianity. A theist may argue, “God created his children to be perfect. Why manipulate God’s creation?”

Yet, as is evident from the millions of people who suffer every year from genetic disease, humans are not without flaws. To provide an idea of the world’s priorities, in 2019, the Vatican’s net worth alone was 4 billion euros, while CRISPR Therapeutics, the largest CRISPR company by far, is worth 5 percent of that. This favoritism toward an outdated community spreading baseless claims about a technology that aims to save millions of lives is an example of just how irrational religion can make humans.

At times, science is accused of lacking appeal, but the intricate complexity that science weaves every aspect of the natural world into is nothing short of beautiful. The idea that one does not have to defend scripture in the face of compelling evidence otherwise is freeing. In turn, such freedom allows individuals to act more logically in every aspect of life.

My hope for the future is that science is understood not to be a field reserved for geniuses, but rather a beautiful story for the masses desperately in need of an ending.

Andrew, 18, is from Chicago and attends the University of California-Berkeley. “I grew up with a quiet atheist as a father and a Catholic mother,” Andrew writes. “I never was religious, although I’ve only publicly described myself as an atheist for about two years. In high school, I was the president of student council, co-captain of the basketball team, and an active member of the math team.”

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SIXTH PLACE

Thou shalt not mess with science

FFRF awarded Alexis \$1,000.

By Alexis Martin

While living in a Catholic household and protesting on behalf of Planned Parenthood, I could never escape the discussion of religion vs. science. Every Christmas, my family and I would sit in our family room, adorned by small crosses on the banister, and watch “The Ten Commandments.” I always enjoyed spending time with my family and watching the remarkable journey of Moses, until I began to formulate questions that neither my family nor the film could answer. As I grew older, I learned that Santa Claus, the Easter Bunny, the Tooth Fairy, and even princesses were all fairy tales, but how could I be so sure that Moses was not a fairy tale, too? I began to question

“ Science provided me with hope that religion never could.

the validity of the church’s teachings. Science provided me with hope that religion never could. At age 3, I survived Kawasaki disease, a very rare heart condition, and fully recovered with little damage. Whenever I ask my mother about that difficult time, she always begins with “By the grace of God . . .” However, God did not rush me to the hospital, provide me with an emergency IV, or perform an emergency echocardiogram. God also did not diagnose me with the disease that, if left untreated for two more days, would have left my heart muscles enlarged, the rhythm of my heart wavering, and prompted six words a parent should never hear: “You should prepare for the worst.” During that time in which I was in critical condition, I had the science behind heart monitors, IVs and my doctors’ medical degrees to thank. Unfortunately, a large portion of the U.S. population still chooses religion over science.



Alexis Martin

Recently, the Supreme Court agreed to hear the case of *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health*, which debates the right of women to have abortions after 15 weeks. Jackson Women’s Health is the only licensed abortion clinic in the state of Mississippi and is constantly inundated

by people carrying crosses and shouting “Abortion kills, Jesus saves.” The religious defense argues that once conception occurs, the embryo was created by God and should be treated as a child; however, the embryo still has no brain function at 15 weeks. Science has undoubtedly proven the fetus is not yet a person, but the Supreme Court has agreed to listen to the religious standpoint nonetheless. If religion supersedes science, this case could monumentally set back women’s reproductive rights. I trust science not only because it provides material explanations, but has also provided safe abortions to women in need and saved my life when I was 3. Alexis, 18, is from Reading, Pa., and attends the University of Miami.

“I am planning to double major in political science and international studies on the pre-law track,” Alexis writes. “My career goal is to become a civil rights lawyer and avid activist. I am a member of MoveOn and have participated in protests on behalf of Black Lives Matter and Pro-Choice, and want to continue to do so in college.”

SEVENTH PLACE

God is the virus

FFRF awarded Laura \$750.

By Laura Streminsky

In February 2020, I sat in a small Brooklyn studio apartment listening to a rabbi attribute the Covid-19 virus to progressive Jews. The virus, he said, is a sign of disapproval from God in response to the secularization of The Chosen People. His solution to the pandemic wasn’t masks or quarantines, but rather a religious awakening. I looked around the room expecting to find shared disbelief, but my fellow Jewish students didn’t seem at all fazed by the rabbi’s proclamation.

When people are taught to believe in faith as unequivocal truth, suffering is inevitable. We saw this in 2018, when anti-vaccination propaganda resulted in a large measles outbreak in Williamsburg’s Orthodox Jewish population. Even if rabbis encourage vaccinations (and many do), teaching people that religion has more merit than



Laura Streminsky

science breeds a distrust of institutions meant to protect public health. Similar circumstances are occurring now with the Covid-19 virus’ disproportionate impact

on Orthodox Jewish communities. Governmentally mandated precautions, like those regarding masks and social distancing, are repeatedly disregarded because insular communities function irrespective of federal or state law. They act based off of unfounded beliefs, even if those beliefs contribute to thousands of people dying.

I’m fortunate that I wasn’t raised religious. My parents sent me to Hebrew school and synagogue for a few years, but they treated my early belief in God just as they had my belief in the Tooth Fairy. For my parents, Jewish schools were more of a free babysitting service than anything else. So, after I eventually outgrew my faith and my peers didn’t, it shocked me to learn that many of them accepted dangerous advice from our religious leaders. When I think of the rabbi’s words now, it’s

“ I trust science over faith because science learns from mistakes, faith perpetuates them.

hard not to think of my friends and family who followed their faith and then turned to God to heal their lungs. I trust science over faith because science didn’t cause Borough Park’s hospitals to overflow with patients. I trust science over faith because science learns from mistakes, faith perpetuates them. I trust science over faith because science doesn’t wait for anyone’s idea of god(s) to fix our problems.

Laura, 17, is from Brooklyn, N.Y., and attends Boston University. “One of my biggest passions is animal rights,” Laura writes. “I will take any chance I can to fundraise for nonprofits that help neglected animals. As the leader of an animal rights club, I also advocate for environmentalism as part of my effort to minimize animal suffering. I hope to major in biology and eventually become a primary care physician.”

EIGHTH PLACE

HIV and homophobia: Epidemics of a nation

FFRF awarded Caleb \$500.

By Caleb Buell

The phrase is brandished on almost everything of national importance. Currency, monuments, capitols — all of these bear the four-word phrase signifying our nation’s motto: “In God We Trust.” It’s meant to encapsulate our faith in an “all-knowing, all-powerful protector,” one that we believe will guide us to our fullest potential. And yet, in hypocritical fashion, our nation often finds itself blaspheming scientific advancements in an attempt to honor God. Take the HIV/AIDS epidemic, for

example. Throughout the 1980s, human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) ravaged the United States. This disease attacks one’s immune system, and if left untreated, goes on to become Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), which then almost certainly resulted in death. By the end of 1984, roughly 8,000 Americans had contracted HIV, with approximately 3,500 succumbing to the disease. These numbers themselves are staggering, and it should have been enough to re-

“ There’s no doubt that efforts to find a cure [for HIV/AIDS] would have been accelerated had religious homophobia not stood as a barrier.

ceive widespread attention and spark major efforts to find a cure. However, there was one problem: Most of the victims were gay. The timing couldn’t have been worse, as HIV wasn’t the only epidemic plaguing the country. So, too, was the epidemic of homophobia, one charged by Christian beliefs that were heavily prominent through the era. As a result, the HIV/AIDS epidemic was viewed as a punishment



Caleb Buell

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Buell

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from God, one meant to discourage homosexual behavior and reinforce biblical values, and thus any attempts to bring the issue to national light never gained traction.

In fact, it wasn't until 1985, four years after the epidemic began, that President Reagan spoke about HIV,

and it wouldn't be until 36 years later that major breakthroughs would be made regarding a vaccine.

While some of this is certainly attributed to the period's lack of scientific knowledge, there's no doubt that efforts to find a cure would have been accelerated had religious homophobia not stood as a barrier.

And thus, the hypocrisy of "In God We Trust" is revealed. If we trust in an all-knowing, all-powerful God, then

we should not have stood in the way of scientific advancements that had the potential to save lives, as such advancements must have been brought forth by "Him." However, in a misguided attempt to follow "Christian" values, our nation allowed thousands upon thousands to die at the hands of HIV/AIDS.

Therefore, I do not subscribe to the motto "In God We Trust," because it serves as a grim reminder of my count-

less fellow LGBTQ+ members who lost their lives to the two epidemics plaguing this nation. Instead, in science I trust, because science is what has the power to end both of these epidemics, once and for all.

Caleb, 18, is from Kingsport, Tenn., and attends the University of Alabama, where Caleb plans to study chemistry, with minors in research and liberal arts. Caleb hopes to attend medical school in order to pursue his passion for neurology.

NINTH PLACE

Empiricism as gospel: A hymn against suffering

FFRF awarded Ashley \$400.

By Ashley Levstik

I remember the sticky thin paper, like pages from a bible, clinging to my face as I rested on my doctor's examination table. I was 8 years old and had pneumonia. My dad, a devout Catholic, did not take me to a priest when my fever passed 104 degrees. He drove me to my pediatrician, who gave me antibiotics, which I could have died without. As strong as Dad's faith in God was, his faith in expertly studied, repeatable, scientific solutions to ease my suffering was stronger.

Religion gives people a sense of community; a valuable asset in a chaotic and isolated world. But it cannot adequately address issues of physical human suffering, making religion an unacceptable schema to operate with-in when making decisions to alleviate suffering.

In fact, religion often suppresses

“Religion often suppresses our ability to help others in the name of blind faith in God.”

our ability to help others in the name of blind faith in God and his edicts. Take, for example, embryonic stem-cell research, which uses stem cells from an embryo before they have set upon a course of development, a trait only present in embryonic cells. While the Abrahamic religions were being developed, knowledge about gynecology and fetal development was severely limited. Today, some religious groups, like the Roman Catholic Church, ignore modern knowledge in favor of tradition. They oppose embryonic stem-cell research because they believe its equivalent to infanticide.

To apply uneducated ideas about a field of research which helps people with spinal cord injuries, type 1 diabetes, Parkinson's, Alzheimer's disease, heart disease, stroke, burns and cancer is just one example of how religious groups, who lack education and credibility in medicine, protest progress that would ease human suffering.

A weak, unstable society resulting



Ashley Levstik

from miseducation also promotes human suffering. When we ignore current scientific information in favor of unproven religious ideas, we promote ignorance and a society vulnerable to fear-mongering. The Covid-19 pandemic exemplifies the failures of religious teachings applied to public health. Because of the misinformation coming from religious groups, stating that the pandemic was punish-

ment for sin, it became very easy for people to blame Asian-Americans who supposedly brought the plague. Misinformation spread by the church was a contributing factor in the 150-percent increase in anti-Asian hate crimes, which caused many to suffer.

While I believe religion can be a comfort to some, it is more important that we minimize human suffering by taking the guidance of credible scientists rather than uneducated religious groups or individual leaders who enable and promote suffering. To help others and ease their pain is an essential part of our humanity; denying our humanity for the sake of religion is self-defeating.

Ashley, 17, is from Colorado Springs, Colo., and attends the University of Texas-San Antonio. "My interests include volunteer work for the group Too Little Children," Ashley writes. "We sew and distribute menstrual pads to women and girls in developing countries so they can go to school. During high school, I made the dean's list and president's list for my academic performance. Outside of school, I work part time to support my family and my education."

TENTH PLACE

It's not 'my time to die'

FFRF awarded Alaina \$300.

By Alaina Adderley

As a science-minded student, I can say without a doubt that I trust science over religion. I was raised to question the whys, hows and ifs of everything. Accepting something based on belief without proof goes against everything I am. Evidence and proof are key. Blind faith is mind-blowing to me.

I come from a nonreligious family, so my earliest memory of religion vs. science happened when I was 6 years old. I was spending the day with a friend whose family was extremely religious and there were tornado warnings in the area. I have an extreme fear of tornadoes, so I was very scared. Instead of assuring me that we would be safe because of facts, like knowing that radar tracks tornadoes or that we would follow safety precautions by going into a safe room, the mother of my friend told me "It's all in God's hands . . . if it's our time, it's just our time." That did nothing to ease my fears. I remember feeling scared that I was about to die because apparently "it was



Alaina Adderley

my time." It made an impression on my young mind. Instead of focusing on ways we could be safe, religion encourages people to just trust that whatever happens is supposed to happen . . . don't try to prevent it.

Meteorology is a particular interest of mine and what I plan to pursue as a career, so when I read about how, for hundreds of years, people believed

that any meteorological or geological event was because of angering deities, my scientific brain short-circuits. Knowing that this is the belief that many religious people have, I wonder how many lives could have been saved if only these people had taken more precautions or heeded the scientific warnings? I feel that any religious leaders who continue to promote religious works as explanations for natural disasters should be held to blame for the deaths. Teaching people that God will come for them when it's their time and that nothing can be done to stop God's will is reckless and dangerous.

Impeding scientific meteorology with religious beliefs is a dangerous and deadly practice. Science provides us with all the tools that we need to understand meteorology and geology, and to prevent disasters from being worse than they already are. I hope that society will soon rely less on religious reasons for disasters and understand the science behind them.

Alaina, 18, is from Buckfield, Maine, and attends Plymouth State University. "I'm a science nerd who plans to become a broadcast meteorologist so that I can combine my love of weather, performing

and travel," Alaina writes. "My family has traveled and lived all over the United States, predominately the Bible Belt, and have now settled in Maine, where I have found my place in a nonreligious area that fits me very well."

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High school essay contest honorable mentions

FFRF awarded honorable mentions to 17 high school students, with each receiving \$200.

Here are excerpts from their essays and their short bios. To read their entire essays, go to freethoughttoday.com.

Keeping Arkansas SAFE from religion

By Ainsley Anderson

I have chosen to put my faith, or rather trust, into science. My rationale is simple — faith and religion has and



Ainsley Anderson

continues to be detrimental to progress. In my home state of Arkansas, with a church on almost every corner, our state Legislature takes great pride in legislating in the name of God. In April, our legislature passed the Save Adolescents from Experimentation (SAFE) Act, putting Arkansas on the hate map again as the first state to pass a bill restricting access to gender-affirming health care for anyone under 18. During the session, a senator directly quoted the bible, voicing her support for the bill targeting the LGBTQ+ community.

These lawmakers often ignore the document that they so proudly stand behind when it supports their cause. The hypocrisy is pungent.

Ainsley, 18, lives in Little Rock, Ark., and attends Tulane University. “I was president of several clubs, including Junior Civitan, Women in STEM, and Young Democrats, and was also captain of the varsity girls soccer team,” writes Ainsley.

Aborting religious dominance

By Elizabeth Andraschko

Equity for minorities will not be achieved until scientific evidence replaces religious influence in health care.



Elizabeth Andraschko

Continuing to withhold abortions despite the research discouraging restrictions demonstrates how religious leaders utilize spirituality to mask their intentions of maintaining

dominance over people with the ability to give birth. Thoughts and prayers will not impact maternal mortality prevention nor terminate fertilization by rape, but safe abortions can. Our leaders must replace their outdated, unfounded religious beliefs with scientifically authenticated legislation to promote equity of all genders and their rights to reproductive health care.

Elizabeth, 19, is from Spring Park, Minn., and attends the University of Wisconsin. “I intend to graduate and begin my career in New Zealand,” Elizabeth writes. “Eventually, I would like to move back to the United States and have a leadership role in the EPA, working toward the mitigation and replacement of fossil fuels with sustainable energy.”

In skepticism I trust

By Benjamin Ash

Religion must defeat skepticism and demand unquestioning faith from its believers or else it will eventually cease



Benjamin Ash

to exist. For this reason, faith is prioritized over scientific thought often because it seems to promise immovable certainty and celestial security.

Faith cannot co-exist with skepticism: When one admits that the whale didn’t swallow Jonah, it is a slippery slope to the church’s irrelevance.

My trust does not lie in those who say they are correct, but admit that they may be wrong. Benjamin, 17, is from Gilbert, Ariz., and attends Arizona State University. “I am an aspiring writer, having won an honorable mention at the National Scholastic Writing Competition and a second-place award in the National Youth Classical League essay contest,” Benjamin writes. “I aim to be a university history professor, with an undergraduate double major in history and political science and a minor in East Asian studies.”

Ignorance leads to death

By Neil Dervis

My constant skepticism ensures that I make well-informed decisions and do not believe information at face value.



Neil Dervis

Some of the more religiously inclined individuals have put themselves and their families at risk by believing that God and faith in religion will protect them from the threat of the Covid-19. This false sense of security, while initially comforting to them, is dangerous because choosing to ignore the facts and science about the disease and relying on faith alone could result ultimately in sickness and death. This lack of trust in science and misplaced trust in religion could cost people their lives and the lives of those they love.

Neil, 18, is from Oviedo, Fla., and attends the University of Central Florida. “My mother and stepfather created the Central Florida Free-thought Community,” Neil writes. “As I grew up, they gave me responsibility for the organization’s sales of merchandise. Every summer, I visited my dad, who is a civil engineer, in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.”

Facts over fear

By Shamsul Haque

For centuries, civilizations have turned to religion to justify their actions and unexplained phenomena. But when it comes



Shamsul Haque

to solutions to real-world issues, only science has been proven to provide us protection. In fact, religion proved to be a barrier to a swifter recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic.

If humans trusted facts over faith, thousands of lives could have been saved.

Despite all evidence proving the effectiveness of vaccines against the virus, many worshippers refuse vaccinations based on falsehoods. Many renounce vaccines believing that they are developed from aborted fetuses, contain pig gelatin or that vaccines decrease fertility.

Shamsul, 17, is from Springfield, Va., and attends the University of Virginia. “Ever since I was young, I have been interested in science,” Shamsul writes. “In high school, I tutored peers for three years and expect to continue tutoring while in college. I intend to major in engineering then pursue an entrepreneurship in the field to help those less fortunate.”

Evolution and religion in Arkansas

By Trinitey Hayward

When a large portion of Americans disregard a repeatedly confirmed scientific theory, it has an impact on how quickly the field can progress. Public opinion does affect how easily scientists can study a topic. Arkansas lawmakers passed a law that banned teaching evolution in schools because they feared it would make Christianity less credible. (Luckily, a Supreme Court ruling made this unconstitutional.)

These actions are direct attacks against science and logic. I trust in science because it does not require faith — it only needs objectivity. Trinitey, 18, is from Harrison, Ark., and attends the University of Arkansas. “My major is in finance because I would love to spend my time helping the disadvantaged better their financial situations,” Trinitey writes. “I have not been allowed to attend protests due to my parents’ rules, but I plan on attending protests while living on campus.”

Trinitey Hayward

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Science, sexuality and religion

By Anna Hendrick

While growing up, I also began to understand and see how people who claim to follow faiths that preach kindness and love use that same faith to perpetuate hatred and backward ideals that harm our society’s progress. Many people — most notably the very religious — refuse to accept homosexuality as natural, advocate for discriminatory laws and practices, and even turn to outright hate. It is frustrating to see a group of people who preach kindness reject people so violently while also showing a complete disregard for scientific research and fact. This has made religion even more difficult for me to accept, and it has led me to believe that religion has no place in politics or in state or nationwide policy.

Anna, 18, is from Virginia Beach, Va., and attends the College of William and Mary. “I attended numerous summer camps for STEM, and took science courses at a local university instead of at my high

school for two years,” Anna writes. “I am also a member of the International Youth Neuroscience Association, and I attended the 2020 International Neuroethics Society Conference. I plan to pursue a double major in neuroscience and Japanese with a possible minor in biochemistry.”

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Why we should have ‘faith’ in science

By Neha Kumar

Since its discovery, penicillin has been estimated to have saved 200 million human lives. The same cannot be said about Jesus Christ. If it could, why build hospitals? Why educate doctors?



Neha Kumar

If human life was in the hands of a god, it would not be necessary for the world to race to develop a vaccine for Covid-19 as tens of thousands of lives are lost daily.

Science recognizes that every life holds significant value, we are not a pawn of any higher being, we are our own beings. Devoting mental capacity to dated theories that no longer apply to the world we have created for ourselves only prevents innovation.

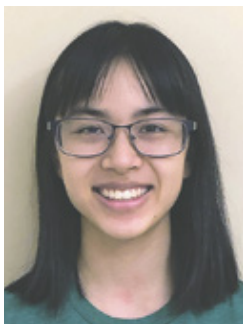
Neha, 18, of Dover, Del., attends New York University. “I am a retired competitive gymnast of nine years and worked at my local gymnastics facility, teaching toddlers the basics of gymnastics,” Neha writes. “I was part of my school’s varsity tennis team, was president of the DECA chapter, as well as an active member of the Business Professionals of America (BPA), in which I won numerous state titles.”

Religion: Unscientific stalling in the face of urgency

By Isabel Li

In the face of a scientifically supported issue, they seek refuge in the bible, maintain that God is in control of the world and that rising temperatures are intentional.

Today’s world is in a dire situation where governments need to decide between climate action and inaction in a scientifically proven climate crisis; the situation is far too urgent to involve religion while waiting for divine intervention.



Isabel Li

We constantly rally and fight for systematic change supported by credible scientists and science-based organizations worldwide, but such widespread change cannot occur when heavy reliance on religion blurs the lines between fact and faith.

Isabel, 17, is from Temple City, Calif., and attends Scripps College. “I was a volunteer manager for the youth climate activism organization This is Zero Hour,” Isabel writes. “As someone who advocates for systematic change in response to the climate crisis, I will also be studying environmental analysis along with media studies. In the future, I hope to produce film projects that emphasize the need for climate action, as well as promote green practices based in science.”

The repercussions of faith during the pandemic

By **Adrianna Martinez-Lainez**
From the beginning, my family and I took the pandemic seriously — my relatives did not.

They refused to wear masks, social distance and continued to travel. They went so far as to claim God was their vaccine.

It is the 21st century and we have more access to data than ever before, but people still choose to ignore science when it defies their religious beliefs.

Because of this, I will always choose science over faith.

Adrianna, 18, of Phoenix, attends Seattle University. “Through the Girls Who Code program, I learned what programmers do, how technology is shaping our future, and why it is important to have different perspectives in tech,” Adrianna writes. “I participated in the Google Code Next Program and Google’s Computer Science Summer Institute, an intensive four-week introduction to computer science for rising college freshmen.”

Life before birth

By **Eliane Odefey**
Texas Gov. Greg Abbott went on to sign S.B. 8, widely known as the heartbeat bill into law, which banned almost all abortions later than six weeks after conception. Science shows that, at six weeks, the embryo is only as big as a grain of rice and barely recognizable as a growing life form. Unfortunately, many religious people continue to push the idea that personhood begins at conception. Their persistence and roles in the lawmaking process have created laws, such as SB 8 in Texas, that stem from religious principles.

It is times like these, when the safety and freedom of all are compromised to cater to the beliefs of the few, that I question the priorities of our country. In what world can science be so easily overlooked and discounted?

Eliane, 18, of Waterbury, Vt., attends Middlebury College. “I plan to be an architectural studies major with a minor in Spanish,” Eliane writes. “I enjoy outdoor sports such as skiing and paddle boarding and also volunteer with local resettled people.”

Have faith in the facts

By **Carlin Padgett**
When faith and religion hold the trust of society, we see the misuse of power, and harm to humanity. The HIV/AIDS epidemic within the United States is a fascinating example of scientific theory versus religion



Carlin Padgett

belief. Before science could develop any inkling of an understanding for this disease, religion swooped in. Religious believers claimed that God brought down this disease to smite out homosexuality.

We have evidence that trusting in science saves lives. Trusting in faith without evidence is deadly. Carlin, 18, is from Moxee, Wash., and attends Western Washington University. “I am currently planning on being a business and sustainability major, which combines economics with environmental science,” Carlin writes. “My family owns a struggling small business that I often help out at in my free time. I also work part time at a winery.”

Evolutionary insight

By **Haden Ringel**
Faith fundamentally fails to explain the details and the nuance of the larger questions of the universe and our existence in it.

While I can conceive of religion and science co-existing to answer different questions, ultimately, I believe we must champion a scientific and rational worldview for the resolution of public policy. Rigorous enforcement of the separation between church and state and a reliance on science represent the only effective means of furthering a fair, just and humane society for all Americans. Haden, 17, is from Denver and attends the University of Chicago. “I have always had a keen interest in politics and government,” Haden writes. “I worked on a campaign for governor in Colorado and then interned for a senator in the Colorado state Senate. I also paralleled my political interests with corresponding legal interests and participated in my school’s Constitutional Law Team and served as a student attorney at a local Teen Court.”

Religion: Salvation or weapon?

By **Gavin Ruby**
Religion is not some private, benign practice. It is a weapon wielded by the powerful. It is used to secure their position at the top of the hierarchy, legitimize harmful beliefs and actions, and oppress those they deem inferior.



Gavin Ruby

Science has, and continues to be, the foremost expression of our understanding of our environment. It is through scientific analysis and the application of our findings that we continue to improve our standards of living and technological capabilities. The application of science put us on the moon and gave us electricity. The application of religion has given us seemingly endless conflicts.

Gavin, 18, is from Aldie, Va., and attends the University of Colorado-Boulder. “I’m going to be an aerospace engineering student and I hope to pursue a master’s in the same field, and then work at NASA’s JPL facility in California,” Gavin writes. “I participated in NASA programs at Wallops Flight Facility and Langley Research Center in high school.”

Facts vs. faith

By **Garret Snitchler**
While many say that the times of science and religion warring are behind us, events as recent as Covid-19 can prove that there is still a large group that chooses faith over science.

Science is not a matter of faith. It is an international, decentralized force of social progress and learning that should not need to be “believed in.” The world learned many things during 2020, and one of the most important lessons was the importance of science. It can only be hoped that, with new leadership that listens to scientists, the United States can recover from the damage it has sustained.

Garret, 18, is from Norfolk, Neb., and attends the University of Nebraska. “I am a software engineering major that has always wanted to program computers for a living,” Garret writes. “I also play tennis, and was on the Norfolk High School boys tennis team. I was a lifeguard for the past four years and have saved multiple lives.”

The religious method

By **Josiah Wilson**
Since science begins with observations, it is far more reliable than faith, which begins with its conclusions already set in stone. Since faith-based religions claim that their conclusions are divinely inspired, they cannot afford to change their minds.



Josiah Wilson

If a single “divinely inspired” belief turned out to be wrong, it would invalidate all the others. Therefore, religion only seeks out evidence that justifies its conclusions.

This is why science is more reliable than religion. When a scientifically reached conclusion is wrong, it has a good chance of being disproven. Josiah, 17, is from Greenwood, Ind., and attends Indiana State University. “I have spent time as part of a troop in Trail Life USA scouting program, musical theater, and have volunteered for an assortment of causes,” Josiah writes. “My goal is to graduate debt free with a degree in information technology.”

Duality

By **Ares Zhang**
Defined by painstaking hypotheses rooted in fact, there is no judgment or variance in Newton’s Law or the periodic table. While religious leaders still struggle with uniting their respective followers over modern issues incompatible with the archaic beliefs of old, such as attempts to merge religion and evolution, science is universal throughout, with institutions of science across the world able to collaborate on the same theories. The debate over Jesus’ existence or the proper way to interpret the Quran continues, but the works of Galileo and Einstein live on because science is rooted in recorded results and evidence, not stories and speculations. Ares, 17, is from Camas, Wash., and attends the University of Washington-Tacoma. “I was an outreach director at a nonprofit for remote tutoring, a varsity swimmer, a member of the Key Club, National Honor Society, and Green Team,” Ares writes. “I hope to channel my love for teaching and serving others into the health care field.”

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By Orvin Larson

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Freethought Matters returns Sept. 5

Go To: ffrf.org/freethought-matters or visit FFRF’s YouTube Freethought Matters playlist at bit.ly/37yVce9

Happy birthday to our secular Constitution!

By John Compere

The U.S. Constitution will be 234 years old on Sept. 17th, which is Constitution Day. This annual national observance commemorates the day in 1787 when our Constitution was signed by 39 Founders at the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia. It also celebrates American citizenship.

Knowledge of constitutional history is lamentably lacking, although educational programming is federally mandated. Understanding begins with our original establishment and governing document — the Constitution itself.

The Constitution's Preamble states six secular reasons our nation was created by and for "We the People." The Constitution establishes our secular democratic government. The Bill of Rights (first 10 Amendments) provides our individual liberties (1791). The 14th Amendment guarantees all persons born or naturalized in the United States are citizens and citizens of the state where they reside (1868).

The Constitution created three separate and equal government branches for a check and balance on power. The legislative branch enacts law (Article I), executive branch executes law (Article II), and judicial branch interprets law with authority on all Constitution cases (Article III).

Article V provides only two ways to amend the Constitution: (1) constitutional convention requiring two-thirds of state legislatures to convene and enact amendment, then ratification by three-fourths



John Compere



Image by Shutterstock

of states (0 amendments); or (2) amendment enactment by two-thirds of Congress, then ratification by three-fourths of states (27 amendments).

Many Americans do not know what our Constitution says regarding religion, according to the Pew Research Center. The Constitution contains no deity reference and Article VI commands that "No religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States." (This lawfully separates religion from government and protects government from religion).

The First Amendment provides our historic trinity of religious liberties: 1. Freedom from government established or endorsed religion.

2. Freedom of religion or no religion.

3. Freedom for religious speech (lawfully separating government from religion and protecting religion from government).

Government neutrality is required regarding religion (neither anti-religion nor pro-religion, but religion-neutral). The genesis of the First Amendment was the 1785 Virginia Religious Freedom Statute, authored by Thomas Jefferson and James

Madison, which mandated "No man shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship, place, or ministry whatsoever."

The United States was the first nation in history that was independently established by and for the people, without acknowledging a higher authority (emperor, monarch, dictator, deity, religion, scripture, etc.). There were no public prayers opening or closing the 116-day Constitutional Convention. James Madison reminded delegates of the secular purpose: "This is derived from the superior power of the people."

More than 80 percent of colonists did not belong to religion establishments in 1776. More than 50 percent of Americans are not members of a church, synagogue or mosque today.

It is fact: History and law show that our Constitution created a secular republic, not one based on a religion. The 1797 Treaty of Tripoli publicly proclaimed to the world: "The United States of American is not in any sense founded on the Christian religion." This international legal document was negotiated and written during President George Washington's first ad-

ministration, unanimously ratified by the Senate and signed by second President John Adams.

World history records the human harm caused when governments and religions combine. Separation of church and state is a liberty of free people keeping government out of religion and religion out of government originating during the 18th Century European Age of Enlightenment. It was clearly intended by our Founders as provided by their governing documents, indisputably documented by historic records, publicly acknowledged by presidents since the nation's founding and judicially confirmed as the law of our land. Even Jesus allegedly separated government and religion (Matthew 22:21; Mark 12:17).

The United States became the first nation to constitutionally provide freedom of belief and a model for the historic Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations in 1948, declaring "Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion."

Native American contribution and influence have also been officially acknowledged: "The contribution of the Iroquois Confederation of Nations to the development of the United States Constitution" and "the confederacy of the original 13 colonies into one republic was influenced by the political system developed by the Iroquois Confederacy as were many of the democratic principles which were incorporated into the Constitution itself." (100th US Congress Resolution)

We are one nation under our Constitution. It is the Constitution in which we trust. We celebrate with patriotic pride our American Constitution and citizenship.

FFRF Member John Compere is a retired Texas lawyer, retired U.S. judge and Texas rancher.

THEY SAID WHAT?

The bible and the Constitution are not supposed to be separate.

Josh Mandel, candidate for U.S. Senate and former Ohio state representative.
Twitter, 7-2-21

It would be a real pleasure to lacerate your body with my nicest knife and leave it to rot in the woods.

N'Aissita, an 18-year-old female psychology student reacting to a post by a 16-year-old French girl for saying, "I hate religion. The Koran is a religion of hatred." Thirteen people are being tried for online harassment of her.
The New York Times, 7-6-21

He's helped out where he could. He's offered to call donors. We actually had our first D.C. march because he called me and he said, "You need to go to the Supreme Court." I said, "All right, my captain."

Far-right activist and devout Catholic Ali Alexander, leader of the "Stop the Steal" movement, praising U.S. Rep. Paul Gosar, who has ties to racists, white supremacists and the white Christian identity movement.
The New York Times, 7-6-21

There's a big misconception when it comes to separation of church and state. It never meant that Christians shouldn't be involved in politics. It's just loving the city. Being engaged. Our children are in public schools. Our cars are on public streets. The reality is that people who don't align with the church have hijacked everything. If I ever get elected, my only al-

legiance will be to the Lord.

Steve Penate, former Fort Worth mayoral candidate, in the article, "An American Kingdom," with the subhead "A new and rapidly growing Christian movement is openly political, wants a nation under God's authority, and is central to Donald Trump's GOP."
Washington Post, 7-11-21

I don't know about you guys, but I think climate change is — as Lord Monckton said — bulls—. By the way, it is.

Wisconsin Sen. Ron Johnson, referring to British conservative climate change denier Lord Christopher Monckton, when Johnson was speaking to Republican Women of Greater Wisconsin Luncheon in Wauwatosa, Wis.
Wisconsin State Journal, 7-8-21

Do you believe in God?

Sen. John Kennedy, questioning assistant attorney general nominee Hampton Dellinger, who had said, "If there were no Republican men in elected office, there would be no abortion bans."
Salon.com, 7-28-21

It's happening. When more scientists are saying there's an intelligence behind the universe, that's basically what the Templeton Foundation is about: We don't live in only a materialistic world. Francis Collins drove home that in every single cell in your body there's a code of

several billion instructions. Could that be chance? No. There's no actual reason why things should be the way they are, and chance mutations couldn't possibly lead to the complexity of life on earth. This blurring between science and religion is happening more and more. Scientists are more willing to talk about it.

Famed biologist Jane Goodall, after receiving the 2021 Templeton Foundation Award.
Salt Lake Tribune, 5-21-21

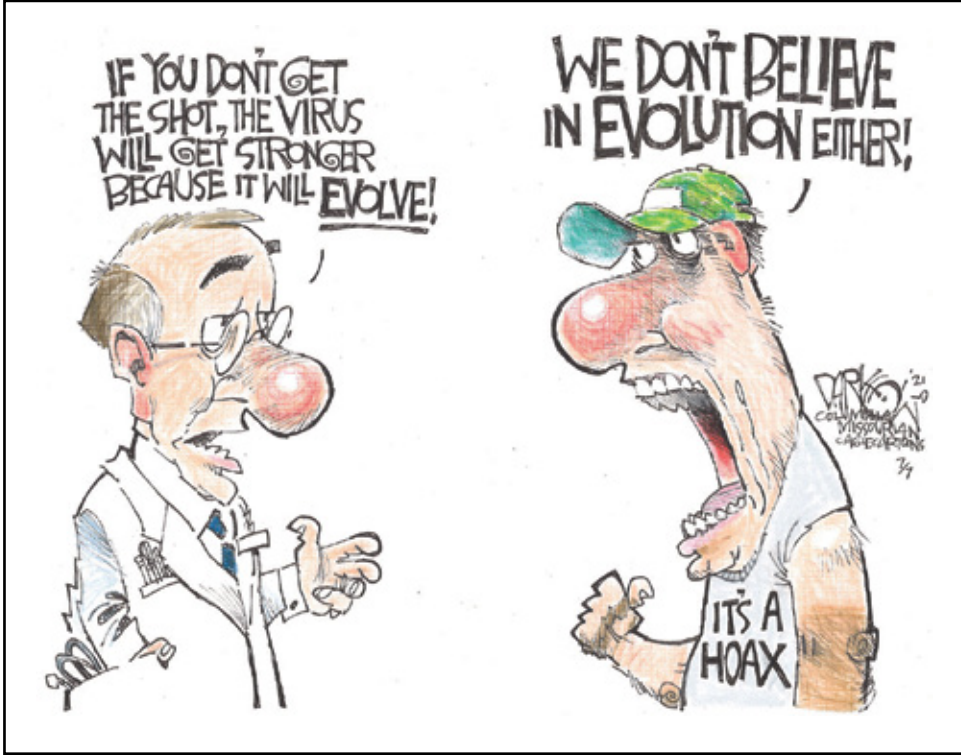
The easiest way to make the delta variant go away is to turn off CNN. And

vote Republican.

U.S. Rep. Lauren Boebert, in a since-deleted tweet.
Forbes, 7-12-21

Think about what those mechanisms could be used for. They could then go door-to-door to take your guns. They could go door-to-door to take your bibles.

U.S. Rep. Madison Cawthorn, speaking of the Biden administration's plan to go door-to-door to reach millions of unvaccinated Americans.
The New York Times, 7-19-21



LETTERBOX

Thanks to those who pay for FFRF billboards

The newest FFRF billboards are eye-catching and brilliant!

It's possible that another member-funded billboard also caught my eye a couple of Decembers ago when I was riding in a taxi. From a distance, I recognized a classic FFRF billboard illustration and tingled with frisson as the taxi drew close enough to read the header. I was harshly prevented from reading, when the driver shrieked, "Don't look at that!" She took her eyes off the road for so long that, fearing a collision, I bellowed back "Keep your eyes on the road!" It was a terrifying moment. So, when Freethought Today reported on the member who received death threats after funding an anti-religious billboard, I wondered whether it was the same one. If it was, then I offer my profound thanks. I regret that we never met. Thank you and best wishes to the new billboard patron, too.

Wisconsin

Book highlights how religion got us into war

I highly recommended the book by Laurence Moore and Isaac Kramnick, *Godless Citizens in a Godly Republic*, whether you "believe" or not!

From the book, with reference to Guardian newspaper records:

Then President George W. Bush pointed to his faith as the reason for embarking on war: "I am driven with a mission from God. God told me, 'George, go and fight these terrorists in Afghanistan.' And I did. And then God would tell me, 'George, go and end the tyranny in Iraq.' And I did."

Indeed, Bush did, backed by lies about Iraq's WMDs and his desire to get Osama bin Laden, which he soon lost interest in, leaving it to President Obama to neutralize.

Where is "God" now to help clean up the mess that he inspired godly G.W. Bush to make worse in his name?

California

Editor's Note: *Godless Citizens* is available at ffrf.org/shop.

Puzzle in paper made me crossword enthusiast

I recently became a member of Freedom From Religion Foundation. After quickly scanning through my copy of Freethought Today, I immediately return to the crossword puzzle [created by FFRF Member Katya Maes]. I've never been a crossword puzzle enthusiast, but this puzzle gets me every time! It's a gem!

California

Red Pill Festival is by and for oddballs

In Helena, Mont., the "Red Pill Festival prescribes conservatism, conspiracies," according to the local newspaper headline. The Red Pill event pushes for the community to adopt Christian values by running conservative candidates for school boards, city councils and county commissions.

During the festival, you'll hear opinions that the government spread Covid-19 in the air, much like



FFRF placed this provocative message on two billboards outside Dickson, Tenn., thanks to local member Frank Stiver.

crop-dusting, that the government is planting microchips in people via the vaccine, and that civil war could be averted if women stayed where they belong — at home, and presumably, pregnant. I am relieved that only 200 oddballs went to the festival. But even 200 oddballs are too many.

It is gratifying that church attendance is down and membership in FFRF is up.

Montana

Give 'em a taste of their own medicine

FFRF's two most recent Freethought Today papers were exceptional. Especially loved, in the August issue, was Gary Wills' column on U.S. bishops being wrong about Biden and abortion, and Sage Miller's essay about when he found his irreligion. And the page 1 article about the Trump White House working with Ralph Drollinger's Capitol Ministries is positively hair-raising.

In commenting on Lee Leimberg's letter to the editor, I'd like to add how I handle unwanted religious proselytizers who appear at my door. When I answer the door, and they (always two) identify themselves, I exclaim cheerily, "Oh, I have something I'd like to read to you!" They always smile hopefully. I then commence reading Marilla Ricker's fine words: "A religious person is a dangerous person. He may not become a thief or a murderer, but he is liable to become a nuisance. He carries with him many foolish and harmful superstitions. That is what makes trouble. Nothing is so worthless as superstition."

By this time, the abashed visitors are slowing backing away. If they back away before I have finished reading the piece, I follow them down the driveway. This stops the unsavory interruption in my day.

Wisconsin

Jan. 6 Capitol attack was religionist insurrection

Regarding the Jan. 6 insurrection, failed coup, and lethal attack on the U.S. Capitol, perhaps you remember the flags, banners and signs reading "Jesus Saves" and "Trump Is President, Christ Is King."

Those folks holding those signs weren't separated from their tour groups; they were there to represent a very broad contributing factor to that traitorous action: religion. We

know that Rep. Liz Cheney is missing or disregarding this fundamental element of that day because in her remarks to the committee investigating that incident, she stated, "But, in the end, we are one nation under God."

No, we are NOT one nation under God, no matter how much believers want to make that true. Our rights in America are based on the U.S. Constitution, which has no more to do with Jesus than our country has to do with Allah, Jupiter, Kali, Shiva or Thor.

I believe we must directly confront the threat of white Christian supremacy to our nation.

Hawaii

Why should churches get a tax exemption?

I enjoyed reading the winning law student essays on issues concerning the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. While doing so, it occurred to me that I have long been disturbed by the IRS tax exemption granted to churches, which seems to be an arrangement that intrudes upon the separation of church and state, at least insofar as the rationale for doing so involves considering churches to be some form of charitable organization. Are they? I think not, since the revenue they collect goes mostly, if not entirely, to promote and maintain their own self-serving needs.

While doing a bit of research on the tax exemption question, I found an article from the Los Angeles Times (Sept. 23, 2008), and thought that it would be of interest to Freethought Today readers. You can read it here: lat.ms/2TKuewY

I'm looking forward to attending my first FFRF convention in November.

California

Superintendent deserved to be chastised by FFRF

I just wanted to thank you for chastising the Miami-Dade Public Schools superintendent for his outrageous religious graduation speech. I am a product of that school system. My parents taught in it, my friends teach in it, and I am still an active property taxpayer in that county. I want everyone I know to see this as an outrage.

I used to think he was a good superintendent, but no longer. I don't think this would have happened in 1973 when I graduated high school, however. The religious groups, in-

cluding the American Association for Christian Athletes, were given free rein to operate on school grounds.

I hated it then, and I hate it today. Thank you for the great work you do in protecting our democracy and freedoms.

Florida

Insect's name just needs one letter changed

Just catching up on my reading of the May issue and saw the letter from Dave Glenn in response to the praying mantis cartoon from the March issue. Dave suggested a new name for this insect, focusing on how its front legs, which resemble praying hands, in fact are claws used to grip victims so they can be eaten alive.

I see no need to change the name, just one letter of the spelling. Instead of praying mantis, preying mantis. That would also serve us well when clergy or leaders say, "Let us pray," when perhaps their intention is "let us prey."

New York

Not everything is black or white, up or down

In general, much of humankind has not learned to critically think in the "gray zone."

Many bipolar positions that are emphatically touted take on the essence of being right or wrong, good or evil, always or never, left or right, up or down, everything or nothing, atheistic or theistic.

The motivation to live life with extreme convictions may be an unconscious attempt to reduce existential fears and anxieties surrounding and understanding the ultimate unknown — death.

People often take a firm position of belief rather than accept that most of life's challenges fall in the "in-between or sometimes" category. Many answers that we seek will probably remain unknown. The trick to achieving peace of mind is to not stop pondering, but rather to stop concluding.

Pennsylvania

The Christian god's name is not God, it's Jealous

I wish to make a clarification: "God" is not a personal name.

It is what one is alleged to be, not whom one is alleged to be. Just like a CEO is a CEO, like a car is a car, and a dog is a dog.

People, by and large, are truly ignorant of the fact that the "Abrahamic" deity has a name. "Do not worship any other god, for the lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous god." (Exodus 34:14)

Jealousy is a petty human emotion. Therefore, the man-made, flawed deity figure, is not a god.

Texas

Communion just another of the fictions of bible

The Catholic Church's communion ritual has always baffled me.

According to the bible (Matthew 5:17), Jesus (a devout Jew) spoke these words: "Do not imagine that I have come to abolish the law. . . In truth I tell you, until heaven and

Earth disappear, not one dot . . . is to disappear from the law.”

Well, Mosaic law forbids drinking blood. Isn't it reasonable then, to surmise that not even figuratively would Jesus invite his disciples to drink his blood? Even supposing that the Last Supper actually took place, that repulsive, cannibalistic juxtaposition of the wine of the Eucharist turning into the blood of Jesus is just another among the bible's many fictional stories.

California

Best, worst to uphold state/church separation

The best record for upholding the separation of church and state goes to Thomas Jefferson.

While James Madison was the workhorse in terms of the separation of church and state, Jefferson was the trailblazer, making the defense of religious liberty one of the hallmarks of his career. Jefferson was considered a Deist who valued reason over revelation and rejected traditional Christian doctrines, including the virgin birth and resurrection of Jesus. Jefferson won the presidency in 1801 after a vicious campaign in which he was vilified as an atheist. A man of contradictions, even today the slaveholding Jefferson is seen as an icon of individual liberty.

The worst record for upholding the separation of church and state goes to Dwight D. Eisenhower.

A deeply religious man, Eisenhower was the first and only president to write and read his own prayer at his inaugural ceremony. In 1954, Eisenhower signed into law adding the phrase “under God” to the Pledge of Allegiance. Two years later, Eisenhower signed a law officially declaring “In God We Trust” to be the nation’s official motto (supplanting “E Pluribus Unum”) and also mandating that the phrase be printed on all American paper currency.

Ohio

Abortion choice shouldn't need any explanation

I'm a new Lifetime Member. Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the discourse!

And thank you to letter writer Brianna Knoppow (August issue) for making the excellent point that we shouldn't be supporting rape/incest exceptions to anti-abortion laws. Not only do they codify the idea that women should have a reason that is approved by someone else in order to have an abortion, the incest clause doesn't even make sense. Is it about a biblical injunction against incest? Is it coded language for a fetus who may have genetic differences that re-

Crossword answers

C	H	O	P	S		B	I	T		F	I	V	E		
L	A	N	A	I		E	R	E		A	L	D	E	R	
A	L	I	S	T		R	A	M		P	A	L	E	R	
N	O	T	H	I	N	G		P	I	N	K	E	R		
			A	N	A			R	I	T	E				
A	P	I			G	I	B	E		D	I	L	L	E	R
M	O	N	T		R	E	S	T		C	E	A	S	E	
I	N	D	O		A	L	P	H	A		F	U	S	S	
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C	L	O	D			N	E	E		A	R	A	K	S	

Centenarian celebration



FFRF Member Darrell Barker, right, celebrates the 100th birthday of atheist Ken Lyon on July 31.

“I met Ken while attending a philosophy club in Olympia, Wash., in 2017,” Darrell writes. “My wife Suzi and I were impressed with how lucid his mind was at age 97. Ken told me that when he was 14, he attended many churches and then thoroughly thought through the smorgasbord of religions to consider. At age 18, Ken abdicated his belief in a God and embraced the morality of atheism.”

sult in a disability? If the latter, then it is ableist, and inconsistent — why isn't the right supporting abortion exceptions for disabilities in general (which we also shouldn't support)?

Abortion should be a woman's right and a woman's choice, without explanation or excuses. The term ‘rape or incest’ has been in the exception language for so long that I think we often forget to question it.

Minnesota

Georgia sheriffs ram religion down our throats

Thank you all for getting on the sheriff of Polk County, Ga., regarding his religious proselytizing. He, and my sheriff in Bartow County, Ga., continue to ram all this religion stuff

down our throats. Every time I see a government (county) vehicle with “In God We Trust” on it, I cuss. And I, as a 38-year resident, helped pay for it. Why should that be there?

Georgia

Making abortion illegal won't stop abortions

Many thanks to the FFRF staff for consistently bringing timely and interesting articles to us with each edition of Freethought Today. I found the article “Pro-lifers disregard for pregnant people” by Monica Hesse in the August issue to be very informative and thought-provoking.

It's important for us to understand that the Religious Right is actually waging a war on a woman's right to obtain a safe and legal termination of her pregnancy, all the while believing that they will be stopping all abortion procedures. But abortion will still not be stopped.

We need to remember what that was like before *Roe v. Wade*. Many will die or suffer from severe infection with resulting infertility. Women who are found out and the providers who performed the procedures will face fines and prison time.

As Hesse pointed out so well, it ultimately comes down to denying women the right to decide for themselves what is best for them both physically and mentally. In no other

Write to us

To send a letter to the editor for Freethought Today, please email it to editor@ffrf.org.

area of medicine is a person forced to undergo risky procedures or medical treatment without their consent after the risks and benefits have been clearly explained. Once a woman is denied the right to terminate a pregnancy, she is in effect being forced to undergo a process/procedure that has very real risks and life-changing consequences.

Will the majority of the U.S. population allow the minority to force this upon us? I can only hope not!

Florida

How does God justify its existence?

Thank you for Freethought Today. I read it religiously.*

The article by Ann L. Lorac in the June/July issue raised an interesting point which triggered a question which I have never heard addressed. Her sibling asked, “What is the purpose of living if there is no god?” But I have never heard anyone ask what is the purpose of God? How does God justify its existence?

You previously received a letter suggesting that you reduce or eliminate the Crankmail** and Black Collar Crime sections. Please do not do that. I always enjoy reading them, even though they are often horrifying. Apparently, no one can hate like a really religious person. Similarly, no one can justify cruel or vicious conduct like a really religious person. Keep up the good work!

New York

* Sorry, I could not resist.

** I see it as hate mail.

Freethinkers' voices still being dismissed

Relating to James A. Haught's column in the August issue, he gives us examples of how and why freethinkers' voices are not welcome in most media. But one thing stands out in his column and the historical record: Religions fight dirty.

Christianity alone has shoved its doctrines on innocent children and societies for centuries. During most of that time, it has killed, suppressed, jailed and banished individuals who have not agreed with its interpretation of reality.

In all that time, however, it has never proven its claim to be true. Yet, we have been made to hear only its side of things, while our voices are still being dismissed and denied. Isn't it time we demand equal time?

Thomas Jefferson regarded religions as “opinions” and said, “No man has a right to force his opinions on another.” Yet, here we are in the 21st century, dealing with religious privilege, exceptions to laws and the allowance to discriminate based on religion, supported by a government and legal system established to prevent anyone's opinions from claiming exemptions to the laws made to protect everyone.

Maine



The Boston Park Plaza is site of FFRF’s 2021 national convention, Nov. 19-21.

Photo by Bruce Johnson

Convention information

Hotel reservations

The convention hotel is the Boston Park Plaza, 50 Park Plaza at Arlington St., Boston. The convention rate is \$189 single, double, triple or quad. Suites are \$389 and up. Attendees should call the Central Reservations Office (617-379-7129). Please ask for “Freedom From Religion Annual Convention.” The hotel will discount self-parking to \$30 per day at Motor Mart Garage.

The cut-off date for reserving rooms is 5 p.m. Eastern on Oct. 18, 2021. *FFRF urges you to plan ahead and reserve early to avoid disappointment.*

Meals

In addition to offering several complimentary food or dessert receptions, the convention will include four optional group meals. FFRF does not mark up meal prices, which include 17 percent gratuity, 10 percent taxable administrative fee and 7 percent sales tax.

A robust and tasty box lunch, \$60, will be offered at Friday noon for participant convenience, concurrent with Andrew Seidel’s Christian nationalism workshop.

Choices include:

- Grilled Chicken Caesar Wrap
- Turkey BLT Wrap
- Grilled Vegetable Wrap

Wraps will be served with roasted vegetable penne salad, Cape Cod potato chips, a piece of whole fruit, a freshly baked cookie and choice of assorted soft drinks or bottled water.

A Southern barbecue buffet, \$65, with vegetable chili and cornbread muffin, rotisserie chicken with BBQ sauce and greens, carved brisket with mac and cheese and fruit kabobs will take place from 5–7 p.m. Friday.

FFRF’s Non-Prayer Breakfast, \$45, includes scrambled eggs, bacon and breakfast potatoes, assorted pastries, juice, coffee and tea, with vegetarian/vegan options.

The Saturday banquet dinner of \$95 will include Maple Glazed Statler Breast of Chicken with buttermilk mashed potatoes, seasonable autumn baby green salad with roasted beets, quinoa, goat cheese, apple cider vinaigrette, and Boston Cream Pie. The vegetarian option is Butternut Squash Ravioli.

A two-hour lunch on your own is scheduled for Saturday to permit some fresh air, sightseeing or relaxation between events.

The Boston Park Plaza itself offers a variety of dining options: Kozy Korner for drinks, lunch or dinner in Off the Common, the uber-modern steakhouse Strega Italiano just off the lobby, and classic Irish pub J.J. O’Connor’s, just outside the entrance. The Back Bay Boston neighborhood offers a variety of restaurants.

Plan time to sightsee

The Boston Park Plaza is in the officially recognized neighborhood of Back Bay Boston, built on reclaimed land in the Charles River basin. It’s home to a number of restaurants, glitzy stores, skyscrapers, the commercial strips of Newbury Street and Boylston Street, the residential brownstones of Marlborough Street and Copley Square, a grassy plaza within walking distance. The hotel is about a mile from the Charles River Esplanade, a waterfront haven for runners.

You may wish to take a self-guided Freedom Trail tour of historic Boston sites, or sign up on your own for a guided tour on Thursday or Sunday at thefreedomtrail.org or choose any number of other tour options.

Covid-19 rules – vaccinations required

The event is limited to FFRF members and their guests who are fully vaccinated* for Covid-19. Please be sure to indicate on the registration form whether you have been vaccinated. FFRF reserves the right to request proof of vaccination. **Only exception: If you are under a physician’s explicit instructions not to be vaccinated for Covid-19 due to health/immunity issues.*

The great news is that atheists as a group in the United States are the most likely and willing to be vaccinated. We fully expect the event to reach “herd immunity.” FFRF staff members are fully vaccinated.

Please note that the Boston Plaza Hotel is adhering to all federal, state and local guidelines and does not at this time require its staff to be vaccinated.

The hotel has indicated it will

follow whatever protocol, as yet unknown, is required by the government at the time of FFRF’s convention.

Although FFRF will not require masking for vaccinated individuals, unless CDC, Massachusetts or Boston rules change and require them, convention participants of course are free to wear masks. FFRF will be offering its popular masks, with the slogans “FFRF,” “Science is Golden” and “In Science I Trust,” at no cost during the convention.

The conference room will be set up for about 800 seats in the usual theater format, which does not allow for social distancing.

However, FFRF will inform participants of any requirements requested by authors during book signings, such as masking or social distancing.

FREEDOM FROM RELIGION FOUNDATION NATIONAL CONVENTION

BOSTON | NOVEMBER 19-21, 2021

44TH CONVENTION REGISTRATION FORM

Or register online: ffrf.org/convention-2021

REGISTRATION FEES	Number Registering	Cost
Member	___	\$75 \$___
Spouse or Companion (Non-member accompanying member)	___	\$80 \$___
Child (High school or under accompanying registrant)	___	Free \$___
College Student with ID	___	\$25 \$___
<input type="checkbox"/> I am interested in hotel, meal or travel scholarship		
Non-member	___	\$130 \$___
<input type="checkbox"/> Or, I will join FFRF for \$40 (and save \$15)	___	\$115 \$___

OPTIONAL AUTHOR RECEPTIONS

VIP Dessert Reception / Fundraiser with Margaret Atwood	___	\$500 \$___
Friday night Includes author book (Limited to 100)		
VIP Book Signing / Fundraiser with Gloria Steinem	___	\$500 \$___
Saturday afternoon Includes author book (Limited to 50)		

OPTIONAL MEALS / EVENTS

Friday, November 19

Box Lunch Wraps	___	\$60 \$___
Registrant 1 <input type="checkbox"/> Grilled Chicken <input type="checkbox"/> Turkey BLT <input type="checkbox"/> Grilled Vegetable (vegan)		
Registrant 1 <input type="checkbox"/> Grilled Chicken <input type="checkbox"/> Turkey BLT <input type="checkbox"/> Grilled Vegetable (vegan)		
Friday Dinner Buffet	___	\$65 \$___
Registrant 1 <input type="checkbox"/> Regular <input type="checkbox"/> Vegetarian <input type="checkbox"/> Vegan <input type="checkbox"/> Gluten Free		
Registrant 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Regular <input type="checkbox"/> Vegetarian <input type="checkbox"/> Vegan <input type="checkbox"/> Gluten Free		

Saturday, November 20

Non-Prayer Breakfast	___	\$45 \$___
Registrant 1 <input type="checkbox"/> Regular <input type="checkbox"/> Vegetarian <input type="checkbox"/> Vegan <input type="checkbox"/> Gluten Free		
Registrant 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Regular <input type="checkbox"/> Vegetarian <input type="checkbox"/> Vegan <input type="checkbox"/> Gluten Free		
Saturday Dinner	___	\$95 \$___
Registrant 1 <input type="checkbox"/> Regular <input type="checkbox"/> Vegetarian <input type="checkbox"/> Vegan <input type="checkbox"/> Gluten Free		
Registrant 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Regular <input type="checkbox"/> Vegetarian <input type="checkbox"/> Vegan <input type="checkbox"/> Gluten Free		
► Total \$		___

☐ I am adding a donation to sponsor student convention scholarships. \$___

Please enclose separate note indicating any ADA or food allergy accommodations needed in order to fully participate.

(Make checks payable to FFRF) Return with payment to:
FFRF, Attn: Convention | P.O. Box 750 | Madison, WI 53701

☐ I attest that I and my guests will be fully vaccinated for Covid-19 as of 11/18/21.

☐ I attest that I have a physician's order against vaccination.

Name of Registrant 1

Name of Registrant 2

☐ I am including additional registrants (enclose your additional list, with meals, if any).

Address

CityState / ZIP

Phone*Email*

Credit Card NumberExpiration Date / Security Code

Billing Name / Signature*Contact information for in-house use only

Pre-registration deadline Oct. 31, 2021 (Unless event is sold out)
No refund after pre-registration deadline.