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FFRF sues over 'Year of the Bible'

The Freedom From Religion Foundation filed a federal lawsuit March 26 challenging the Pennsylvania House declaration of 2012 as "The Year of the Bible." The House resolution exhorts citizens everywhere and government officials to "study and apply the teachings of the Holy Scriptures."

FFRF is suing on behalf of its 599 Pennsylvania members, including 41 named state members, as well as its chapter, Nittany Freethought. The suit was filed in U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Pennsylvania. Defendants are state Rep. Rick Saccone, author of the resolution, Parliamentarian Clancy Myer and Chief Clerk Anthony Frank Barbush.

"FFRF's membership includes individuals residing in Pennsylvania who have had direct and unwanted exposure to the Year of the Bible Resolution and the hostile environment created thereby as a result of the official declaration of a state religion by the

This is what an atheist looks like.



Grace, Clarksville, TN

Freedom From Religion Foundation

Above, FFRF launched its new "This is what an atheist looks like" campaign in Nashville, Tenn. in late March. Grace Quiroz (above) suggested the slogan. Read more, Page 22.

Holding FFRF's placards are FFRF staffer Katie Daniel (right), joined by a supporter at FFRF's pre-Reason Rally dinner party March 23 in Washington. For more photos by Andrew Seidel, see the center spread, Page 23 and the back page.

Pennsylvania Legislature," notes the legal complaint. Members include "individuals [who] oppose governmental speech endorsing religion because they are made to feel as if they are po-Continued on page 9



Inside This Issue



FFRF's Historic National TV Campaign

Page 5





Tennessee student honored by FFRF Student blows whistle on school religion

An atheist student whistleblower whose column was censored in the high school paper she edits in Lenoir City, Tenn., has received an FFRF activism award for bringing to light several unconstitutional endorsements of religion at the school.

Krystal Myers' article, "No Rights: The Life of an Atheist," [see Page 3] also detailed negative treatment which allegations about school-sanctioned prayer during the current school year, including at swim meets and football games, where the public address system is used. [See "FFRF victories" on Page 8 for the successful resolution of the complaint.]

Religious proselytizing by teachers is also alleged by Myers and another student. (See Page 3)

Christian. And by Christian, I mean a "die-hard, go to every church event and mission trip and witness to everyone" Christian. But due to several bad experiences with churches and Christians, I just decided that I'd had enough. Continued on page 3





Pages 12–13

FFRF Convention Registration Opens Dawkins to Appear

FFRF.ORG

Back Page

Myers says atheists are subjected to. The column never ran in the Panther Press but was printed in full in the Knoxville News Sentinel.

Myers, 18, received an FFRF Catherine Fahringer Memorial Youth Activist Award of \$1,000 for her outspokenness. She's an honors student and captain of the swim team as well as editor of the paper.

FFRF, which last year protested prayers in an algebra class and a nativity scene at Lenoir City Schools, laid out new concerns in Senior Staff Attorney Rebecca Markert's March 5 letter of complaint.

"Given that the school has allowed religious opinions and numerous other articles to be published in the school newspaper in the past, restriction of Ms. Myers' article is impermissible viewpoint discrimination," said Markert.

The letter also noted disturbing

Local complainants have also told FFRF that the Lenoir City School Board opens meetings with prayer that includes invoking "Our Heavenly Father" and ending with "In Jesus' name we pray."

FFRF expressed concern to school officials about harassment and threats against Myers.

Markert concluded that "It appears that Lenoir City Schools has countenanced and turned a blind eye to wellknown violations and has chosen to only address the issues brought to its attention rather than remedying the entirety of the problem. It is very clear that a religious atmosphere has been directed and cultivated in the school district. The allegations set forth herein are egregious violations of the Establishment Clause."

Krystal writes:

Ironically enough, I used to be a



Krystal Myers received an Youth Activist Award of \$1,000 from FFRF.

Meet an Intern

Name: Ken Earl.

Where and when I was born: On Halloween morning in 1986 in Dixon, Ill. (interesting fact: the boyhood home of Ronald Reagan) but grew up about 40 miles away in Prophetstown (more enjoyable fact: the hometown of Wisconsin football coach Bret Bielema).

Family: My admirable father, Doug Earl, still lives in Prophetstown and is a very happily retired high school math teacher. My unbelievable mother, Maggie, unfortunately passed away in 2009. My twin brother, Alex, will be graduating in May from the University of Iowa College of Law. My sister, Jen, and her fiancé, Kenny, also live in Iowa City.

We are all very close and try to get together at least once a month for some live music and games. Here in Madison, I live with my lovely girlfriend of eight years, Katrina, along with our Boston terrier, Bentley, and our two cats, Margot and Lucy.

Education: Despite an inspiring mathematics education from my dad at Prophetstown High School, I majored in English (with a concentration in publishing studies) at Illinois State University. Currently, I am in my second year at the University of Wisconsin Law School.

My religious upbringing was: I was raised (in the loosest sense of the word) Lutheran by my mom and went through the motions up until my confirmation around eighth grade. The only thing that really sticks out in my mind from my religious upbringing was being chastised in Sunday school for asking too many questions. After

that, I never really had anything to do with religion again, with absolutely no complaint from my parents.

How I came to work as an FFRF legal intern: I had been an admirer of FFRF's work for quite some time, and had been a member for a while as well, when I saw a job posting for a part-time law clerk at the start of the 2011 fall semester. My schedule was already pretty packed, but I thought it would be a wonderful opportunity to get some legal experience doing work I actually believed in, so I couldn't resist applying.

What I do here: Incense and rabblerouse. But honestly, I work with our excellent staff attorneys to research and investigate complaints that we receive from both members and nonmembers, and then I will draft a letter of complaint to offenders informing them of their usually glaringly obvious constitutional violations and ask that they rectify the matter.

What I like best about it: The people at FFRF are some of the most kindhearted and enjoyable human beings I have ever met. The office is very relaxed, and being able to work with such passionate and intelligent people as Dan and Annie Laurie makes every day interesting.

Something funny that's happened: While not outright humorous, I can't help but laugh whenever we get a response from a person who can't seem to understand how something like including prayer before a high school football game or displaying a nativity scene on government property could



Ken Earl is no slouch at the keyboard, where the right word rarely escapes him.

possibly be wrong.

My legal interests are: I really don't have a particular legal niche worked out for myself yet. I'd love to be able to work with civil rights and civil liberty law, but I'd be equally happy doing transactional (particularly real estate) or litigation work as well.

My legal heroes are: Anyone who works long hours for little pay to help out the less fortunate.

Spontaneous, intelligent, bald.

Things I like: Craft beer, baseball (go White Sox!), movies, bluegrass, procrastination, animals, escapist literature, friendly people, the Grateful Dead.

Things I smite: Close-minded people, snakes, irrational individuals, Auto-Tuned music (think of Cher's "Believe"), restrictions on labor organization.

These three words sum me up:

Meet a Volunteer

Name: Ryan Hettinger.

Where and when I was born: Milwaukee, Dec. 10, 1989.

Family: I'm the oldest of five kids. I have two younger brothers. One is graduating from high school this year and wants to become a firefighter. I also have twin sisters. The youngest has a career goal of pediatric oncology.

Why I volunteer for FFRF: I am against forcing beliefs on anyone. Politicians should keep their religious beliefs, or lack thereof, private. FFRF is fighting an uphill battle to ensure government stays neutral toward religion.

What I do as a volunteer: Anything that needs to be done — clerical work, shredding, sorting and filing letters of complaint. I also help with miscellaneous computer issues that pop up with interns and staff members.

What I like best about it: Being "behind the scenes" at Freethought Hall. It never ceases to amaze me how many flagrantly unconstitutional violations happen daily.

My day job is/was/will eventually **be**: A career in RFID (radio frequency identification) engineering would be fascinating and rewarding. The technology has come a long way, and there are so many uses for it on the horizon.

Education: I am in my senior year at Herzing University, pursuing a double major in computer science and clectronic engineering. I plan to travel on a shoestring upon graduation before securing a career.

These three words sum me up: Inquisitive, enterprising, open-minded. My freethought heroes are: Thomas Paine, Arthur C. Clarke, Robert Inger-



soll.

on Lake Waubesa, playing devil's ad- teachers and pious politicians. vocate, and making meals with real ingredients, no partially hydrogenated, high-fructose anything!

Things I smite: Blind ignorance, Things I like: Books! Wakeboarding bigotry, proselytizing public school A freethought saying I like: "Two hands at work do more than 10,000 folded in prayer."

A Note to **Members**

Your address label shows the expiration date of your membership in FFRF, which includes your subscription to Freethought Today and "Private Line." If your label shows April or earlier, your membership has expired. Your prompt renewal (\$40-single membership; \$50-household; \$100 sustaining; \$25-student) saves us time and postage, and is tax-deductible. Freethought Today is published 10 times a year, with combined issues in Jan/Feb and June/ July. Send to FFRF, Box 750, Madison WI 53701.

Send Us Your **Address Change Promptly!**

Don't miss a single issue! If you move, notify us directly and promptly. The Post Office does not forward third-class mail. FFRF cannot be responsible for replacing back issues if we have not been notified prior to your move. Back issues, while they last, may be ordered for \$2 each.

Freethought Today

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No Rights: The Life of an Atheist

"Krystal Myers is an honors student, captain of the swim team and editor of her high school newspaper. She's also an atheist in a predominantly Christian student body."

That's how the Knoxville News Sentinel started its Feb. 23 story on how Myers' column, "No Rights: The Life of an Atheist," was banned from publication in the Panther Press by Schools Director Wayne Miller because of what he called the potential for disruption in the school.

"We do have the right to control the content of the school paper if we feel it is in the best interest of the students," Miller told the News Sentinel.

Here is the "disruptive" column:

By Krystal Myers

The point of view expressed in this article does not necessarily reflect the point of view of the Panther Press, its staff, adviser or school.

As a current student in government, I have realized that I feel that my rights as an atheist are severely limited and unjust when compared to other students who are Christians. Not only are there multiple clubs featuring the Christian faith, but youth ministers are also allowed to come onto school campus and hand candy and other food out to Christians and their friends.

However, I feel like if an atheist did that, people would not be happy about it. This may not be true, but due to pervasive negative feelings towards atheists in the school, I feel that it would be the case. My question is, "Why? Why does atheism have such a bad reputation?"

An even better question: "Why do Christians have special rights not allowed to nonbelievers?"

Before I begin, I want to clear up some misconceptions about atheism. No, we do not worship the "devil." We do not believe in God, so we also do not believe in Satan. And we may be "godless" but that does not mean that we are without morals. I know, personally, I strive to be the best person I can be, even without religion.

In fact, I have been a better person since I have rejected religion. Perhaps the most important misconception is that we want to convert everyone into atheists and that we hate Christians. For the most part, we just want to be respected for who we are and not be judged.



Even though Krystal Myers is editor of her high school newspaper in Lenoir City, Tenn., the school wouldn't allow her column about discrimination against atheists to run.

not mean that atheists do not believe in higher causes; we just do not believe in a higher being.

With that being said, I can move on to the real issue. Before I begin, I want you to think about your rights and how your perceived "rights" might be affecting the rights of others.

There are several instances where my rights as a nonbeliever, and the rights of anyone other than a Christian, have been violated. These instances inspired me to investigate the laws concerning the separation of church and state, and I learned some interesting things. First, I would like you to know specifically what my grievances are against the school.

First and foremost is the sectarian prayer that occurs at graduation every year. Fortunately, I am not the first one to have thought that this was a problem. In the Supreme Court case, Lee v. Weisman, it was decided that allowing prayer at graduation is a violation of the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment that says, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." Special speakers can pray, but the school cannot endorse the prayer or plan for it to happen.

Public prayer also occurs at all of the home football games using the public address system. This has, again, been covered by the Supreme Court case Santa Fe Independent School District v. Doe. The court ruled that school-sponsored prayer is an unconstitutional violation of the Establishment Clause. If a speaker prays, it is fine. However, as soon as the school provides sponsorship, it becomes illegal. Sponsorship can be almost anything, even something as simple as saying that the speaker can pray or choosing a speaker with a known propensity to pray or share his or her religious views.

It is not just the speakers whom we have to fear at Lenoir City High School. We also have to fear some of the teachers and what they might say about their own religious beliefs. On at least two separate occasions, teachers have made their religious preferences known to basically the whole school.

performing her duties as a public employee. Also, Kristi Brackett, a senior at Lenoir City High School, has said that the teacher, "strongly encouraged us to join [a religious club] and be on the group's leadership team."

Yet again, this violates the Establishment Clause. When asked if this was true, the teacher replied, "As a teacher I would never use my power of influence to force my beliefs or the beliefs of [a religious club] on any student in the school."

Regardless, the religious T-shirts are still inappropriate in the school setting. Teachers are prohibited from making their religious preferences known. The Constitution requires them to be neutral when acting in their capacity as a public school teacher.

Not only are religious preferences shown through shirts, but also through a "Quote of the Day" that some teachers write on the boards in their classrooms. One teacher has bible verses occasionally as the teacher's "Quote of the Day" for students. The Establishment Clause has been violated yet again with no regard for nonbelievers.

Perhaps I would have more hope in our school and the possibility of change on the horizon if our own School Board did not open their meetings with prayer. A person who wished to remain anonymous that has been present at board meetings says, "They do have prayers. They pray to 'Our Heavenly Father' and end with 'In Jesus' name we pray.' "

This not only violates the Constitution, it violates the board's own policy prohibiting prayer at school-sponsored events. The whole foundation of how our school is conducted is established by obvious Christians. Somehow, this is unsurprising. If our School Board chooses to ignore the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment and the Supreme Court, then it is no surprise that teachers choose to do the same.

I know that I will keep trying to gain my rights as an atheist and as an American citizen, but I also need your help in educating other people to realize the injustice done to all minority groups. The Christian faith cannot rule the United States. It is unconstitutional. Religion and government are supposed to be separate. If we let this slide, what other amendments to the Constitution will be ignored?

Now you should know exactly what an atheist is. Dictionary.com says that an atheist is, "a person who denies or disbelieves the existence of a supreme being or beings." However, this does

One teacher has made her religious preferences known by wearing a T-shirt depicting the crucifix while

I leave it to you to decide what you will or will not do, but just remember that nonbelievers are not what you originally thought we were. We are human beings just like you.

What Is a **Freethinker?**



free-think-er n. Α person who

forms opinions about religion on the basis of reason, independently of tradition, authority, or established belief.

Student blows whistle on school religion

Continued from front page

I was agnostic for a couple of years, but for the past year or so, I've been an atheist. I have not made any efforts to hide my nonreligious beliefs from anybody in that time, but I did not willingly offer the information either until now.

I know that everyone wants to know why I decided to write my editorial. The reason is quite simple. I do not think that nonbelievers have the same rights as Christians, at least in my school and the area in which I live. I wanted to

change that, but I never thought that this would garner so much attention. I just wanted the School Board to notice my editorial and make changes accordingly (which I did not think would be hard).

No matter what the outcome, though, I am glad that I decided to go through with my editorial. I hope that it will make Lenoir City High School more accepting of those of all faiths and nonbeliefs, not just to Christianity. I plan to go to college to study journalism, but I have not decided where yet. I have been accepted to Kansas State University, Indiana University-Bloomington and the University of Tennessee.

Even though I will be leaving soon, I hope that my efforts will inspire other high school students to stand up for their beliefs and rights, even in the face of opposition. People will always be there for support, just like they have been for me.

Krystal was interviewed on Freethought Radio on March 10. See ffrf.org/radio/ shows/

Madison, Wisconsin

Heads Up A Poetry Column by Philip Appleman

Sideshow

OK, Life, you with the grinning clown face, I know I'm not the main attraction here, and of course you've slapped me around, whacked me with bladders, booted my behind but I want you to know that after all those pratfalls, I've finally got used to your jabs, your tweaks, your pinches, and are you ready for this? I forgive you. Because sometimes on hazy afternoons I'll hear the terrible keening of houseflies, and a tragic crow will conjure up all those broken stones in Rome, and maybe someone special will glance at me and look quickly away – and in that one dagger-deep moment, Life, you sadistic old joker, I realize how much I'd miss you if you turned up missing.

© 2012 Philip Appleman

Freethought Today is honored to publish this new poem.



Philip Appleman is Distinguished Professor Emeritus at Indiana University. His published volumes of poetry include Perfidious Proverbs and Other Poems: A Satirical Look at the Bible (2012), Darwin's Ark (new 2009 edition) and Karma, Dharma, Pudding & Pie (2009). His nonfiction work includes the widely used Norton Critical Edition, Darwin, and the Norton Critical Edition of Malthus' Essay on Population. His poetry and fiction have won many

awards, including a fellowship in poetry from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Castagnola Award from the Poetry Society of America, the Humanist Arts Award from the American Humanist Association and the Friend of Darwin Award from the National Center for Science Education. His work has appeared in Harper's Magazine, The Nation, The New Republic, The New York Times, The Paris Review, Partisan Review, Poetry, and The Yale Review.

He and his playwright wife, Marjorie Appleman, are both "Afterlife" Members of the Freedom From Religion Foundation. They recorded an excerpt of "Noah," New and Selected Poems, which is available for sale from FFRF for \$23 ppd, The Norton Critical Edition, Darwin, is \$22 ppd., Karma, Dharma, Pudding & Pie, \$27 ppd., Darwin's Ark, \$23 ppd., and Perfidious Proverbs, \$20 ppd. (ffrf.org/shop/).



Overheard

I'm good mates with Barack Obama. I tell him, "You think it's tough being African-American? Try being me. Try being an athechildless, single ist, woman as prime minister."



Julia Gillard, Australia's first female prime minister

Sydney Morning Herald, 4-2-12

[Fr. Michael Hennelly] described working with priests trying to achieve what he called "sexual sobriety." St. John Vianney, a church-run hospital in Downingtown, had "Sexaholics Anonymous" meetings devoted exclusively to priests. Others attended "Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous."

Hennelly's testimony in the trial of Msgr. William Lynn, accused of covering up sexual abuse by priests Associated Press, 3-28-12

I felt helpless and trapped. My parents expected me to work.

Trial testimony by a woman in her 50s, who alleges she, her sisters and other victims were molested as children by Fr. Albert Kostelnick in a Catholic rectory in Roslyn, Pa.

philly.com, 4-1-12

The color of the emblem is fluorescent orange, and our church forbids the bright, loud and gaudy colors. Therefore, we cannot in good conscience use the slow-moving vehicle emblem.

Jacob Gingerich, Mayfield, Ky., asking legislators to approve a bill, which they did, to let Amish use white reflective

levels. Education plays a role. Religiosity is higher in less-educated states and negatively associated with the share of state residents that are college grads. Richard Florida, senior editor, analyzing a Gallup poll on U.S. religiosity The Atlantic, 3-29-12

Tribes organized around religious belief have rituals, sacred texts and physical spaces that all serve to bind the participants together. Atheism has none of these things. Most of the time it's an individual choice, made and kept alone. Contributing editor Paul Waldman, "One Nation, Not Under God" The American Prospect, 3-2712

Why, in Mexico, did you not want to be close to the victims of that most ignominious priest Marcial Maciel?

Question to Pope Benedict from Juan Jose Vaca, former member of Maciel's Legion of Christ, when the pope visited Mexico

Latin American Herald Tribune, 3-26-12

He put his hand on my thigh, and he started talking about God.

Kayla Hill, 17, one of three New York models suing Aristeo Tengco, modeling agency owner, alleging he groped them

New York Times, 3-26-12

I'm not sure it is to atheists' benefit to always present a kinder, gentler face. We certainly want to let people know, again, we're your friends, we're your neighbors, we're good people. But I think it's also to our benefit to let people know that we're to be reckoned with, that we're not going to let ourselves be doormats, and that we're mobilized, we're organized, and when people get us angry, we're going to take action. Greta Christina, author of Why Are You Atheists So Angry? 99 Things That Piss Off The Godless National Public Radio, 3-23-12





Religiosity is higher in lower income states where poverty is prevalent. The share of state residents who say religion is very important to their daily lives is correlated with the poverty rate and negatively associated with state income

Recruit a Member

Sample Copies for \$2

Send \$2 with the name and address of each person you wish to receive a sample copy of Freethought Today to:

FFRF, P.O. Box 750, Madison WI 53701

Freedom depends upon freethinkers

(Please specify whether the individual is a freethinker.)

YOUR WEEKLY ANTIDOTE TO THE RELIGIOUS RIGHT

TUNE IN TO FREETHOUGHT RADIO

produced by the Freedom From Religion Foundation



Hosted by Dan Barker and Annie Laurie Gaylor

Broadcasts and streams Saturdays at 11 a.m. Central, Progressive Talk The Mic 92.1 FM, Madison, Wis., and over several other stations.

iTunes or podcasts archived at: ffrf.org/news/radio

Slightly irreverent views, news, music & interviews

FFRF launches national TV ad campaign

The Freedom From Religion Foundation, a state/church watchdog and the nation's largest freethought association with more than 18,000 members, is airing a historic 30-second tribute to separation of state and church on network television.

FFRF's ad debuted on Sunday, March 25, on "CBS Sunday Morning," and March 26 on the "CBS Evening News," on NBC's "Meet the Press" April 1 and on MSNBC's "Rachel Maddow Show" the week of April 2-5. FFRF believes these are the first freethought ads ever aired on such shows.

FFRF's commercial showcases the famous words of Sen. John F. Kennedy in 1960 during his presidential run: "I believe in an America where the separation of church and state is absolute . . . where no ecclesiastical body seeks to impose its will directly or indirectly on the general populace."



The ad opens with footage of JFK's speech to Protestant ministers in Houston, which Rick Santorum recently

claimed "makes me want to throw up." The ad says, "Let's restore respect for America's secular roots. Help the Freedom From Religion Foundation defend the wall of separation between state and church. Join us at FFRF.ORG. Freedom depends on freethinkers."

Underneath the 30-second spot can be heard a piano rendition of "America" recorded by FFRF Co-President Dan Barker. The ad concludes with the strains, "Let freedom ring," and the image of a Lincoln penny with "In Reason We Trust" replacing "In God We Trust."

FFRF's name, website and toll-free number, 1-800-335-4021, alternate on the screen. Buzz Kemper narrated the ad, produced for FFRF by John Urban Productions.

Help FFRF educate via television, the most powerful mass medium, by making a tax-deductible contribution to FFRF's ad campaign at *ffrf.org/donate/*. View the ad at *ffrf.org/*.

FFRF urges Grassley to hold churches accountable

FFRF sent a substantive 23-page memo to U.S. Sen. Chuck Grassley, R-Iowa, in late March, weighing in on 17 issues regarding the financial status of churches which the senator is studying.

Last year, Grassley asked the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability (ECFA), an accreditation agency promoting fiscal integrity, to solicit responses from churches on a series of legislative proposals prepared by Grassley's staff. The 17 issues all involve the favored financial status that churches and other religious organizations have under U.S. law.

Believing it is vital for Grassley to hear secular viewpoints, as well, FFRF Co-Presidents Dan Barker and Annie Laurie Gaylor sent a detailed response, which can be read in full at: ffrf.org/news/action/weigh-in-on-financial-fraud-in-churches/

FFRF, which is currently in federal court challenging the insidious "parish exemption" that rewards ministers with special housing allowance benefits, urged Grassley to work to rescind that favored treatment.

FFRF also wants churches to be required to file Form 990, as all other tax-exempt organizations, including FFRF, must do, accounting for what they do with tax-deductible donations.

FFRF noted, "Having one rule for churches, which exempts them from documenting their eligibility, and even from paying fees all other 501(c)(3)groups must bear, means churches are given special, favored status. This lack of oversight and accountability not only discriminates against nonchurch nonprofits, but encourages . . . scams and crime. It encourages predators, con artists, and those who, in the name of religion, would prey on the most devout."

FFRF opposes the suggestion of a clergy advisory committee to superintend IRS tax policy regarding churches, advocates "love offerings" (cash gifts to church leaders) be presumed to be taxable income, and says churches and church managers should be penalized for unlawful excess benefit transactions.

FFRF also wants compensation study guidelines to prevent church

leaders from comparing their salaries to superstars such as Oprah, and for the IRS continue to prohibit churches from endorsing candidates if they wish to retain tax exemptions.

Read more at:

ffrf.org/legal/grassley-comment/

Action Alert — Contact:

Senator Chuck Grassley 135 Hart Senate Office Building Washington, DC 20510 Phone: (202)224-3744 Fax: (202)224-6020

Email contact form: grassley.senate. gov/Copy-of-contact.cfm

FFRF thanks constitutional consultant Andrew Seidel for his work on this memo.

Include FFRF In Your Estate

FFRF welcomes 28 new Lifetime Members!

The Freedom From Religion Foun- quelyn Purpura, Robert Ready, Joseph atheist ad on national TV. It gives me

Planning

Arrange a bequest in your will or trust, or make the Freedom From Religion Foundation the beneficiary of an insurance policy, bank account, or IRA. It's easy to do. For related information (or to request a bequest brochure), please phone Annie Laurie Gaylor at (608) 256-8900. FFRF P.O. Box 750 Madison WI 53701

Freedom Depends on Freethinkers dation gratefully announces 28 new Lifetime Members. They are:

Lee Case, Dan Cobb, Thomas Dinwiddie, Rod Fisher, Nero Gordon, Neal Grunstra, Rex Gunderson, RG Huber, Robert Kramer, JS Lomont, Jack Nixon, Eugene L. Norris, Paul Offit, Dr. William H. Olson, Todd Peissig, JacRizzi, Hans Schellenberg, John Smail, Michael Steiner, Eric Stone, Claudette St.Pierre, Richard Tuckerman, Buddy Turner and John D. Weeden. Two new Lifetime Members wish to remain anonymous.

Thomas Dinwiddie writes: "I was so proud to see what I believe was the first



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.

The Foundation's e-mail address is *info@ffrf.org*. Please include your name and physical mailing address with all e-mail correspondence. Foundation members wishing to receive online news releases, "action alerts" and "Freethought of the Day" should contact *info@ffrf.org*. hope for a better tomorrow."

Buddy Turner writes: "My wife, Roberta Mistretta, became a Lifetime Member last year. I applaud your ad on CBS and want to see more."

Nero Gordon's husband, Frank, is already a Lifetime Member.

States represented are:

Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Maryland, Montana, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Utah, Virginia and Wisconsin. Countries represented include Switzerland!

Individual Lifetime Memberships are \$1,000 indicated for membership or renewal, guarantee never another renewal notice and go into a safe endowment to ensure FFRF's future. All gifts and dues to FFRF are deductible for income-tax purposes.

IT'S TIME TO CONSIDER QUITTING THE CATHOLIC CHURCH



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Thank you, FFRF'ers, for 'extraordinary' N.Y. Times ad support!

FFRF raised more than \$52,000 from members in one weekend to place a historic full-page ad in the New York Times. A member not only proposed to FFRF that it turn Annie Laurie Gaylor's commentary, "It's time to quit the Catholic Church" [March 2012], into an ad, but generously pledged \$5,000 toward the cost of the ad.

Thanks to an outpouring of support, small and large, the money was raised and FFRF's ad ran on March 9. Those who gave \$1,000 and express permission to use their names were featured in the ad. Benefactors included Dan Barker, Fairfid M. Caudle, James G. Coors, Robert and Jo Chanaud, Jeff and Jill Dean, Mr. and Mrs. Timothy Callivan, Annie Laurie Gaylor, Lali Reddy, M.D., Nicholas Sargantson, Jane and Stefan Shoup, Claudette St.Pierre, Fred Thorlin, R. Jeffrey Wenk and John Whiteside. Several major donors preferred anonymity.

FFRF has already signed up at least 300 new members, including four Lifetime Members, and received many plaudits and Internet coverage. Reduced from its New York Times dimension, it is featured adjacent. You may view and share it at *ffrf.org/ news/releases/nyt-ad/*.

"We're very grateful to all the members, named and unnamed, who donated toward this historic project, one of those heady 'truth to power' moments," said Annie Laurie Gaylor, FFRF co-president. She credits Dan Barker, who co-directs FFRF, with what she calls "the best line: 'Please, exit en Mass.'"

Naturally, Catholic League blowhard Bill Donohue insisted that the newspaper should have censored the ad. But Tom Beaudoin of Fordham University, writing in America, a national Catholic weekly, said, "Whatever one thinks of this ad, it seems to mark a particular moment in the unfolding history of the Catholic Church in the United States. That a full-page ad in one of the most influential newspapers in the country would ask members of a major religious group to walk away from that group is an extraordinary occurrence." The Times required FFRF to change its original headline, "It's Time to Quit the Catholic Church," to "It's Time to Consider Quitting the Catholic Church.'

Anrie Lourie Groulor and Dan Barker, co-presidents, pressive row Deligion Presseries

Please, Exit en Mass.

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First Paul Gaylor Student Activist Award Recipient

Intelligently designed costume

Jeff Shott, 17, is the first recipient of the Paul J. Gaylor Memorial Student Activist Award, a newly endowed scholarship of \$1,000. Similar awards offered through FFRF are the annual Thomas Jefferson Youth Activist Award and the Catherine Fahringer Memorial Student Activist Award. Jeff is a student at Summit High School in Spring Hill, Tenn., 30 miles south of Nashville.

FFRF, with two student activist endowments last year, actually gave out an additional four \$1,000 awards. Many more student activists deserve recognition. If you'd like to endow and name a student activist award to reward freethought or state/church activism, contact Annie Laurie Gaylor at info@ffrf.org.



By Jeff Shott

d arrived at school this Monday before 8:15 a.m. and waited in the cafeteria until classes started, eating breakfast with friends and adding finishing touches to my Jesus costume.

The head principal, Dr. Farmer, soon came up and asked me to come to his office. The assistant principal, Ms. Lamb, and Officer Pewit, school resource officer, were waiting outside the cafeteria. Dr. Farmer asked me whom I was portraying. I told him that I was Jesus Christ. He said he had been hoping my answer would have been Zeus (or me a lot.

When I mentioned this to him, Dr. Farmer had wondered if we should just teach "both theories" equally, essentially advocating that we "teach the controversy." I explained why creationism doesn't belong in a science classroom, that my teacher wouldn't be able to substantiate her claim with empirical evidence or the scientific method. I compared it to the "Intelligent Falling Theory" of Pastafarianism.

I also pointed out that by teaching the bible as true, she was teaching Christianity as fact, which further implied she was teaching that non-Christians are going to hell. He had said he would talk to her and give her a warning.

Now, he told me my costume was controversial and likely to disrupt the learning environment. I explained that my quarrel with my science teacher wasn't one of personal offense, but of professionalism. I told him that by teaching creationism, she was teaching something unconstitutional and flatout dishonest. As a science teacher and an educator, she was out of line teaching biblical creationism. She was only adding to the already dishearteningly prevalent misconceptions on the theory of evolution, the very basis of our understanding of modern biology.

Both principals said they were worried my costume would spark religious debates in every class and take up large amounts of time. I was sternly warned that if even one teacher reported the slightest disruption, I would have to take off my costume. Then and there, I decided to take it off.

Even though the vast majority of students in my school are religious, many told me how much they liked my costume and how disappointed they were that I had to take it off. Even my teachers thought it was funny. Only a very few of my peers said they thought it was in bad taste, and none did so during instructional time.

I wondered, if a religious debate had been sparked, wouldn't it be up to the teachers to control the classroom and deal with students who actually disrupted class time? I was merely participating in Fictional Character Day.

tos and details of what had happened prayer list. I made one list four times in to the r/atheism section of one of my favorite websites, Reddit.com. My fellow Redditors were, with very few exceptions, overwhelmingly supportive and said my civil liberties had been violated. Many urged me to contact the Freedom from Religion Foundation, so I did.



Jeff Shott as Jesus on Fictional Character Day at his school.

bible as nonbelievers, the devil himself literally changes the words, making it impossible for us to gain an adequate understanding of the word of god. After telling someone that I am an atheist, it's not uncommon for the initial response to resemble a personal attack such as "You're a bad person," or a threat, "You're going to hell."

One religionist asked me why I had become an atheist: "Was it family trouble, abuse?" Others assume that atheists are simply rebelling against "god and his rules," or that we put as much "faith" in science as religious people do in their doctrines.

I've even met a very fundamentalist Christian who told me that science is a left-wing conspiracy made up of people rebelling against god.

Last year, a teacher leading the class in prayer openly criticized my brother for refusing to bow his head. One of his peers caught him reading my copy of Richard Dawkins' The Greatest Show on Earth: The Evidence for Evolution, picked it up and threw it on the ground.

We smile whenever one of our When I went home, I posted pho- friends tells us we're on their church's tion with me.

Being a bible belt atheist has highlights and lowlights. One of the best things any atheist can do, especially in the South, is to come out of the heathen's closet. When nontheists are open with others, it debunks misconceptions. As Dawkins would say, we act as consciousness raisers, and if enough of us do so, we can shed favorable light on the atheist community and perhaps one day shift the statistics in our favor.

If you had told me two years ago that I would one day be receiving a scholarship and award from a group like FFRF as a result of my secular activism, I wouldn't have believed you. You see, I was previously quite the quintessential, vehemently fundamentalist Christian — a young Earth creationist, a biblical literalist, a Calvinist, a homophobe the whole nine yards.

It's been two years since then, and, though it's still difficult to wrap my head around the fact that I've won an FFRF student activist award, needless to say, I'm honored.

The Paul J. Gaylor Memorial Student Activist Award is principally endowed by

some other variation of a mythological deity).

Even though I'm typically very openly atheistic and have no problem discussing my views, I was a little distraught that all three school authority figures were addressing me at once. Dr. Farmer claimed I couldn't have things both ways — I couldn't complain about teachers talking about Jesus and also dress up as Jesus on Fictional Character Day.

I'd had a long talk with him earlier after my science teacher, in reply to a question about evolution, had publicly said things such as "Evolution is just a theory," "I don't believe it at all," and, "We actually come from Adam and Eve." It's fairly clear that she openly advocates not only Intelligent Design, but straight-up biblical creationism.

I immediately asked her, "Can you honestly say that as a science teacher?" She told me that she could. That upset

I soon received a reply from FFRF Staff Attorney Rebecca Markert, who sent a letter to the school district on my behalf, and I greatly appreciate that.

Atheist in the bible belt

Statistics show that the least trusted and most despised American minority is the atheist community. I, along with most of my atheist friends and family, have experienced this firsthand.

My younger brother and I have both been told that we are only atheists because we are possessed by demons. We've been told that when we read the one day.

Getting to know you

People seem less likely to treat you poorly as an atheist once they get to know you and develop a deeper understanding of the reasoning behind your disbelief. I post Facebook status updates of atheist quotes, YouTube videos made by atheists, etc. I share and explain my views and opinions with a sizeable number of the most devout Christians from my school and in my area, including pastors, the Fellowship of Christian Athletes leader at my school and other adults and teens.

I've had Christian peers say things like, "I read that debate on your Facebook wall last night, and it really made me think." In fact, I first really started to get to know my girlfriend after she read some of my anti-theist sentiments on Facebook and struck up a conversaFFRF Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor.

Losing Faith In Faith: **From Preacher** To Atheist by Dan Barker "An arsenal for skeptics. A challenge to believers." Hardback, 342 pp., with photos. Member price: \$20 Nonmembers: \$25



FFRF, PO Box 750, Madison WI 53701 ffrf.org.shop/books/

April 2012

FFRF Legal Victories

FFRF pressure stops staff leading prayers

After a complaint in late 2011 from FFRF Staff Attorney Patrick Elliott about prayers at school athletic events, banquets and graduations, the South Montgomery Community School Corporation in New Market, Ind., has adopted restrictions on school-sponsored prayer. FFRF had been informed that the superintendent was even leading the prayers at school events.

An attorney for the corporation assured FFRF in March that guidelines were distributed to school officials and that the prayer issues have been addressed.

The policy specifies that prayer will not be conducted at graduation ceremonies or "during banquets, award ceremonies or other school functions." It also says that persons affiliated with the school "will refrain from leading or participating in prayer prior to, during, or immediately following athletic or other extracurricular events."

The policy on extracurricular events provides:

"If students participating in these events wish to pray, school officials, school administrators, teachers, coaches, volunteers and other schools representatives must separate themselves from the students as they pray in order to prevent the appearance that the students' participation in the prayer is an endorsement or advancement of the students' religious beliefs or practices by the corporation. In addition, student prayer will not be broadcast by way of amplification devices to those in attendance at the event."

School stops claiming God created students

FFRF complaints to the chartering authority of Byron Center Charter School, Byron Center, Mich., about statements from the school's handbook and website were successfully resolved.

The handbook said, "BCCS believes that to teach a child created by God is a noble calling." The website said, "Byron Center Charter School cannot promote a certain religion, it can however teach both creation and evolution as a theory, and use the Bible as a historical reference." In response, BCCS denied engaging in religious instruction. FFRF requested records from the school relating to "creation" instruction and the use of the bible. The school immediately removed the "creation" and bible statements from the website and provided records on the science curriculum.

Those records did not include materials relating to creationism. After further inquiry from FFRF, an attorney for the school said, "Byron Center Charter School does not engage in the teaching of creationism or intelligent design as part of the curriculum. Byron Center Charter School does not use the Bible for instruction."

The board of directors voted March 12 to remove phrasing from the handbook that said students were "created by God."

FFRF arrests Wisconsin cop's proselytizing

FFRF stopped Police Chief Ken Manthey, Portage, Wis., from using his public position as a religious soapbox.

He racked up a series of constitutional violations by using his city email to distribute religious materials to employees. He also sent employees bible verses, bibles and other devotional material.

One such article was titled "Strength for Service to God and Country." Another was "The Connection between Spirituality and Policing." In a Jan. 9 letter to the city administrator, FFRF Staff Attorney Stephanie Schmitt wrote, "It is grossly inappropriate for any government employee, especially the chief of police, to distribute religious messages to government employees."

FFRF was also informed that the chief posted religious messages in the Police Department lobby and attended bible study while on duty. He also opened a mandatory employee meeting with a Christian prayer. Under his direction, employee "swearing in" ceremonies often included mention of "Jesus." He also maintained an employee prayer board for weekly prayer requests and religious articles.

A city attorney replied to FFRF's letter on March 5, stating that Manthey was "instructed to cease from religious displays or conduct that promotes or has the appearance of promoting sectarian beliefs while performing his duties."



Angel's wings clipped

It took seven years and several follow-up letters to FFRF's initial complaint, but this guardian angel statue has been removed from the Interpretive Center in Genesee County Park in Batavia, N.Y. The statue was placed by the Women's Republican Club in memory of a Republican activist. In her 2005 letter, FFRF Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor said, "We continue to believe the angel statue itself, not just the 'guardian angel' reference, makes the garden look like a religious cemetery. Whether a religious intent was conscious or not, the presence of a large, white statue of an angel or seraphim (precisely of the type which is sold to be placed in religious cemeteries) injects a symbol of Christianity into a secular, publicly maintained center."

A local news story said the statue was scheduled to be moved in August 2005, but FFRF learned in 2011 it was still there. Staff Attorney Stephanie Schmitt then shepherded the case to a successful resolution with County Attorney Charles Zambito, who said in February it was removed. The local complainant confirmed the removal.

Wis. voucher bill dies

A last-minute push at the end of the legislative session in Wisconsin to expand school vouchers for students with special-needs died March 15 in the Senate.

It would have given parents vouchers for up to \$13,500 for students with disabilities to attend private (mostly religious) schools or schools in another district. The originating school districts would have seen a drop in state FFRF said, "Our state Constitution contemplates a secular public education system, explicitly excluding the creation of sectarian schools and the funding of religious education. No state money should fund religious education, no matter which pupils are receiving it." "Disability rights groups have lamented the lack of accountability and have noted that private schools are not bound by laws that protect the rights of students with disabilities." Parochial school lobbyists were key supporters of the measure. Other expansions of voucher schemes in Wisconsin have not fared well. A voucher program was expanded to the city of Racine last year. The Department of Public Instruction released a report March 27 that compared the standardized test scores of voucher students to Racine public school students. The voucher student

FFRF silences prayer in North Carolina

The City Council in Kannapolis, N.C., agreed March 26 to end the practice of praying aloud before regular meetings. Mayor Bob Misenheimer announced that future meetings would start with a "moment of silent prayer" instead.

FFRF Staff Attorney Patrick Elliott sent the mayor and council a letter March 14 informing them that the council's sectarian prayers violated the Establishment Clause. FFRF's letter focused on recent decisions in the 4th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals, which has jurisdiction over North Carolina. In January, the Supreme Court let stand a decision by the appellate court that struck down sectarian prayers in Forsyth County, N.C. Council member Ryan Dayvault said in a story in the Salisbury Post that the choice of the words "silent prayer" was deliberate. "We want to be clear, this is not just a moment of silence or reflection."

Mike Legg, city manager, said, "The law is pretty clear, and that doesn't paint a good picture of the outcome if [sectarian prayers] were to be challenged."

According to the Post, the March 26 meeting had opened with this prayer by council member Randy Cauthen, "Tonight, we pray for those who want to restrict our right to pray. Father, open their minds and hearts to understand that our great country was founded on freedom of religion, not freedom from religion." Cauthen closed with, "We ask these things in Jesus' name, amen."

North Carolina is currently a hotbed of government prayer controversy, according to Elliott. In nearby Rowan County, FFRF and the ACLU put the County Commission on notice that prayers to Jesus at every meeting are unconstitutional. The commissioners have refused to end the prayers, which may bring about legal action.

The North Carolina House and Senate also received letters from FFRF about sectarian prayers that open sessions. It remains to be seen if they will continue with the Christian prayers. Both houses reconvene April 23. average was 50.8% proficient or advanced in math, compared to 61.5% of public school students.

The voucher students averaged 55.7% proficient or advanced in reading compared to 69.2% of district students. Racine Superintendent Ann Laing said, "Basically, the scores speak for themselves."

Commissioners move prayer to pole

Henderson County commissioners in Hendersonville, N.C., have "begrudgingly accepted" a 2011 ruling last year by the 4th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals banning sectarian prayers to open government meetings, Blue Ridge Now reported March 27.

FFRF filed a complaint in 2010 with the commission about its prayers, but the board voted to continue them, said FFRF Staff Attorney Patrick Elliott. "The appellate decision in the Forsyth case seems to have changed their mind."

The U.S. Supreme Court declined in January to hear an appeal of the 4th Circuit's decision. Henderson County Manager Steve Wyatt then came up with the idea of prayer before meetings at the flagpole outside the courthouse in order to be able to pray while complying with the law.

All five commissioners said that while they disagree with court rulings, they will comply.

Religion rife in Tennessee school

FFRF Senior Staff Attorney Rebecca Markert wrote a letter of complaint March 5 to Lenoir City Schools, Lenoir City, Tenn. Violations included censoring a school newspaper article by atheist student Krystal Myers, the Panther Press editor; school-sanctioned prayer, including at swim meets and football games, where the public address system is used; alleged religious proselytizing by teachers; and opening Lenoir City School Board meeting with sectarian prayer. (See page 3.)

While FFRF had not received a formal response at press time, the Knoxville News Sentinel reported March 21 that the board decided to stop opening meetings with prayer. The school also decided it no longer will allow prayer before football games, said Superintendent Wayne Miller.

Long-term decisions on other issues raised by FFRF and other groups will be made with advice from legal counsel, Miller said. "We sent the letters to our attorney. I'm waiting to hear his response." Miller said. lain." The tradition was for a pastor to lead sectarian prayers over the public address system before games.

The school district's attorney replied Feb. 28, "We are confident that any of the situations that gave rise to your concern have been addressed and will not give rise to any concerns during next year's football season or otherwise."

Letter breaks divine rainbox connection

FFRF put an end to inappropriate prayer in a Manchester, Tenn., kindergarten classroom.

A Hillsboro Elementary School teacher was in the habit of leading her students in daily prayers, according to a local complainant. Children were expected to join their teacher in proclaiming "God is good, God is great." In at least one instance, the teacher told students that rainbows "are a sign from God that he wouldn't flood the world again."

FFRF Senior Staff Attorney Rebecca Markert sent an advisory letter Feb. 28 to Superintendent Kenny Casteel: "Coffee County Schools must take immediate action to stop its teachers from imposing their religious beliefs and practices on their students."

Markert received a positive response March 12 from the director of schools: "The teacher has been reminded of her obligations under the law, and has assured us that no such problems will reoccur. This topic will be brought to the attention of all teachers within the system."

FFRF drives home secular bus message

FFRF's Feb. 10 complaint to the County of Lackawanna Transportation System (COLTS) in Scranton, Pa., led to dropping displays of "God Bless America" on its buses.

Staff Attorney Stephanie Schmitt's letter to COLTS Executive Director Robert Fiume noted that buses flaunted the message on an electronic ticker.

Fiume confirmed on March 5 that the bus company would comply with FFRF's terms and had "updated its PR software to reflect only secular messages."

FFRF assures God has left the building

FFRF forced removal of an unlawful religious display in a hallway at Hononegah Community High School in Rockton, Ill.

FFRF sues over 'Year of the Bible'

Freethought Today

Continued from front page litical outsiders."

The bible "contains violent, sexist and racist models of behavior that FFRF members find personally repugnant and which potentially could encourage persons who rely on them to act in a manner harmful to them and others." HR 535 sends a message of Christian endorsement and disparagement to nonbelievers.

"We heard an outpouring of indignation over this state-sanctioned religion. We've never had so many members volunteer to be part of one of our lawsuits," commented Annie Laurie Gaylor, FFRF co-president.

The complaint names FFRF members: Carl H. Silverman, Justin Vacula, Charlie Miller, Steve Brungard, Michele Grant, John Kelley, Daniel Gallagher, Joyce McChesney, Neil Miller, Heather Miller, Steve Barry, Ryan Foster, Tom Melchiorre, Bob Schachner, Dan Reiff, Harry Geedey, Daniel Matesic, Karl Best, Nicolas Posey, Andrea McCormick, Thomas Johnson, Chuck Berry, Jim Phynn, Erin Kowal, Phillip Lichtenberg, Len Frankel, T. Alexander O'Hare, David Mullinax, Scott Rhodes, Ed Avery-Natale, Wayne Trotta, Frank McGovern, William Wisdom, Stephanie Strazisar, John Murray, Lanny Silks, Bruce Baldwin, Susan Hanna, James Billere, Regis Sabol and Patrick Hughes.

The resolution was sneaked into the agenda for a vote without debate Jan. 24, the day it was introduced, and was included with a group of "noncontroversial resolutions." It passed 193-0. Several House members later apologized for voting "aye" without realizing its content.

The resolution falsely claims the "word of God" and "biblical teachings inspired concepts of civil government."

A sponsor, Rep. Jerry Stern, even claims the First Amendment's Establishment Clause doesn't apply to the State of Pennsylvania!

The complaint quotes Jonathan Malesic, associate professor of theology at King's College, who said HR 535 "flies in the face of Pennsylvania's history," given its founding by William Penn.

"HR 535 improperly proclaims the bible to be 'the word of God,' . . . the Pennsylvania House of Representatives has no such authority or right to determine what is 'the word of God,' or if there is a 'word of God,' or if there is a 'God'," maintains FFRF. Our nation is not founded on religious belief or a bible, but upon "a secular and godless Constitution, which grants sovereignty not to a deity or a 'holy book,' but to 'We the People.' "

FFRF asks the court to find that HR 535 violates the Establishment Clause, to order defendants to discontinue further publication and distribution of HR 535, to declare that public officials in Pennsylvania are indeed subject to the Establishment Clause, to declare that the theocratic principles of the bible do not constitute the "official, preferred or endorsed religion" of the state, and to declare that the government is not "Judeo-Christian."

FFRF v. Saccone was filed by attorneys Lawrence M. Otter, Doylestown, Penn., and Richard L. Bolton, Madison, Wis., on behalf of FFRF. U.S. District Judge Christopher C. Conner, who was appointed in 2002 by President George W. Bush, was assigned the case. Conner notably has ruled against the Affordable Health Care and Patient Protection Act.

Read the legal complaint at: ffrf.org/news/releases/ffrf-sues-over-pennsylvanias-year-of-the-bible/

Overheard

For many of the people I met, evangelical Christianity represented a tiny island of righteousness adrift in a sea of secular evil. At virtually every conference, one or more speakers would warn of the seductions of "the world's" wisdom, which is to say the world outside of their own tiny enclave. As they saw it, evolution was just one tool among many in the arsenal of God's enemies. traception that the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has been trying to impose on Americans of all faiths and beliefs who happen to work at a Catholicsponsored hospital or university. **Rabbi Arthur Waskow, Shalom Center, Philadelphia**

Huffington Post, 2-27-12

Team benches chaplain after FFRF complaint

The Haralson County High School football team in Tallapoosa, Ga., will no longer call upon a "team chaplain" to provide religious support, thanks to FFRF Staff Attorney Stephanie Schmitt.

Schmitt wrote to Superintendent Brett Stanton on Sept. 19, 2011: "A public high school football team should not employ a chaplain, seek out a spiritual leader for the team or agree to have a volunteer team chapThe phrase "In God We Trust" had been prominently featured on a school letterboard for at least 10 years, but FFRF Co-President Anny Laurie Gaylor's March 13 letter to Superintendent Randy Gross changed that.

Gaylor referenced the history of the motto as a "Johnny-come-lately first adopted during the Cold War as a reaction to the purported 'Godlessness' of Communism. American's original motto was purely secular, i.e., 'E Pluribus Unum.'"

A representative of the high school responded March 16 to say that "main-tenance removed the display."



Declare and share your nonbelief in FFRF's online "Out of the Closet" campaign! ffrf.org/out Author Jason Rosenhouse, "What one atheist learned from hanging out with creationists" Huffington Post, 3-21-12

You are all stardust. You couldn't be here if stars hadn't exploded, because the elements (carbon, nitrogen, oxygen, all the things that matter for evolution) weren't created at the beginning of time. They were created in stars. So forget Jesus. Stars died so you can live. **Entertainer Miley Cyrus, quoting physicist Lawrence Krauss in an online post which angered some fans** *The Daily Mail, 3-9-12*

During the last few weeks, we have seen an outrageous attempt to impose sharia law on the U.S. government and the American public. Not Muslim sharia; it is Roman Catholic "sharia" about con-

There are more Christians in the USA than in any country in world history, and few of these Christians feel any compunction about mixing faith and politics. If you don't believe me, just ask the next European visitors you see whether God has been banished from the American public square. I promise they will laugh in your face. **Stephen Prothero, Boston University religion professor, column headlined "Why Santorum is no JFK"** *USA Today, 3-4-12*

Jews don't baptize, so instead I will now proxy-circumcise all the dead Mormons. **Stephen Colbert, riffing on the Mormon practice of posthumously baptizing ev-**

eryone



"The Colbert Report," 2-23-12

April 2012

FFRF challenges school Commandments

A large granite monument bearing the Ten Commandments that sits outside Valley High School in New Kensington, Pa., has got to go, FFRF Staff Attorney Patrick Elliott told the New Kensington-Arnold School District in a March 20 letter.

"Courts have continually held that public schools may not display religious messages or iconography," Elliott wrote.

"Any student will view a permanent 6-foot-tall monument in front of the school entrance as being stamped with the district's approval," he added.

Elliott, who is co-counsel in an ongoing lawsuit in Virginia on a similar issue, *Doe 1 v. School Board of Giles County*, said that dispute has been extremely disruptive to the school environment and could have been avoided. "It is unfortunate that some educators feel it is their place to instruct other people's children on religious edicts. FFRF is committed to defending parental and student constitutional rights."

FFRF will sue if necessary to get the monument moved, said Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor. FFRF's complaint has generated widespread news coverage.

Appeals court hears oral arguments

Attorney George Daly, represented FFRF as local counsel in March 20 oral arguments in its appeal over the Spartanburg County School District 7's (Spartanburg County, S.C.) policy granting academic credit for religious release-time classes held at a church next door to Spartanburg High School.

The case is before the 4th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals in Richmond, Va.

FFRF first filed the lawsuit in U.S. District Court in 2009 on behalf of two district families with schoolchildren. It challenged the policy's constitutionality, arguing that close cooperation between the district and religious educators had the primary effect of advancing religion. The school also excessively entangled church and state by granting a religious institution the power to give public school credits and grades.



This monument, more than 50 years old, sits between two footpath bridges that lead from the parking lot over a small stream to the main entrance of the school.

tract required the school to pay \$2,000 to You Can Run But You Cannot Hide.

The contract specifies that boys, girls, and teachers would be separated for a second portion of the program. The contract says, "The boys will be doing a huge exploration of music, dealing with different artists, what they stand for and don't stand for, their lyrics and more."

"The girls will deal with issues such as the beauty of being a bride, purity, your heart, knowing whom you follow and more." KCRG reported that the girls' program included a statement that girls would have "mud on their wedding dresses" if they weren't virgins and that they should assume a submissive role in the household.

The boys were reportedly given the group's theocratic view of the Constitution during a portion of their program.



Fuera del clóset

Helen Valdés, New York, is in the photo taken by her husband in Phoenix. She writes: "After living 25 years in Puerto Rico, which is predominantly Catholic, it is so wonderful to be out of the closet *and* not be alone. I'm a retired teacher and professional musician. FFRF has been an incredible source of positive energy in my life. Thank you!"



High on freethought

Colorado member Jim Lynch was a long way from home in Tanzania at a base camp below Mount Kilimanjaro. The climb to the top at 19,340 feet, reached on Jan. 25, took five days. Jim made the climb to celebrate his 70th birthday. Several guides and porters and a cook accompanied his group. Jim writes:

"I tried to get the photo on the summit at sunrise but my camera and frozen fingers wouldn't cooperate, so I carried the banner to the top for naught. The climb was much more difficult than I had imagined what with the 10-knot wind and freezing temps. All I really suffered at altitude was the dry heaves. I did meet up with six other people from around the world whom I climbed with and are also nonbelievers — from South Africa, New Zealand, Holland, Australia, Finland and Belgium. Next: Mount Aconcogua [Argentina, 22,841 feet]."

Ministry profits mightily from assembly

In the wake of publicity and complaints, Superintendent Jim Stanton of Dunkerton [Iowa] Community Schools got a verbal lashing from parents at a school board meeting March 13 about an assembly for junior high and high school students presented by the Christian ministry group You Can Run But You Cannot Hide and its musical group Junkyard Prophet.

Stanton apologized and agreed to make changes to the assembly procedures for the school in Dunkertown, a town of about 800 people. The assembly the week before included images of aborted fetuses and derisive comments about gay people.

FFRF received a copy of the assembly contract in response to a request for records from the school. The con-

On Sept. 12, [2001] I used the word "atheist" for the first time. It wasn't too long after that my family stopped returning my phone calls.

Alix Jules, 37, a black atheist from Texas, on how hard it is for African-Americans to "come out" Washington Post, 2-23-12

Contemporary atheists seem loud because for most of human history we were a silent minority or a silenced minority. To use an analogy, the reaction most religious people have to any average atheist proclamation is not very different from the reaction the average male chauvinist has when a woman speaks. The status quo was atheist silence just as it was female silence (and still is in the average theocratic state), and now to hear atheists starting to speak is just unacceptable for so many. **Op-ed by Zubin Adrianvala, University of Maryland doctoral candidate in urban studies and planning** *The Diamondback, 3-7-12*

As a faculty member at an institution of higher education, and as a scientist, however, I question the basic premise that loss of faith is a bad thing. If it is true that those who are more educated have a greater tendency to question their religious faith, shouldn't we consider that this might be telling us more about religious faith than about how harmful getting a college degree can be?

Lawrence M. Krauss, Origins Project director at Arizona State University Washington Post, 2-28-12

I tried many times to educate and talk to them, and let them know we are not second-class citizens. We deserve to be with everybody. It got heated. [The pastor] compared me to a stripper. I get upset just talking about it. He compared me to a stripper and said breastfeeding is lewd and should be covered up and put away.

Nirvana Jenrette, Camden County, Ga., a mother of four who says she was asked to leave church for breastfeeding her baby

WSAV Savannah, 2-29-12

Overheard

Did you know God put the 'fuzz' on coconuts?

FFRF Senior Staff Attorney Rebecca Markert wrote a complaint letter March 22 to Rockingham County Schools about constitutional violations at South End Elementary in Reidsville, N.C.

According to a distraught parent, about 25% of school lessons center around Christian teachings and activities. Included are daily prayers in some classes, overtly religious selections in music class and creationist answers to students' questions.

FFRF's complainant stated when their child asked a teacher why coconuts have fuzz, the teacher answered, "That's the way God made them." Understandbly, the child was unsatisfied with that answer and inquired further, to which the teacher replied, "He made everything in the world along with the world itself. God decided that coconuts should have fuzz."

One of the complainant's children was scolded and threatened with detention when they said they didn't feel comfortable singing a song that intimated that "When we die, we become God's slave."

It's alleged that in one elementary school class, children are told to reach to the ground in a "touch your toes" manner while reciting "no, no, no, no, no," followed by reaching up while saying "yes, yes, yes, yes, yes." When a student asked why they were doing it, they were told that it's because "We don't want to go down there, but we want to go up there to heaven."

When the complainant's child expressed discomfort at being told this, the response was you "have to learn it to grow up right."

When the parent complained to the principal, the principal allegedly replied to the effect that "We don't have to keep God out of the school because everybody who goes there grew up in this town, and they all go to church together."

The next day, the complainant said, the principal told the child that they had to participate in song and prayer, causing the child to cry.

FFRF's letter stated that Principal Elizabeth Lynch should have risen to the occasion to explain to teachers, students and parents that laws were adopted to protect everyone. "Instead, she scolded the complainant's child, flagrantly violating the complainant's wishes, Rockingham County Schools' policies, the North Carolina Constitution and the United States Constitu-

Nobody died for our sins. Jesus Christ is a myth.

FFRF.ORG FREEDOM FROM RELIGION FOUNDATION



Fact vs. fancy

A city park in Streator, Ill., hosts a depiction of the story of Jesus' execution. One cross is cropped from the photo.

In order to accommodate its claim that the park is a public forum, the city of Streator had to provide space for FFRF's banner to counter the Christian scene.

the city views the park as a public forum. FFRF received a permit to place its 8-foot-by-3-foot "Nobody died for our sins" banner in the park. It's expected the banner will be displayed near the crosses from April 4-13.

Tenn. police patch draws FFRF scrutiny

The Lenoir City [Tenn.] Police Department values "Religion" so highly that it includes the word on officers' uniforms. A patch with the motto "Religion, Education, Industry" mars each sleeve.

FFRF sent two letters contesting the eligious patches to Mayor Tony Aikens and Police Chief Don White, the most recent on March 26, noting that decorating public employees' uniforms with references to religion violates the U.S. and Tennessee constitutions. "A 'religious' police force is something to be avoided at all costs," said FFRF Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor. "The citizens of theocratic countries employing religious police citizens of countries like Iran - do not look upon religious police as the guardians of freedom, but as traitors to true freedom." A Knoxville News Sentinel story March 26 reported the response to FFRF from City Attorney James Scott, who said the patch "symbolizes our Police Department's attempt to protect the rights and freedoms associated with any sort of religion. Therefore we view it commensurate with the Establishment Clause.

natural pride and it is merely a 'statement,' " said Scott. Stay tuned.

School speaker pushed religion, abstinence

FFRF Senior Staff Attorney Rebecca Markert wrote a letter March 8 objecting to Chester County High School, Henderson, Tenn., hosting a religious speaker to a "food class."

Brent Lambert, founder of Birth Choice Pregnancy Resource Clinic, was a guest speaker for three class periods. Lambert's lessons reportedly included a PowerPoint presentation listing "good" and "bad" things. "Good" things reportedly included "God, heaven and abstinence." On the "bad" list were the devil, sex and other "sinful" things. According to the local complainant, a parent of an upset student, Lambert told the class that they would not die without sex, but that they would die if they had premarital sex. He told them that science was wrong and God's creation was right. He told them how God has cured cancer in his leg. Birth Choice, according to its website, preaches belief in "the virgin birth, bodily resurrection and ascension . . . the Holy Trinity, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit," and is "committed to upholding God's standard of sexual purity as set forth in scripture."

not handle the backlash from the student body.' "

Texas DOT forum filled with prayers

Staff Attorney Stephanie Schmitt wrote a March 1 letter to the Texas Department of Transportation after receiving a complaint from a Texas Transportation Forum attendee. That atheist attendee felt that sending a personal complaint would put their career at risk.

The complainant stated that at the opening session over breakfast, and again at lunch, the more than 1,300 attendees at the February forum were asked to bow their heads, "and the speaker, a public sector government employee, asked 'Our Father' and 'Lord' to bless us and our meals, etc."

Schmitt noted that asking attendees to pray and say grace is "coercive, embarrassing and beyond the scope of secular state government and events sponsored by it." The letter requested that the Texas DOT ban prayer from all of its events.

Mich. Islamist sign draws FFRF complaint

In early March, a snarky complaint arrived from Michigan, wondering if FFRF cared that a public school in Dearborn, Mich., was endorsing Islam on its flashing lighted sign. The complainant was "curious why [FFRF] never seem[s] to be bothered by the blatant Muslim" constitutional violations.

In fact, FFRF is concerned by all violations of the Establishment Clause. Therefore, Senior Staff Attorney Rebecca Markert wrote a letter of complaint March 22 to the executive direc-*Continued on page 17*



tion."

FFRF banner counters crucifixion scene

A new sign from FFRF will be going up soon in Streator, Ill. FFRF complained in December about the use of a city park by a religious group. The Streator Freedom Association placed a nativity display with a sign that said, "Unto you is born the Savior Jesus Christ the Lord."

FFRF complained about the display and also wrote that the same group had placed three crosses, representing the purported crucifixion of Jesus, in the park in the weeks leading up to Easter for several years, along with a sign that said, "Jesus died for your sins."

An attorney for the city responded in March to FFRF, saying that the displays would continue to be allowed as

"Our officers view the patch with

Markert questioned how the presentation related to "food class," and said FFRF had to contact the district because the "complainant's child feels unsafe complaining because they 'canFFRF Staff Attorney Stephanie Schmitt wrote a letter of complaint Feb. 24 to Mayor Ambrose Buckman in Excelsior Springs, Mo., about this large Latin cross in Siloam Mountain Park, a city park. The cross is lighted at night and is featured on the city's website. Freethought Today

Madison, Wisconsin

April 2012



At least 10,000 people attended the Reason Rally on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. It was sponsored by secular groups, including FFRF.



FFRF Co-Presidents Dan Barker and Annie Laurie Gaylor address the crowd.

FFRF at Reason Rally March 23, 2012

Photos by Andrew Seidel, more photos: http://www.flickr.com/photos/freedomfromreligionfoundation/



Musician Tim Minchin, the Amazing James Randi and "Mythbusters'" Adam Savage wait in the wings to go on stage.





Dan sings his song, "Just Say No to Religion!"







Andrew Seidel, FFRF constitutional consultant, enjoys the moment.

Rain off and on didn't spoil this parade.







Shelley Segal, Australian atheist troubador, sang for FFRF at its pre-rally dinner party and at the rally.





Famous state/church litigants Jessica Ahlquist and speaker Ellery Schempp at FFRF's March 23 dinner party.



FFRF staffers Annie Laurie Gaylor, Jackie Douglas and Katie Daniel greet diners.

More photos Pages 23-24.



FFRF handed out thousands of free placards and goodies at its popular booth at the Reason Rally.

Noted author/atheist Barbara Ehrenreich receives her Emperor Has No Clothes Award from Dan Barker at FFRF's post-rally dinner party March 24.



FFRF was picketed by the Westboro Baptist Church "klan" in D.C. That's Katie Daniel giving thumbs down.

Jerry Coyne — 2011 Emperor Has No Clothes Awardee

'Odd couple' science, religion can't cohabit

Professor Jerry Coyne accepted FFRF's Emperor Has No Clothes Award with this speech Oct. 8, 2011, in Hartford, Conn. It has been edited for print.

By Jerry Coyne

hanks very much to Dan and Annie Laurie for inviting me. It's sort of ironic that I get a statue of a naked emperor when I've taken such great pains to be sartorially splendid today. My friends will tell you they never see me wear a suit except at a wedding or a funeral, but I knew Steve Pinker was going to be here. I know he wears tailored Italian suits and I couldn't let him outdo me. Unfortunately, I can't do anything about the hair.

I'm not really going to talk about the evidence for evolution today as Dan might have implied because that's in my book which you can buy for a pittance outside. I'll be glad to sign it.

I want to talk mostly about the compatibility of science and religion. I started off as an evolutionary biologist fighting creationism, because that's the main opponent you face if you try to teach evolution to kids. Over years and years of doing this and writing a book and newspaper and magazine articles, I realized things weren't budging very much in America and that the rate of acceptance of evolution was pretty much stuck at 40%.

It's not because people aren't aware of the facts. We have people like myself and Dawkins, Carl Sagan and Steve Gould that have been promulgating evolution for years and years. Nevertheless, nothing's happened. It's 40% and it's been that way for 30 years.

There's only one reason for that, and that's religion. Religion prevents people from accepting evolution, the great religion destroyer. As the years went on, I gradually transmogrified from being an evolutionary biologist to an evolutionary biologist atheist. Now I'm more of an atheist than an evolutionary biologist, and I realize that creationism, the opposition to evolution, is the *least* of our worries, compared to someone throwing acid in the face of a schoolgirl in Afghanistan for religious reasons.

Kids learning that the Genesis story



we have the evidence and they don't. I think I have to say something more though to earn my statue, so I will go into a little more detail.

Bogus buddies

The problem I call "accommodationism" is increasingly widespread in the U.S. It's the view that science and religion are buddies. They answer different kinds of questions but in different spheres but they can be harmonious, and maybe they can help each other or mutually reinforce each other. I think that's completely bogus.

The problem is pervasive, it's everywhere. Francis Collins, head of the National Institutes of Health is the most famous scientist in America. He's an evangelical Christian who founded the group called the Biologos Forum, funded by the John Templeton Foundation, which is totally devoted to reconciling evangelical Christianity to evolution.

The Templeton Foundation itself is one of the greatest miscreants in this whole mess. Its mission is to basically blur the boundaries between science and religion. It does that by posing religious questions that are not only poorly framed but unanswerable. Nevertheless, it dispenses \$70 million a year in grants to scientists and theologians to try to blur these boundaries.

Scientific organizations themselves, to their great discredit, frequently issue statements saying science and faith are compatible. Here's the American Association for the Advancement of Science: "Science and religion ask fundamentally different questions about the world." (A) That's not true and (B) even if it were, only one of those areas actually provides answers to the questions. widespread opposition to black holes or gravity or antibiotics. It's because evolution hits you in the solar plexus if you're religious. It attacks the most powerful argument for god that ever existed, which is the design argument.

This is why only 40% of Americans accept evolution, and most of those accept the god-driven version of evolution, which isn't the way we scientists conceive of it.

If you survey Americans themselves, they believe science and religion are incompatible. Indeed, many believe that their own religion and science are incompatible. We have this high rate of atheism among scientists, which to me can only mean there's something about being a scientist that makes you discard religion.



About 16% of Americans are atheists or agnostics. If you look at scientists at "elite" universities — a survey done by Elaine Eckland recently showed 72% of them described themselves as agnostics or atheists. If you look at members of the elite National Academy of Sciences, 93% of them are agnostics or atheists. Only 7% say they believe in a personal god. This is prima facie evidence to me of incompatibility.

You get a violent reaction when you claim otherwise. I wrote an article for USA Today last year, "Science and Religion Aren't Friends." It got a *huge* number of comments, so many in fact, that although USA Today is not the most liberal publication, they want to let me keep writing for them because they know it stirs up controversy.

Two days ago, [conservative political commentator] Andrew Sullivan got really angry at me when I said the Garden of Eden is clearly wrong, and the Adam and Eve story has been disproven by genetics. Sullivan said we all knew this all along. That it's a metaphor and that nobody ever believed this story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden is true. Which of course speaks to a complete ignorance of the history of Sullivan's own Catholicism. "Are science and religion in conflict?" About 55% of Americans say yes, they are. If you ask them whether science conflicts with their beliefs, 36% say yes. So, despite the ministrations of Francis Collins, the scientific academies, etc., we still have this pervasive belief amongst Americans that their faith conflicts with science. And it does! For the rest of this lecture, I'll show you why.

Evolution hits you in the solar plexus if you're religious.

in Time magazine was from a 2006 poll that asked, "If science found a fact that contravened one of the dictates of your faith, what would you do?" Would you give up your faith or that tenet of your faith? Would you give up the fact or what?

What percentage of Americans do you think would reject a well-established scientific fact to keep the tenets of their faith? Maybe 20% to 30%? It's 64%. If anything demonstrates the incompatibility of science and religion, it's that statistic.

There are lots of other conflicts. Look at what Americans believe about the literal truth of the bible. I'll concentrate mostly on the Abrahamic faiths. What percentage believes in the literal existence of angels? It's 78%, so 8 out of 10 of your neighbors, and maybe you've met some of them. The women who used to take care of my cat thought angels were real.

A survey of 32 European countries about how religious they are versus how much they accept evolution shows that the countries that are the most religious have the least acceptance of Darwin. Where do we fall? It's shameful. U.S. acceptance: 40%. The only lower point is Turkey, which is a fundamentalist Muslim country.

This could mean maybe if you learn Darwinism you'll reject religion with this negative correlation. I think it's more likely an explanation that if you're religious to begin with as a kid, you don't accept Darwinism. So this is a conflict between the subject dear to my heart which is evolution and religious belief.

So we have the assertion that science and religion are compatible. We have the palpable evidence that people believe they're not compatible, and we have all this brouhaha in the press. The question is *why* is this happening right now? It's a sociological question.

The 'faitheists'

is true is trivial. My opposition to religion goes far beyond its effects on teaching evolution, but I want to concentrate today on its effects on science in general and in particular on a topic that's been of great interest lately: The so-called harmony of religion and science.

I titled my talk "The Odd Couple: Why Science and Religion Can't Cohabit," because it's an attack on the view that science and religion are not only compatible but can be buddies, that both have ways of finding out stuff in this world. That's complete hogwash. Today I want to tell you why, as a scientist who has studied religion painfully.

I could give this talk with one quote from Christopher Hitchens: "What can be asserted without evidence can also be dismissed without evidence." That's all you need to show that science and religion are incompatible, because The most elite body of scientists in the United States is the National Academy Of Science. (It's so elite that I'm not even a member.) They issued a statement saying science and religion are separate and address aspects of human understanding in different ways.

These organizations are always putting out statements saying, "Science and religion are different. They don't have to conflict with each other. They address different aspects of human experience." But despite this profusion of warm, fuzzy-minded accommodationism, there's still evidence in our society of a profound conflict between science and religion.

Why is there widespread opposition to evolution? We don't have

Angels but not Darwin

A very astounding statistic I found

There's a view which is very widespread amongst what I call "faitheists," who are the atheists who are religion friendly. You'll never make religious people accept science unless you tell them that science and religion are compatible. You have to tell them this message in order to get them to come out for evolution and everything else.

There's not a shred of evidence this is true, in fact. Most evangelicals who have been converted to science have been converted by people like Dawkins, Harris and Hitchens.

This is very common. People don't want to be seen as miscreants or militants or polemicists. A lot of religious people want to keep their faith but don't want to be seen as backward. You want to accept science but keep that view in your brain that maybe you're going somewhere after you die. So you have to say, in order to maintain this cognitive dissonance, that science and religion are compatible with one another.

Religious people are antsy because they see their sphere of influence shrinking. They also see, which is true, that there's no purpose or meaning in the universe or anything like that, a statement made famous by Steven Weinberg. Most theologians can't put up with this purposelessness.

When I use an example of a theologian in this talk, I'm going to use John Haught because I'm going to debate him in about five days in Kentucky. This is sort of a long version of that talk. He can stand in for any theologian. The same kind of "only good" god issues from him as from any other of these so called "sophisticated theologians."

John Haught, by the way, is the prime accommodationist among modern American theologians. He's written gazillions of books showing Darwinism and evolution are friends and compatible. We can't abide the conviction the universe and life are pointless — pointless from a celestial standpoint rather than our own standpoint.

Religious people are antsy because they see their sphere of influence shrinking.

Why does this matter? Why am I lecturing to you, and why do I write editorials for USA Today? First of all, the pollution of science by superstition. I'm a pure scientist. I like my science unsullied by people like Francis Collins, who maintains morality itself is evidence for god. Or why Ken Miller says "Evolution may work, but god's there pushing it from behind or pulling it toward some ultimate point," which of course is us.

The false idea that other ways of knowing are valid as science — this is the non-overlapping magisteria argument Rebecca Newberger Goldstein talked about last night. These accommodationists make unfair and untenable criticisms of science. The false idea is that religion can produce knowledge. Religion doesn't increase any kind of knowledge. Science does. If you're religious and think you have a handle on the truth, you'll act in certain ways that are, in general, inimical for society. If you think you have a handle on the truth and that that truth comes from "God" and religion is a way of really knowing that truth, then you'll do stuff in society that is not very good.

who is the originator of many *bons mots*: "The first principle is that you must not fool yourself, and you're the easiest person to fool." You have to be very careful about that.

Science is an elaborate construction of rules and practices designed to keep you from fooling yourself, to keep you from believing what you really want to believe. The worst thing that can happen to a scientist is to try to show what's true is what you want to be true. That's a real sin. Of course in religion, that's completely the opposite. That's the purpose of religion.

Science is summarized in this quote by a researcher at CERN, which is a European nuclear facility in Switzerland, when they found neutrinos might have gone faster than the speed of light. That's really a revolutionary scientific finding, and immediately one of the people at CERN said, "The correct attitude is to ask what went wrong." Immediate doubt about something — that's *so* revolutionary.

Imagine this applied to religion. Jesus rose from the dead after three days. We have to ask ourselves, "What went wrong? That *can't* be right!" [Laughter] Religion operates differently. You know how it operates, particularly those like Dan who used to be religious. It's based on dogma, authority and revelation and not empirical observation in nature.

Religious people will deny this to their death, but it's true. Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. That's the way religious people "know" stuff. They just find it in their heads through intuition. Or they're taught it by their parents.

Religious ideas don't change by finding out more stuff about nature. Religion does not progress in its understanding of the divine, if there were a divine. Theology or religion changes because of two things: Science shows it's wrong, which is what happened with evolution and Adam and Eve and the flood stories. Or secular morality forces religion to change because they just can't stand up against secular ways of morality, which is what Steve Pinker was talking about last night. Things like gay rights and rights of women have been pushed on churches by changes in secular views, not by religious people themselves.

In science, faith is a vice. In religion, faith is a virtue. In science, there are ways of knowing that you're wrong. I could give you a list of evidence that would convince me that evolution was wrong: fossils in the wrong place, adaptations in one species that are only useful for another species, a whole list of them. None has ever been found.

People say religion and science *have* to be compatible because there are scientists, good scientists, who are religious. And lots of religious people accept science, so obviously they're compatible. My answer to that is, if you're going believe that, you have to believe Catholicism and pedophilia are compatible because a great number of Catholics are pedophiles. [Applause]

This doesn't show compatibility in anything more than a trivial sense. What it shows is that as humans we have an amazing ability to hold two different contradictory concepts in our mind. Walt Whitman said, "I contradict myself. Very well then, I contradict myself." That's what these guys are doing. It shows cognitive dissonance. It doesn't show compatibility.

Religious 'truths'

The incompatibility rests then on three things. First is the methodology. In science we are wedded to *nondivine* explanations for a natural phenomenon. We don't sit there and pray for an answer. We go into our labs or out in the field and look for stuff. And that works! We actually find things out, like antibiotics and how to fly to the moon. We can make predictions.

Think of all the advances due to quantum mechanics. That's all due to assuming that god doesn't interrupt our experiments with erratic interpositions from time to time. This methodological naturalism has brought forth a philosophical form of naturalism



which theologians really hate. It's the view that since assuming there's nothing supernatural has helped us make so much progress, then there must not be anything supernatural, because assuming there is a supernatural hasn't helped us one iota in understanding anything about the universe. So we have methodological and philosophical incompatibility and incompatibility in conclusions reached about the universe. When science and religion interrogate nature, you get different results.

Some examples of things that are religious truths are the creation myth, the great flood, the efficacy of prayer, the afterlife, etc. Science doesn't support the existence of these things. It didn't have to be that way. It could have been that scientific research found there was a great flood, that everything was creat-

Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

ed instantaneously, that Adam and Eve were real people. Genetics could have told us that, and that there was virgin birth and resurrection. At least some people could have been parthenogenic and women could give birth to males without being inseminated.

There's an incompatibility of results as well, so it's threefold; methodology, philosophy and results. It could be scripture did give us an accurate scientific understanding of the world, but it didn't. If it's inspired by god, then you have to ask yourself "why not?"

The answer from theologians to what I just said is invariably this: But the bible *isn't* a textbook of science; it's not meant to tell scientific truth.

When you hear that, you have to reinterpret it as this: The bible is not true. That's what they mean when they say it's not a textbook of science.

When you ask them further, you find out maybe it is a textbook of science in some ways. Some things are clearly metaphors. Those are things that science has disproven like the flood and evolution. The biblical science tells us there was a son of God named Jesus who was resurrected after three days, born of a virgin and he's going to come back some day and send us all up, or down.

Fooling themselves

What science is

Science is a sophisticated form of common sense. It's an exquisitely tuned, exquisitely baroque way of finding out stuff about the universe, the same way a mechanic, plumber or engineer finds out stuff. It's just codified by the pervasiveness of doubt, by the use of replication of experiments by different people, by the tenet that any scientific theory you can make has to be falsifiable in some way before it'll be generally accepted.

Scientific knowledge grows by testing hypotheses against what we see in nature — interrogating nature. The best characterization of science I know of was uttered by Richard Feynman

FFRF officer Jim Coors (right) presenting the Emperor Has No Clothes Award to Jerry Coyne. (All photos by Jeff Yardis.)

The people who said the bible isn't true aren't being true to themselves. They think *some* parts are true. They are never going to say this to you. Just ask them that. And the rest is just metaphor.

There is another palpable difference between science and religion. What do you do when you make an assertion about the world that you know turns out to be false? In science it goes into the dustbin of discarded results like cold fusion or any number of falsified theories.

When a religious claim is falsified like creation or Adam and Eve, it simply turns into a metaphor. "We didn't really mean it, folks. It wasn't meant that way. It means something else completely."

Nevertheless, religious people do claim that they do find truth. Here's John Haught again: "Religion is about *Continued on next page*

Continued from previous page

the deepest of all realities. Anyone who takes it seriously, it's about what is *most* real. Indeed, it's about absolute reality."

I looked up the word reality after I read that. It's "real existence." What's real rather than imagined or desired? In that sense, religion doesn't tell us anything about reality. It tells us what's imagined or desired, not what is out there.

Does religion produce truth? No. I've interrogated readers on my website about this for three years by asking them "Give me one example about the truth of the universe that religion has produced." I should start offering a prize for that. There's never been an answer, at least one that makes sense.

Religious inquiry doesn't produce the truth about the universe. Theological knowledge doesn't expand. It just changes from one form to another, sort of like literary criticism.

Religion answers the big questions that science can't handle. This is what John Haught said. It's the main business of religion to answer the really big questions. We scientists only have

Evolution is the most profound argument against the existence of god.

to answer the tiny little questions like "Where did the universe come from?" or "Where did we come from?" But the really big questions like "What is our purpose" or "Where do we go after we die?" — that's the job of religion.

They really do think they provide answers to questions, and of course they don't. None of these questions have been answered by religions. Or if they have been, different religions give you different answers. If you're a Muslim and you believe Jesus is the savior, you're doomed. If you're a Christian and you believe Muhammad is the savior, you're doomed as well.

If you press a theologian, they'll actually admit they don't have these answers. Haught again: "We really can't say what the point of everything is because it's all so fuzzy."

When you look at it hard enough, modern sophisticated theology is functionally indistinguishable from atheism, because they'll just waffle and waffle.

to support the existing paradigm.

Finally, there are unfounded claims to understand the nature and intention of god. Any faiths not agreeing with theologians' claims are deemed incorrect faiths.

Here's a prime example of the bible not saying what it seems to say. Up until about 100 years ago, everyone thought the Adam and Eve story was true, that all of us came from two progenitors. The bible says this very clearly. In the last couple of weeks, genetics has shown this is all bunk, as if we didn't know that already. The numbers of ancestors of modern humanity was, at a minimum, 1,200 to 12,000 about 20,000 to 40,000 years ago. So what do theologians do? They make stuff up.

They say, "Well, there were lots of people, but only two of them were the designated beneficiaries of god like Adam and Eve." You wouldn't believe the stories theologians have made up to try to get around this intellectual fact of genetics.

If you find something like that is false, and you look at a book and all the stories turn out to be false scientifically, what you should do is be more skeptical of that book. That, of course, isn't what happened. If Adam and Eve turns into a metaphor, the reaction you should give to a Christian is, "Well, then Jesus died for a metaphor." And theologians aren't down with that view.

Here's another case of what theologians do when faced with a case of stuff that doesn't exist: The afterlife. John Haught really admits there isn't any evidence for an afterlife.

He does this with his usual verbal obfuscation: "If I were to try to illicit scientific evidence of immortality, I would just be capitulating to the narrow empiricism that underlies the natural belief." That translation: We don't have any evidence, folks.

Nevertheless, it's still there, and why is it there? Because you have hope. You have hope, and that hope is what makes it true. That's completely the opposite of what science does. It's the assurance of things hoped for. John Haught is making stuff up.

We know when we look around us, there's not much evidence for god in the world today. We don't see miracles. We see suffering, we see death. We see tsunamis and earthquakes. Where's god? John says that "the ultimate reality is beyond our grasp. We can't see god because if we could grasp it, it would not be ultimate."

This is, first of all, a profound tautology. Secondly, it rests on our misunderstanding of the word "ultimate," because ultimate things can be graspable. But this is the kind of verbal prestidigitation that theologians engage in. And when you see there's no evidence for god, it's far more parsimonious to come up with this hypothesis: "The invisible and the nonexistent look very much alike." [Laughter]



ed into the bosom of Jesus.

The Earl of Gloucester in "King Lear" says, "As flies to wanton boys, are we to the gods, they kill us for their sport." I've rewritten this according to the view that many theologians hold: As actors are to an audience, are we to the gods, they watch us for their sport.

Every possible observation can be comported with religion. Anytime you find something new, you don't overturn your paradigm. You save it by some judicious circumlocution. Evolution used to be a god killer. It's the most profound argument against the existence of god that science has ever come up with. What do the theologians do? Do they reject god? No friggin' way. They say, "It's really a tribute to god that the world isn't just passive putty in his hands but instead is inherently active and a self-creative process, one that can evolve and produce new life."

If you're the Church Lady, if you remember "Saturday Night Live," you'd look at this and say, "Well, isn't that special." [Laughter]

When you see stuff like this rationalization of evolution, we should have known that god really meant it all along. If that's so, why isn't it in scripture? When you see that kind of rationalization, I think of theologies as a kind of sausage grinder where you feed in scientific necessities like evolution and our human ancestry at one end, and theologians turn them into religious virtues at the other. This is "the way god really wanted it, and isn't it wonderful that he wanted it that way?"

Accusing science

Finally, unfounded claims to understand the nature and intention of god. According to Haught, God has this extravagant divine generosity that's produced all these wonderful species. The question is how does he know that? If you look around the world, you can equally say god was mischievous or apathetic or even a bit malicious. John is not only making up stuff, but he's claiming to know something about the nature of god, which he has no right to know. Religious people, because they're backed into a corner by science, start counter-accusing science as being bad: "Science is a faith like religion." "Science can't prove that god doesn't exist," which is wrong because you can prove the nonexistence of something. You can prove for example that I do not own a Maserati. Just look at my garage. Look at my bank account, etc. "Science fosters scientism." That's the view that science is the only reliable guide to truth. That's a common accusation. In my view, science is the only reliable guide to truth if you construe science broadly as rationality combined with empiricism. "Science gives us no moral grounding." Maybe it does if it's evolved. And so what? That doesn't prove that Jesus gives us moral grounding. And finally, "science has been misused." Well, fine. There have been scientists that have

misused stuff as have religious people.

So in the end, when you ask yourself if science and religion are compatible, can there be a constructive dialogue between them — and many people may maintain this like the National Academy — the answer is NO. There can be no constructive dialogue between science and religion. There can be a monologue between science and religion but it's not a constructive one. It's a destructive one. It's because science can contribute to faith by showing their assertions about the world are wrong.

Why does it really matter that science and religion are incompatible? Who cares if there are some religious scientists out there? It's a matter of not only how you possess the truth and how you come to it, but what you do with the truth.

Science is a methodology about finding out objective information about the world. That's all it is. If you have antibiotics or an atom bomb, what you do with an antibiotic or an atom bomb depends on considerations like ethics and morality and other things that don't come from science.

Religion is different because religion starts with ideas about ethics and morality and beliefs and then confirms them in these sort of roundabout ways that I mentioned before. That's dangerous.

We're constantly accused of being arrogant, and the religious people say they're humble. We're actually the humble ones because we always admit our truths are tentative, whereas religious people think they have the handle on truth.

If you think you have the handle on truth that comes from above, then you're going to act on it and will act on it in a much less tentative and much more malicious way than people who have come to the truth through reason and empiricism.

Here's one example: Some think of the Catholic Church as a warm, fuzzy faith. Here are some of the tenets of Catholicism that have come from their belief in the errancy of scripture: Opposition to birth control, opposition to birth control to prevent AIDS in Africa and opposition to abortion.

That all comes from scripture and the belief we know what's true and that humans have souls. More scripture: God made marriage indissoluble. Opposition to homosexuality to control people's sex lives. Making women second-class citizens. Installation of fear and guilt in children. Children being terrorized into adulthood by Catholic teachings. Protection of priests who abuse children, which now in my view

Theologians fooling you

I want to finish with some ways I've discerned theologians behave unscientifically when dealing with the problems of science. You should be aware of the maneuvers they make.

First of all, they say the bible doesn't mean what it seems to say, that it's a metaphor in many ways.

Secondly, they say theology is different from science because its purpose is to confirm what you already believe rather than to test what you already believe.

Third, when you're pressed into a corner like Adam and Eve, you make stuff up. You have to comport new observations with god's plan. That's different from science. When you find a new and unusual observation, we may have to overturn the existing paradigm. In theology, you have to use that Another thing theologians do that scientists don't is to rationalize everything you find or will find as being part of god's plan. Evolution used to be a god killer. Now we know that actually that's what god wanted.

Why do we see suffering in the world? Why do little kids get cancer? Why do tsunamis wipe out hundreds of thousands of people? It's because god likes that kind of drama, according to John Haught.

He set the world so it would be just like this magnificent play in which all these things unfold, new species arise, and it's just a magnificent drama and everything's being pulled toward this huge future in which we're all unfoldhas gone so far up in the Vatican that it's official policy.

This all comes from people thinking they know that they have a handle on the truth, that their revelation is a way to find out what truth is. That they *have* to act on the basis of that truth because (A) it comes from god and (B) truth comes with a package of beliefs and morality that was there in the first place.

Real truth comes only from empirical investigation and analysis. I am an advocate of scientism in that respect, science properly construed.

When religion comes up against science, the outcome is inevitable, as Stephen Hawking said last year: "Science will win because it works."

Thanks very much.

Jerry Coyne is a professor in the Department of Ecology and Evolution at the University of Chicago and author of the 2009 book Why Evolution is True.

FFRF Legal Complaints

Continued from page 11

tor of Central Michigan University, who is in charge of the Center for Charter Schools.

Markert's letter described why the sign in front of the public charter school Riverside Academy West, which at one point read "To Allah We Belong & To Him We Return," raised "serious concerns under Michigan and federal law."

Michigan law states that a charter school cannot be religiously affiliated. Though this school used to be the American Islamic Academy, upon conversion to a government-run charter school, the school sponsorship of a religious message became impermissible. The letter included a picture of the sign sent by complainant and stated that "any religious postings or messaged displayed at Riverside Academy West must be removed promptly."

The letter also requested "an immediate investigation" and asked for a written reply detailing the steps that the Center for Charter Schools is taking to remedy these constitutional concerns.

Boards trust entirely too much in God

In March, FFRF's legal department sent several letters of complaint over "In God We Trust" displays, calling them divisive and stating they have no place on government property. For instance, Staff Attorney Stephanie Schmitt's March 14 letter to the Camarillo [Calif.] City Council said that "citizens are frequently compelled to come before you on important civic matters and to participate in important decisions affecting their livelihood, their property and [their] quality of life. These citizens should not be made to feel offended, excluded and like political outsiders because the local government they support with their taxes oversteps its power by prominently placing a religious statement at the

seat of government."

On March 13, FFRF Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor wrote to the Weld City Council in Greeley, Colo., and the Clark Township supervisor in Cedarville, Mich., to state that the "prominent posting of 'In God We Trust' [on government property sent] an unfortunate message of exclusion to those citizens who do not believe in God."

Kansas Legislature steeped in prayer

The religious atmosphere in the Kansas Senate and House of Representatives drew fire in March 20 letters to legislative leaders from FFRF Co-Presidents Annie Laurie Gaylor and Dan Barker.

The House, which regularly opens sessions with prayer, saw one get completely out of hand March 15 when Fr. James Gordon of St. John Vianney Catholic Church delivered a controversial sectarian prayer against abortion rights and gay rights. He delivered this prayer "in Jesus' name" and referenced political concerns despite House policy and practice prohibiting those types of prayers and references. Gordon prayed to the House, "We ask you to strengthen our understanding of traditional marriage: one man and one woman. We ask you to bring us back to virtuous morals in society, morals that kept us from killing a child in the womb through abortion. We ask you to defend us now in the fight for true religious freedom and freedom of conscience, that seems to be threatened now in the public sphere."

Local observers of the prayers to open Senate sessions noted that all but one in 2012 have ended "in Jesus' name" or a variation thereof. Senate Chaplain Fred Hollomon, in the job for 30 years, appears to almost always end prayers with "in the name of Jesus Christ." The review of prayers also shows Pastor Hollomon also has quite the imagination:

"Heavenly Father, I wonder what Jesus would do if He were a member of the Kansas Senate.... The last time He was on earth, He completed only three years of His term! And that was to benefit others. I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen."

FFRF contested similar violations in the Oklahoma Legislature in early March.

Sharing the Crank Mail

A lot of this issue's mail, printed as received to preserve the full flavor, commented on FFRF's March 9 full-page ad in the New York Times asking Catholics to quit the church.

cowards

your founders are cowards they never respond to my emails. SO FFRF you all are communist cowards defend yourself Bitch Gaylor and Peckerhead Barker. Organizations like yours should not be allowed to exist in this country. — d jones, wetumpka, Alabama

Hey loser

Hey asswipe pick on your own church, if you have one, or burn away in the next life. — William Brennan

Disgustinginly EVIL

With your screed in the NEW YORK SLIMES you have descended to ever new lows and you have placed yourself on record of your depravity and your now open revolt against God and His Most Holy Roman Catholic Church. Disgusted with your actions and finding it very difficult, and nigh on impossible, in fact, to even pray for your conversion as one should not throw pearls before swine lest they trample it under foot!!! — Steve DeAngelo

YOU NY SLIME ARTICLE

OBAMA'S DEMANDS OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH ARE CONTRIVED AND MEANT about each other ? Dan must beat you often ? $- \mbox{ carl kaiser}$

FUCK YOU

Fuck you, you anti catholic scum bags. - Deacon247

New york

Your oranization is dumb and a Hypocrite. maybe your mothers should have aborted the organization. — Thomas Esquivel

Thank you

You suck, and we outnumber you. 'Nuff said. – Joan

The Church

We dont purify sinners and blasphemers by burning at the stake these days. Bad for the environment and hard to get a permit!! — Ed Olearczyk, Allentown Pa

Good luck with your new (old) religion

"Reproductive Freedom" : everyone knows this is your "fig leaf" for killing the unborn. And severely separating sexual love from the transmission of life, reducing it to the moral equivalent of a sneeze. — David Stivers

Your Ad is Despicable

our ad in the NY Times is insulting to people of faith everywhere. Perhaps when we vote out the Hawaiian in the white house, your rude man-

many Bod Fearing Believers - you asshall Jerky!
(Dan & annie "FUCK HEADS")
GO HANG YOURSELVES
0

tion of a venomous spider, or moans that mass murderers should be given a reprieve from the death sentence, while in the same pestilential breath, you squeal about 'women's rights' to murder their own children within their womb pretending that it is an act of humanity to do so. You are sick, twisted people and so mentally ill that it is seriously doubtful that any remedy exists to restore your minds to sanity. — Pauly Walnuts

Fostering ill will

I thank God each Sunday that I can attend a Church, and that I know enough history to recall the many advances made by women due to the munity in North Carolina. Men have fought and died to allow you to have your twisted believes. Enjoy them to yourself. — Alan Daniels

The Catholic Church

Do you hate men that much that you have to spread your venon against them by attempting to twist the mind of women to agree with your perverted way of life. Anyone that stands for what you do, contraception, abortifacients and sterilations is about as evil as one can get. God forgive you for what you do that is as evil as the Jewish holocoust. — John Michel

IO PUT THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN AN UNTENABLE POSIT ON SO THAT HE CAN FINE THEM UNTIL HE CAN TAKE OVER THE HOSPITALS AND PUT HIS OWN MANAGERS IN PLACE TO ENFORCE HE DEATH PAN-ELS WHICH HE KNOW S THE CATHOLIC CHURCH WILL NOT DO. YOU BIGOTS ONLY WANT TO HEAR THE SOUND OF YOUR OWN VOICE SPEWING VENOM.

NY Times ad concerning HHS mandate

Your belief that women should have the right to engage in recreational sex and have it subsidized by Church affiliated organizations does not give you the right to spread hurtful and hateful lies about my beloved Church. — In Christ's love, Chris Pampo

Attack on Catholics etc.

I never see you attacking the Jews assholes. How about a little equality? - VIRGINIA PIC-CININNI

Regarding "Quitting the Church"

From your article, I'd reply: "It's Time to Quit Reading the New York Times." — Robbe L. Sebesta

Times ad

hey annie, how do you & Ms. Fluke feel

ners will change. It is clear the your organization is as un American as Fidel Castro, Adolph Hitler and the Obama clan. Your disgusting. — Joe C

thank you for your attack on the catholic church

if the church had followed the leaders of the boy scouts, on their policy concerning homosexuals,,we would not have our catholic children being attacked by homosexual priests.. – Jack D

FRONTAL ASSAULT ON CATHOLICISM

Just look at the performance of this once great paper, in it's new form as the Gray Slut (CUNT??) as Bill Maher "jokes", we can see the decline by the hour. Your end can't come soon enough. — Herrmann Glockler

FRONTAL ASSAULT

Go to the PPVI Institute and look up Dr. Hiligers work on fertility. Then let me know if the Catholic Church isnt cutting edge when it comes to being Pro-Women. — Holly Harrington

Ignorance

I have to tell you that you people are ignorant, hate-filled,dishonest, hate-spewing antilife bigots - the type who whines over the extincChurch's influence. — Jane Gilroy

The Time Machine

Your arms are too short to box with God. — kerry

Think again

Me thinks you are afraid. Afraid of the Catholic Church. Truly, you should be afraid, very afraid. We are awesome....Boo! — Donna

Pennsylvania school Ten Commandments

It seems like your a group of "Mis-Fits" who just can't pull up your pants and face the world that God has created. Get a life. Get a good paying job. Pick a religion & Praise Jesus! — KJ

new kensington

The ten commandments in new Ken is t bothering anyone. I mean you do realize that the dollar bill says in God we trust, and the pledge of allegiance says one natiom under God. You all need to get off your high horses and actually think before,you file a stupid frivelous lawsuit. — phil stegner

Mine your own business

Please keep your believes out of my com-

What\'s wrong with America

It's freedom OF religion, NOT from religion you fools! You need to be shut down ASAP — Dale Gross

Gaylor the Baby Killer

I recently recieved a post stating that Ms. Gaylor ran an abortion organization and has referred thousands of women for abortion and she founded FFRF because religion oppresses womens rights but yet did not abort your own 4 children. Very two-faced to me. What will it take for FFRF to cease to exist? The return of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. You dont believe now but just wait one day Ms Gaylor and Mr. Barker will bow and confess Jesus Christ as Lord. — David Jones

Scum bags

Leave us alone in the Pittsburgh area you scum bags. Don't want ya and sure as hell don't need ya. Eat your freaking cheese and leave us alone!!!! — Ed Ewonce, Coraopolis, PA

FNY Times ad

When it comes to your place in eternity, would you prefer the smoking section or the non-smoking section....think for a minute — Tony Barlogio

Black Collar Crime Blotter

Compiled by Bill Dunn

Arrested / Charged

Curtis G. Mathews, 50, Hopewell, VA: 2 counts of using a communication device to facilitate sex with a minor. Mathews, pastor of Springfield Baptist Church, is accused of using a computer to arrange a sexual encounter with a Petersburg teen, whose guardian notified police. *Source: Richmond Times-Dispatch, 3-15-12*

Efrain Bernal, 41, Hemet, CA: Sodomy with a child under 10, engaging in lewd acts, forced oral copulation and continuous sexual abuse of a child under 14. During interviews and a search of Bernal's home, where he conducted bible study, deputies determined he'd been molesting a family member for a decade since she was a child, a sheriff's report said.

He's also alleged to have convinced young women, including minors, to strip and pose for photos during "religious" ceremonies.

"I always had a feeling something was off about him, but I just kind of pushed it in the back of my head, because it's not something you want to believe about your father," said Destiny Audish, Bernal's daughter.

"You know, he would use God as a way for them to just want to trust him, to believe him," she said. *Source: CBS Los Angeles, 3-8-12*

Darwin F. Schauer, 70, Laporte, **MN**: 15 counts of criminal sexual conduct. Schauer, pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church in Lake George, is accused of molestation (including intercourse) of a girl in 2009 when she was 15.

According to the criminal complaint, the girl said she felt threatened and the sex occurred twice a week. *Source: KSAX, 3-9-12*

Patrick Marini, 69, Abbotsford, **BC**: Sexual assault and sexual interference. Marini, a missionary and pastor at Resurrection Life Ministries, is charged with an alleged incident with a 15-year-old boy. *Source: Abbotsford Times, 3-8-12*

Gordon Rideout, 73, and Robert Coles, 70, Eastbourne, UK: Sexual assault. The men are retired Church of England priests accused of molesting 9 young people from 1965-72. East Sussex detectives said the cases are not linked. *Source: BBC, 3-6-12*

Donald Ratcliff, 60, Wheaton, **IL**: 2 counts of aggravated child pornography and misdemeanor weapons charges. Ratcliff teaches Christian education at Wheaton College (evangelist Billy Graham's alma mater) and has written 10 books "primarily related to children, spirituality and related topics."

He was arrested Thursday after a lengthy undercover investigation by Carol Stream police, prosecutors said. Police took computers from his home that had images of children younger than 13, court documents said. *Source: Chicago Sun-Times, 3-2-12*

Meshulam Rothschild, 26, Brooklyn, **NY**: Criminal possession of a forged instrument. Rothschild, a Pupa Hasidic rabbi, is charged with selling about 3,600 cartons of cigarettes a week without \$50-per-carton tax stamps.

A source alleged Rothschild started sending cigarettes to Virginia for phony stamps because New York merchants were refusing to sell unstamped packs. *Source: N.Y. Post, 3-2-12*

Yigal Krispel, 47, Netanya, ISR: Indecent acts, sodomy, sexual misconduct, nonconsensual sex and rape. Two former students filed complaints against Rabbi Krispel, principal at an Orthodox haredi school for girls, as did a



Park Baptist Church. *Source: WYFF, 2-29-12* **George A. Smith**, 74, Truro, **NS**: 62 sexrelated counts, including gross indecency, indecent assault on a male, sexual assault, unlawfully committing a gross indecency and unlawfully assaulting with intent to commit an indictable offense. Smith was suspended from the Catholic ministry on Prince Edward Island in 2010 due to allegations from 9 victims for incidents alleged to have occurred from 1969-89. *Source: Western Star, 2-24-12*

James Monson, 41, Sparta, WI: Sexual exploitation by a therapist, sexual assault of a child by a person who works or volunteers with children, exposing genitals or pubic area and sexual intercourse with a child. Monson, pastor at Gaining Ground Community Church, is accused of raping a 16-year-old girl who had moved in with him. The girl's mother told police she agreed to let her live with Monson, who was a family friend, and be home-schooled after she ran away from her home in Texas.

The complaint said Monson told police it was "possible" he had sex with the teen when they slept in the same bed. *Source: La Crosse Tribune, 2-23-12*

Rene Paul Emile Labelle, 62, Seeleys Bay, **ON**: Sexual assault, sexual exploitation and invitation to sexual exploitation. Labelle, pastor at St. Barnaby Catholic Church and chaplain at Holy Cross Secondary School, is accused of incidents in 2004. *Source: The Intelligencer, 2-22-12*

Harold Markham, 46, Niagara, WI: Repeated sexual assault of a child, battery and disorderly conduct. The complaint alleges Markham had sexual contact with a 14-year-old female multiple times between July and September 2007 in Niagara while he was a Baptist pastor in Norway, MI.

The complaint alleges he argued and grabbed the same female around the neck in 2011 in Niagara to stop her from leaving. Markham has resigned as pastor. *Source: Iron Mountain Daily News, 2-21-12*

James E. Davis, Cotton Plant, AR: 4 counts of rape. Davis, pastor of Morning Star Baptist Church, was arrested after a middle school counselor contacted police, who said the alleged female victim's mother is in jail and is Davis' former girlfriend. The girl was living with Davis and his wife.

The girl told police Davis said she could

touched two 8-year-old girls he was giving yeshiva lessons to in their homes. He's a student at Rabbinical Seminary of America. *Source: N.Y. Post, 2-29-12*

Frankin "Wayne" Knight, 63, Colorado Springs, **CO**: Pleaded guilty to being an accessory to a crime and failure to report suspected child abuse. Other charges against the Baptist pastor, who was also superintendent of a church school, were dropped. At sentencing, Knight is expected to agree to do 150 hours of community serve and serve 2 years' unsupervised probation.

He's accused of covering up a sexual relationship between his niece, 32, who taught at the school, and a former student, who was 15 at the time. Knight plans to move to Texas. *Source: ABC 7, 2-28-12*

Jeffrey A. Maxwell, 59, Corsicana, TX: 2 sentences of life in prison to be served concurrently after being found guilty of aggravated kidnapping and 2 counts of aggravated sexual assault. The victim, 63, was a former neighbor of Maxwell, who is a past vice president of the Kiwanis Club.

Testimony showed Maxwell strung up the victim on a rack he made to gut deer and hogs and tortured her for 12 days, using sexual devices, whips and clips on her breasts. He admitted chaining her to a bed at night and raping her every morning but said he also let her read the bible.

"It's only because of God that I'm alive," she told courthouse reporters. *Source: Star-Telegram/AP, 2-22-12*

Barry Caudle, 39, Marengo, **IL**: Pleaded guilty to 2 counts of solicitation of a child, grooming and 3 counts of harmful material for performing lewd acts. Police said Caudle, a married youth minister at Marengo First Assembly of God, solicited sex from an officer posing online as a 14-year-old girl.

"I have been in ministry for 17 years and I love kids and love to serve, and just love people," Caudle wrote in an online journal. *Source: Northwest Herald, 2-16-12*

Randell Vandeventer, 51, New Castle, **IN**: Guilty on 3 counts of child molesting. Vandeventer, a hospital chaplain, is already in prison for a 2011 conviction for child seduction.

The new convictions involve 4 victims (3 males and a female) from 2000-08 when the children attended Tiny Town Daycare Center in Switz City. It was owned by Vandeventer and his wife, Lia. One victim testified Lia Vandeventer witnessed abuse, which she denied on the stand. A victim's mother told of an incident in church before she knew the boy was molested. She said when "Brother Rendell" was introduced, her son immediately stuck his head under her arm and curled up in a ball. Then he vomited. *Source: Greene County Daily World, 2-16-12*

'Let me pat you on the bo-bo.' — One of Fr. Louis Meinhardt's alleged catchphrases

The sentence upset prosecutor Dan Mc-Ginn. "He was trying to say all the right things so he'd get probation."

Victory Fellowship pastor Lonnie Parton didn't like the sentence either. "I think it does a disservice for any other victim who wants to come forward."

Gireoux's wife, Erin, is filing for divorce. Source: KETV Omaha, 3-7-12

Robert H. LaForce, 60, Rinely, **PA**: \$50 fine and \$280 court costs after being found guilty of harassment. LaForce, associate pastor at St. Paul Lutheran Church, was cited for an incident with a female congregant at a church budget meeting.

"Some questions about the finances were asked, including by the alleged victim," said North Hopewell Police Chief Larry Billets. "The associate pastor apparently became upset over the questions that were being asked."

Billets said LaForce "placed his hands on her arms above the elbow, then made some inappropriate comments relative to 'If we were outside, I would slap you.' " Source: York Dispatch, 3-7-12

Tommy Gene Daniels, 49, Citrus Heights, **CA**: 158 years in prison for conviction on 11 counts of child molestation. Daniels was pastor at First Baptist Church in Rio Linda, a congregation affiliated with Growing Healthy Churches. He was charged with sexual assault of 5 girls between the ages of 5 to 13, including 2 sisters.

A mother testified her 5-year-old came home in 2005 and said Daniels had molested her. She called it "the day I found out I failed as a mother. I failed to protect my children from a monster. I failed to recognize the evil that lurked in a place I thought we had found friendship, safety and trust."

The mother reported it the same day to police but no charges were filed until 2010 after other victims came forward. *Source: Sacramento Bee, 3-2-12*

Patrick McCormick, 48, **Philadelphia**: 18 hours of community service and \$200 in fines for patronizing a prostitute. McCormick, parochial vicar of St. Timothy's Catholic Church, allegedly solicited sex from an undercover police officer.

The Archdiocese of Philadelphia said in a statement the priest was put on leave. McCormick told superiors the day after his arrest that he was charged with DUI, the statement said. *Source: Daily News, 3-2-12*

Daniel Curran, 61, Newcastle, **N.IRE**: 4 years in prison for molesting 2 boys, ages 9 and 10, between 1989-94 while he was a Catholic priest in Belfast. Curran has served prison time twice before.

Judge David Smyth said Curran has victimized at least 13 people in 17 years. *Source: BBC*, *2-29-12*

Samuel Slocum, 60, Smethport, PA: 2 years' probation, 100 hours of community service and to not be alone with anyone under 18 for 2 years. He was convicted of concealment of the whereabouts of a child and corruption of minors. He was acquitted of interference with the custody of a child and loitering and prowling at night. He was not accused of having sex with the young male victim, who testified he, his brother and friends often visited Slocum at the rectory at Our Mother of Perpetual Help Church. Slocum has been barred from the ministry by the Diocese of Erie. Judge William Morgan told him to look for a job outside the priesthood. Source: Buffalo News, 2-28-12 Connie Ikpoh, 49, Los Angeles: 3 years in prison and \$6.7 million restitution for conspiracy for her role in defrauding Medicare out of \$14 million with her husband and fellow pastor, Christopher Iruke, 61, already sentenced to 15 years. They served at Arms of Grace Christian Center, now closed. Source: Visalia Times-Delta, 2-28-12 Derrick T. Griffin, 41, Minneapolis: Life in prison with no parole for 1st-degree murder. Griffin, associate pastor at True Vine Missionary Baptist Church, was convicted of the drive-by shooting of a man who was with Griffin's estranged wife. The shooter drove away in a white Cadillac.

20-year-old teacher. Source: Press TV, 3-1-12

Kirk L. DeVine, 43, Gladstone, MO: DeVine, minister at Trinity Missionary Full Gospel Church, is charged with whipping his son with a belt and computer cord over a 5-hour period because he had a bad report card and talked in class. His stepmother reported the incident.

The police report said DeVine also punched the boy in the stomach and made him clean his own blood off a chair. *Source: Kansas City Star, 3-1-12*

Gregory L. Goner, 40, Franklin, **WI**: 5 federal counts of theft and wire fraud. Goner, pastor at Spirit Governed Baptist Church and operator of Excel Academy, a Milwaukee choice school from 2004-10, was indicted for using school funds for noneducational purposes.

Excel Academy got over \$100,000 a year from the U.S. Departments of Education and Agriculture. Goner is accused of using school money to buy 2 apartment buildings, pay a church deacon and "needlessly lease" church space. He allegedly used \$313,000 to buy the apartments. *Source: USDOJ, 2-29-12*

Kenneth A. Johnson, 58, Taylors, SC: 3 counts of assault and battery of a high and aggravated nature. Warrants allege Johnson molested a 14-year-old boy in 1985 while Johnson was involved with a youth group at Hampton for bad behavior at home, the complaint said. Family members said she is pregnant. *Source: KSLA. 2-21-12*

Pleaded / Convicted

Neil J. Byrne, 61, Brisbane, **AU**: 9 months in prison suspended after pleading guilty to possessing child exploitation material and 8 counts of making child exploitation material. Byrne, a Catholic priest whose church is affiliated with a primary school, admitted having sexual fantasies about "young blond boys." Offenses took place from 2005-07.

Authorities said he had received images of a boy sexually abused by his parents. *Source: Courier Mail, 3-7-12*

Curtis Burkhardt, 44, Grand Blanc, **MI**: Pleaded no contest to indecent exposure by a sexually delinquent person. Burkhardt, a volunteer youth leader and board member at First Baptist Church, was charged with exposing himself to an 11-year-old girl while holding his 5-year-old daughter on his lap. He was convicted in 2001 and received probation for exposing himself to a woman and her child at a McDonald's. *Source: Detroit Free Press, 3-2-12*

Hillel Selznick, 25, Flushing, **NY**: Pleaded guilty to 2 counts of sexual misconduct against a child. Selznick admitted he inappropriately

Sentenced

Robert Lovett, 56, Rochester, **NY**: 1 year probation, 80 hours of community service and \$9,000 restitution for mail fraud. Lovett, pastor at Word of the Kingdom Ministries, pleaded guilty to bilking a 95-year-old woman. The woman was convinced through phone calls she would get "three \$25,000 grants" if she sent money to Lovett. *Source: Democrat & Chronicle, 3-9-12*

Brent Girouex, 32, Council Bluffs, **IA**: 17 years in prison suspended after pleading guilty to 3rd-degree sexual abuse and entering an Alford plea to 2 counts of sexual exploitation by a counselor or therapist. Gireoux, youth pastor at Victory Fellowship Church, had faced 89 molestation charges of young men and boys. He will be on probation for life and must stay at a sex offender treatment facility until "maximum benefit is obtained."

Police used cellphone records, a bullet taken from the victim's body and surveillance cameras to pin the murder on the pastor. *Source: AP, 2-24-12* Madison. Wisconsin

Onyegbule, a Nigeria native, previously

Robert Mac Santry, a priest of the Catho-

Robert Poandl was removed from cleri-

dropped child molestation charges against

Victim advocate group SNAP said letting Poandl continue as a priest after 2010 was "to-

William Rowe, 72, pastor for 18 years at St.

Mary's Catholic Church in Mount Carmel, IL,

pray the prayers of the Mass as they are trans-

lated in the new Roman Missal," said a letter from Diocese of Belleville Bishop Edward Brax-

No criminal charges were filed after 1-year-

old Juan Cardenas drowned in 2 feet of water

in a baptismal pool at a day care at Praise

Fellowship Assembly of God, Indianapolis.

Employees apparently lost track of the boy's

whereabouts on Ash Wednesday. The day care

has 8 employees caring for 30 to 45 children,

officials said. Source: Indianapolis Star, 3-7-12

sin Attorney General J.B. Van Hollen to investi-

gate 8.000 alleged sex offenses and as many

as 100 previously unidentified offenders said

to be described in documents filed in the Arch-

They called the allegations, if true, "nothing

"The concealment of these offenses may

already have facilitated hundreds of additional

crimes against young people," said the letter

signed by Sens. Lena Taylor, Julie Lassa, Rob-

ert Jauch and Jessica King; and Reps. Sandy

Pasch, Chris Taylor, Robert Turner, Terese Ber-

ceau and Kelda Helen Roys. Source: Journal

Email: blackcollar@ffrf.org

diocese of Milwaukee bankruptcy.

short of a public safety crisis."

Nine Democratic legislators asked Wiscon-

lic Diocese of Honolulu, has been "dismissed

served at Our Lady of Perpetual Help and is liv-

Source: Reading Eagle, 3-5-12

made public. Source: SNAP, 2-24-12

Tommy R. Shelton Jr., 66, Dunn Loring, VA: 6 years in prison for child molestation. Allegations by 2 victims stemmed from the mid-'90s, when Shelton was pastor at Community Church of God.

One victim, now 30, asked Shelton from the witness stand "to say you're sorry - that's it."

The man was a high school freshman when Shelton gave him piano lessons and counseling after his parents died. After the lessons came kissing, fondling and oral sex, the victim testified.

"I'm sorry for any suffering he has received," Shelton said in court. "However, I still stick with my plea of not guilty." Source: Washington Post, 2-24-12

Mark Archibald, 56, Red Deer, ALB: 12 months of house arrest and 6 months of abiding by a curfew after pleading guilty to indecent assault and committing a gross indecency. Archibald was accused of assaulting 3 teens in the 1970s when he managed a Christian summer camp run by the Canadian Sunday School Mission, affiliated with the Evangelical Free Church of Canada

Complainant "Jake," who was 14 at the time of the alleged assaults, objected to the sentence. "I don't know what a person has to do to a child to receive jail time in this country."

Judge Thomas Schollie defended the sentence. "I'm satisfied he is not a pedophile. For a short period of his life, his brain wasn't working too well." Source: Calgary Herald, 2-19-12

Civil Lawsuits Filed

Sexual Ministries Uganda filed a federal suit in Springfield, MA, against evangelist Scott Lively and Abiding Truth Ministries, alleging Lively helped persecute gays for a decade in Uganda, Lively issued a public call for people to fight against a "genocidal" and "pedophilic" gay movement, "which he likened to the Nazis and Rwandan murderers," the suit alleges

The suit seeks a judgment that Lively's actions violate international law and human rights. Source: Wall Street Journal, 3-14-12

Arquimedes Nganga, 46, London, is suing the Baptist Union of Great Britain for £10 million, alleging the 19 years he spent as a "fervent evangelist" ruined his chances of playing soccer for Manchester United.

Nganga used to play semi-professionally in his native Portugal but quit at age 25 after converting to the Baptist faith. He alleges the church destroyed his social life, caused him "psychological harm" and defrauded him of money through compulsory donations. Source: The Guardian, 3-5-12

The Diocese of Savannah, GA, and 2 bishops have been sued in South Carolina over alleged sexual abuse by former priest Wayland Y. Brown

The suit claims Brown, 67, molested "John Doe," a youth program participant at Savannah's St. James Catholic Church and school in the mid-1970s as well as at other locations. Bishops Raymond Lessard and Gregory Hartmayer are also named as defendants. Brown was defrocked in 2004. Source: Morning News. 2-24-12

"John Doe" is suing the Society of Mary (Marianists), Chaminade Preparatory School and U.S. Marianist leader Fr. Martin Solma, alleging that Louis Meinhardt, a priest now dead, starting molesting him in 1966 as a 7th grader at the Creve Coeur, MO, school. More than a dozen students of Meinhardt and another dead priest, Fr. John Woulfe, have since come forward. Meinhardt's inappropriate behavior toward showering students, including grabbing of genitals, was notoriously dubbed "the Meinhardt treatment," the suit alleges. The priest would tell students. "Come here and give me loving" and "Let me pat you on the bo-bo," the suit says. Source: St. Louis Post-Dispatch. 2-24-12

"Jane Doe" is suing Rev. Kendall Graham and the United Methodist Church's Texas



"John R.J. Doe," now in his early 20s, alleged he was molested as an altar boy and choir member at Madonna del Sasso Church in Salinas. Source: San Jose Mercury News, 2-18-12

Legal Developments

Prosecutors in Cook County, IL, are trying to extradite Sleeva Raju Policetti, a defrocked Catholic priest, from his native India to face 20 counts of criminal sexual assault and aggravated criminal sexual abuse involving a 16-yearold girl. He fled the U.S. in 2002

But the alleged victim recently said she's no longer willing to pursue charges, which would effectively end the case. Since 1985, at least 32 Catholic priests nationwide have fled overseas after allegations of sexual abuse were made, and only 5 were returned to the U.S. for trial.

More than two dozen other Catholic clergy left the U.S. while facing internal church inquiries or civil allegations of child sex misconduct, or were transferred to foreign countries by church authorities. Source: Chicago Tribune, 3-12-12 Nana Kwasi Agyeman, 42, Abidjan, Côte

d'Ivoire, who jumped bail 4 years ago after being charged with 8 counts of defilement, was arrested in Ghana. Agyeman, pastor of the Church of Shiva Linga Prayer Group, is accused of sexually molesting 8 children ages 3 to 12.

A newspaper reported he "cajoled their parents who were members of his church to allow them to live with him so he could bring them up uprightly in the fear of the Lord." Source: dailyguideghana.com, 3-9-12

The 2008 suit filed by Norman Redwing, who sued the Catholic Diocese of Memphis, alleging sexual abuse in the 1970s by now-deceased priest Milton Guthrie, can proceed, ruled the Tennessee Supreme Court, overruling a lower court that dismissed the case due to the statute of limitations. Source: AP, 2-27-12

Norbert Maday, a former Chicago Catholic priest convicted in 1994 of sexual assault of 2 boys in Oshkosh, WI, was deemed a sexually violent person after serving out a 13-year sentence. That means he will be sent to a secure treatment facility for at least 9 months.

Prosecutor Kevin Greene said Maday needs more treatment because he won't fully admit he did anything wrong. If he's not released in 9 months, he'll be reevaluated every year. Source: WLUK, 2-15-12

Allegations

Clavon Leonard, Charlotte, NC, is accused by 6 former members of Leonard's Church of Philadelphia of spiritual, physical and sexual abuse. "I would describe him as barbaric," said former minister of music Talitha Williams. Ayanna Armstrong described Leonard as a cult

Richard T. Powers, 76, was put on leave by the Archdiocese of Philadelphia during review of allegations he had sex with a 17-yearold Venezuelan girl some time before 2000. Powers' name was on a newly disclosed 1994 internal church memo that listed 35 priests suspected or accused of abusing children.

The late Cardinal Anthony Bevilacqua allegedly ordered the memo shredded, but a copy turned up in a church office in 2006 and was turned over to prosecutors working on the case against Msgr. William J. Lynn, who drafted the memo and is on trial for covering up clergy sex abuse. Source: The Inquirer, 3-12-12

Louis Bier, pastor at St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church, Springfield, PA, was put on leave over concerns about his "suitability for ministry," said a letter to parishioners. "These concerns are not connected to any complaint of inappropriate behavior with minors." Source: myfoxphilly.com. 3-9-12

Cletus Onyegbule, 44, Whitfield, PA, was removed as pastor at St. Ignatius Loyola Catholic Church after admitting he had an inappropriate relationship with a woman. The relationship started when the woman was 18, said a spokesman for the Diocese of Allentown.

Italy aims to tax Catholic property

Other

Prime Minister Mario Monti told the European Commission in late February that Italian law will be changed to make the Catholic Church pay taxes on commercial property, including bedand-breakfasts owned by convents.

The New York Times reported that the change, if approved by Parliament, would bring in \$650 million to \$2.6 billion annually, depending on the legislation. Other countries with large debt such as Spain and Greece might see

"It was time that they paid, too, with all the exemptions they've had throughout the years," said Marco Catalano, 35, a Rome merchant who said he goes to church twice a month. "They own the most beautiful buildings in downtown Rome, on Italian soil, and rent them out at market prices. They don't give them for free or at low prices for charity."

They Said What?!?

Earlier in my political career, I had the criticizing the court-ordered removal opportunity to read the speech, and I of a school prayer banner in Cranston, almost threw up. You should read the **R.I.** speech.

Italy as an example to follow.

Sentinel, 2-20-12

delegation for more than \$25 million, alleging the pastor molested her at age 14, eventually impregnated her and made her get 2 abortions.

Doe claims Graham, a Port Arthur pastor, taped them having sex when she was a minor and told his congregation she was his granddaughter and their daughter was his greatgrandchild.

They married in 2009 and divorced last year. Source: Courthouse News Service, 2-24-12

A suit alleges a Kansas City Catholic priest molested 4 boys in an Independence, MO, family. John Tulipana, who left the ministry in the mid-1990s, and the Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph are defendants.

The suit claims the abuse began in 1976 and occurred on camping trips and at the family's home. Allegations against Tulipana were part of a \$10 million settlement in 2008 with 47 plaintiffs. Source: Kansas City Star, 2-23-12

Edward Fitz-Henry, a priest in the Catholic Diocese of Monterey, CA, is suing the diocese for failure to defend him against claims of child molestation. The diocese paid \$500,000 to a man who claimed Fitz-Henry molested him when he was a minor in 2005.

Fitz-Henry was suspended as a priest in January 2011 when he was pastor at Mission San Juan Bautista.

leader.

Members said Leonard has young adult male assistants called "armor bearers." The men told of abuse and being forced to clean his house, give him massages and feed him grapes.

His ex-wife, Ayanna Stinson, said she saw him grab an armor bearer's genitals. Leonard denies all allegations. Source: WCNC, 3-1-12

Removed / Resigned

Thomas Adamson, 78, an ex-priest of the Diocese of Winona, MN, has been barred from all Catholic parishes and schools. After Adamson, who was stripped of priestly duties in 1989, moved to Rochester earlier this year, the diocese sent a letter and current photo of Adamson to all Rochester schools and parishes.

Allegations of Adamson's sexual involvement with boys date from the early 1960s. He's never been charged criminally but was named in 4 civil suits. Source: La Crosse Tribune, 3-16-12

Zalman Bernstein, a Chabad rabbi serving a small Jewish community in Cochin. India, and his wife were expelled to Israel after authorities alleged Bernstein failed to declare on his visa application he would be conducting religious activities. Bernstein and his wife, Shendi, denied that and also denied trying to convert anyone to Judaism. Source: Haaretz, 3-13-12

GOP presidential candidate Rick Santorum, criticizing in 2011 Sen. John F. Kennedy's 1960 speech calling for state-church separation

The American Prospect, 2-27-12

They're going to take us down. They're taking us down. They're going to take us down. Say the Lord's Prayer. Say the Lord's Prayer.

Words screamed by JetBlue Airways pilot Clayton Osbon before passengers subdued him outside the cockpit en route from New York to Las Vegas Associated Press, 3-27-12

I just said the world is going to hell in a handbasket because there are a lot more things to worry about than whether there is a prayer on the wall that's been on the wall for 50 years that you think needs to come down.

Singer Meat Loaf (born Marvin Aday),

Providence Journal, 3-23-12

Well, actually the Genesis 8:22 that I use in there is that "As long as the earth remains there will be springtime and harvest, cold and heat, winter and summer, day and night." My point is, God's still up there. The arrogance of people to think that we, human beings, would be able to change what He is doing in the climate is to me outrageous. Sen. James Inhofe, R-Okla., interview on the Voice of Christian Youth America radio network based in Milwaukee "Crosstalk," 3-7-12

No.

Fr. Paul Mooradd, pastor of Our Lady of Mercy Maronite Catholic Church, Worcester, Mass., answering whether someone who didn't go to Mass could be a good person Worcester Telegram, 2-19-12





New Life Members in for the long haul

Oh boy! You damned infidels are really going to stir up a hornet's nest with your New York Times ad! Cardinals will molt, bishops will blather and bleat, the pope will probably pop and Rick Santorum will, if there is an audience, vomit. You don't understand that birth control pills are not "natural," like celibacy, and therefore not acceptable to the Holy Führer and his accomplices.

Seriously, it is a great ad. And, more seriously, my check for Life Membership is enclosed.

R.G. Huber New Jersey

Recent events in America have brought forth the full agenda and unconcealed hatred of the Religious Right for all things human and humane. Their determination to fight contraceptives, which would bring abortion activity down to bare minimums, stands as the most flagrant example, defying logic and compassion.

This fight exposes a great hypocrisy. The religious façade of brotherly love rips apart in their wolfish appetite for authority and money. The signature of Catholic authority — unquestioned control of all things sexual — needs to be dismissed as outdated and unwarranted. The demands of Catholic bishops concerning birth control particularly offend me; their objections and arguments are a complete and hostile affront. They are the catalyst for sending this letter and check.

I therefore enclose a check for \$1,000 for a Lifetime Membership to aid FFRF in standing up for me and my values. I strongly value your work and the inroads you have made to keep all Americans free from religious arrogance, inhumanity and unwarranted invasion of our rights.

Those who pray may do so in their own home or church. They may govern themselves under their own rules as best they can. They may keep their religion in their sacristy where it belongs. I do not welcome them to insert themselves into my life or into the Constitution under which they have their freedom.

Robin

Colorado

I was born into a Hindu home, married a truth-seeking Christian, and together we've found our way into the world of the mentally emancipated. My husband, Frank, is already a Lifetime Member, and my payment for one is in the mail. for the separation of church and state and I want to keep our government secular, the way that the founding fathers of our country would have wanted it. **Todd Peissig Wisconsin**

Three pieces had extra appeal in March issue

The March issue was very appealing overall, but I particularly liked three items. One was Philip Appleman's "Snow on the Bosporous." I would guess that, for some, Appleman's poem would spell out both a history and a future of hopelessness, but for me it was a poignant recognition of the fact that hopelessness lies not in what has gone on before but in our continuation of depending on force and superstition to guide human affairs.

What struck me next was Barbara G. Walker's "Bible morality." I took the time to look up each of her references, and I must say she deserves a medal for sifting through all the nonsense in those many pages. If any thoughtful person could read through these verses and still aver that the Christian god is at all intelligent, loving, incapable of sin, him/her/itself, and worthy even of listening to, let alone worship, that must be someone with well-developed mental blinders.

Finally, I was *so* taken with Dan Barker's "Ghost-buster bags Zombie Jesus." Most of what Dan talks about was familiar to me, and had given me cause to find the whole pre- and post-Easter episodes totally without merit.

But, Dan's retelling of the story with an oft-appearing ghost gave me a laugh and reinforced the incredibility of this tale of human cruelty imposed on a supernatural being. Dan is a kind person, who would not want to offend anyone, but a good story like this one is worth the telling.

Bill McCormick Ohio

I fought for all of the Constitution

Keep up the good work! As a Marine Corps Gulf War veteran, I have fought for the Constitution and all of its amendments. I read Freethought Today and cringe at the Crank Mail. How can people who proclaim to follow a religion (most of them Christian) be so crass?

I was raised Catholic and can never remember a time when I believed anything about it. I leaned about the world's major and even some minor religions in college. While there are truths in all of them, none of them speaks for me. I use reason and clear thinking. Your work is appreciated! **Dewayne Buratti**



your brains for thinking. It's easy if you try. Use thought and rationality to solve our problems instead of talking to imaginary friends (commonly called prayer).

Richard Fletcher Texas

FFRF's New York Times ad creates big stir

[Quite a few people wrote to support FFRF's full-page ad in the New York Times that asked those who already haven't to quit the failed enterprise called the Catholic Church. Unfortunately, we didn't have room for all of the letters. See the Crank Mail on Page 17 for less appreciative responses.]

What a great Friday morning in America! I just saw "our" ad in the New York Times and want FFRF to know of my pride in contributing to its publication and my joy that so many others have done so on a much higher level. Perhaps you will get an influx of new members. Keep up the work. Jerry Moulder

Texas

I "quit" the Catholic Church when I was in the Navy (February 1944 until June 1946). The instrument of my departure was the bible. There was a serious shortage of books on our ship, and as an inveterate bookworm, I read that ridiculous book. It was a small ship, no chaplain. I never did reunite with mother church after the war.

I learned that over the postwar years, the church and the school I attended as a child "merged with" three other churches in Pittsburgh within a few miles of each other to form one church. This tells us just how many Catholics "walked away." **Bill Walker**

Pennsylvania

• • •

ot and an idiot. So if you're getting a raft of emails clogging your mailbox, blame it on the old blowhard himself.

He may be the Rush Limbaugh of the Catholic Church. **Greg Pabst**

oreg I abst	
California	

Kudos to FFRF, for pissing off all the right people, including that moron Bill Donohue. **Mitch Kahle**

Honolulu

Bill Donahue, professional Catholic whiner, said I should contact you about the March 9 full-page New York Times ad.

Loved it! I quit the Catholic Church a long time ago and now send my money to FFRF, AU, PFAW, SPLC and the ACLU.

Kevin Larkin South Carolina

• • •

The "Frontal Assault on Catholicism" author said I could contact you at this address, so I'm doing so to write: GREAT JOB!

I'm a proud member of FFRF and really chuckled at his reference to FFRF as "bigots." Thank you for the work you do.

With much respect,

Dan Shields Florida

. . .

I followed this link from the Catholic League website. They urged me to contact you and tell you what I thought.

Way to go, FFRF, I heartily approve! Now to contact Bill Donahue. Brad North

Canada

...

My husband and I (educated by Dominicans, Vincentians and Jesuits) agree totally with your message. I am writing a piece "Mary Marks the Spot" about the many Goddess shrines around the world (particularly Europe) that have become "Marian" cathedrals and churches. Some great books to fuel the fire: The Women's Encyclopedia of Myths & Secrets (Barbara G. Walker); When God Was a Woman (Merlin Stone); The Great Cosmic Mother (Barbara Mor and Monica Sjoo); The Myth of the Goddess (Anne Barings and Jules Cashford). Good luck with a great cause. Mary Ellen Murphy Cavanna Connecticut

Thanks for the wonderful work you are doing. See you at the Reason Rally. Nero Gordon Pennsylvania

...

I have been a member of FFRF for several years and have admired your work from the beginning. I wholeheartedly support the work that FFRF does on behalf of the atheist/freethinking community. Fighting the religious encroachment on our civil rights is a battle that pulls at my heartstrings, particularly because as a gay man I can see how religion interferes in my life and limits my rights, especially the basic right to marry the person that I love.

For that reason (and many more) I am becoming a Life Member today, because I want to contribute to the fight

Wisconsin

Contenders/offenders, hypocrites/pretenders

The Catholic hierarchy moans that to accept the birth control provision would make them appear hypocritical. Do they have great moral credibility, given the thousands of molesting priests worldwide over the years? Despair not, for their god is forgiving, and all these sins have been forgiven. For as you know, the lord works in mysterious wavs.

Come on, believers. imagine using

I did it! I sent my letter of resignation to the bishop of Lansing Diocese. Thanks for the push, and keep up the great work.

Tom McHale Michigan

...

You made us proud — again.The full-page ad in today's New York Times was a delight — perfectly worded and laid out, with trenchant wit and telling points throughout. It almost made us wish we were Catholics, so we could leave the church and join FFRF. But we're happy to already be members and supporters and to be able to claim friendship with you both.

Freethinkers everywhere, especially women freethinkers, are much in your debt.

Ed and Diane Buckner Georgia

...

Bill Donohue is, as you know, a big-

. . .

[An FFRF member's letter to the Catholic League]:

Why does it offend you so much that people who think differently exercise their freedom of speech? Not everyone believes in gods, so let FFRF point out the truths. I grew up in Mexico in a Catholic family and lived firsthand the poverty that the lack of contraception



approval from the Catholic Church creates in families of seven kids.

I was also of the belief that I had to be a virgin before marriage, which landed me in a very bad, 20-year marriage with a man who would not have sex with me. The church needs to rethink old thoughts about contraception, divorce and gay people. You all know that all gods are made up by men. Laura Connell

'Left Behind' video more than a game

I read about the "Left Behind 4: World at War" video game [Jan/Feb 12] with some concern. "Can't convert 'em? Then kill 'em!" While I'm sure the game's maker will claim that "It's only a game," the mindset that it promotes is unsettling.

Does promotion of such a product bump up against anti-terrorism, civil rights laws barring hate speech or rules against inciting riots or other civil disturbances, or is it protected as free speech?

Roger Werner Florida

Texas

Editor's note: Walmart's lawyers must have vetted the game's legality while missing the morality. They likely were good Christian lawyers.

Reader testifies to Meslier's *Testament*

Thank you very much for your recent mentioning of Jean Meslier in Freethought of the Day. I must admit I never heard of this atheist priest before. An almost complete translation of his Testament has been published (translated by Michael Shreve, Prometheus Books, 2009).

delighted. He was a very clever fellow. that, in character molding, they have but a tragic figure, an underground atheist! Many of his arguments are new to me.

thing about declining envy of your neighbors' possessions like wives, livestock and slaves Doesn't that at least give tacit approval to slavery? Being descended from Yankees, I always thought that we were right in depriving the Southerners of their slaves, but I guess I was wrong. The bible says it was okay to have them. Lester Foley

California

I was pleased to see Barbara Walker's bible verse compilation. My favorite to quote (not on Barbara's list) when I meet a Jesus freak or two Mormons on a mission is Psalm 137:8-9. It's about Israelites happily bashing Babylonian babies against rocks (my vernacular).

. . .

I once showed the passage to a security guard at work. He muttered something about "context." Context, baloney.

One could also remind Jesus freaks that there is no mention of hell in the Old Testament. Nice, friendly, perfect Jesus came up with that one.

John Oman Michigan

The list of Jehovah's crimes omitted the most infamous: his rape of the Virgin Mary. It was probably statutory rape as well, in light of her reputed age. Alan Hurlbut

. . .

Kansas

March was another great issue, particularly the piece on comedian Keith Lowell Jensen. Regarding the Crank Mail, may you all be safe from these venom spewers. Most of them use the evangelical idiom, which tells me their preachers call them "the beloved community" and praise "the fruits of the spirit."

Yet the violent hatred they display I am reading it right now and I am for their perceived enemies tells me received nothing from their religion. In fact, they disprove it.

word for Crank Mail.)

Madison, Wisconsin

Some make the argument that clergy and other church folk don't molest any more than Jane and John Doe do. That's not the point, even if it were true. Remember, God is the source of all morality; hence, God's practitioners must be the most upright of all. Hypocrisy in any field is unappealing.

...

I noticed the quote from Sinead O'Connor in the last issue. Although she stood up against the repressive Catholic Church, unfortunately she's very religious. On "The Tavis Smiley Show" on Feb. 28 (www.pbs.org/wnet/ tavissmiley/interviews/singer-songwriter*sinead-o'connor/*), she went on and on about the Holy Spirit, Jesus, rescuing God from the church and her respect of and identification with Rastafarians.

She talks about loving and respecting everyone, but she admires the very religion (the Rastas) that's responsible for the murder of gays and lesbians in Jamaica. I was so sorry to hear the interview. I always thought she was a more enlightened person. **Anthony Pasqua** California

Believers 'can't have it both ways'

A member's letter on the Jesus shrine to the Flathead Beacon, Kalispell, Mont.

I am writing to comment about the Whitefish Jesus statue, sitting on land owned by all Americans. I find it curious that Christians, and in this case, Catholics in particular, want to have things both ways.

First they want to violate the First Amendment by keeping the Jesus statue on federal land. Now, they are claiming their rights are being violated because President Obama's administration made a rule mandating coverage for contraceptives for those offering insurance. Do you want the government and religion to mix or not? You can't have it both ways. Kelly Thibault

Montana

Countering 'bible in every drawer' outbreak

As a frequent traveler in the U.S. and abroad, I tired of seeing the bible in every nightstand drawer. After grumbling to myself and commiserating with my husband, It occurred to me that I might type a little missive to place on top of "the Good Book." On all future trips where a bible is found, I shall place the following message:

If you find more REASON to support the FACTS of science and nature than to BELIEVE in

and there seems to be a lot of it, it makes me feel bad. People say some really nasty, awful and sometimes scary, things. While I can't make up for those ugly messages, I did want to send you a pretty card and say "thank you" for all you do. FFRF is making a positive difference in the world and in my life.

I love the daily Freethought of the Day emails. They are really well-written and are the way I like to start my day at the computer.

Do you remember when [the British philosopher] Julian Baggini came to the U.S. and FFRF put out an email so people could be interviewed about their atheism? I responded and met him at a small gathering, but had subsequently forgotten about it. Well, last week the article was published and Julian sent the interviewees a message about it.

The article was well-done and it was nice to have had a small part in the process. Thanks for letting me know about the opportunity. Sam Weber

Texas

Fetal personhood pushed in states

Voters in Mississippi and eight other states will consider ballot questions with nationwide implications, namely, that "personhood" exists at conception.

At conception, a fertilized egg is microscopic; it has no body, no brain and no sex, all of which develop later. It also has no soul (a soul of what?), which is "infused" later, as taught by St. Augustine, St. Jerome and St. Thomas Aquinas, among the world's greatest theologians. This is also noted by Pope John Paul II in his papal encyclical Evangelium Vitae.

They seek to enact a Sharia-type law forcing women to have children and raise them for 18 years against their will, thus destroying America's vital freedom of choice. John Tomasin

New Jersey

Theocrat rains error on Reign of Terror

Rick Santorum is warning those of us who oppose theocracy and religion in government (like Tom Jefferson and friends) not to reject God from government because he says it will lead a replay of the French Revolution's Reign of Terror by religion-bashing Jacobins and French peasants, who executed the king and the aristocrats.

This reveals a total lack of historical knowledge by this disguised priest who also lectures us about the "evils" of birth control while denying all past atrocities of his church. The reason the peasants revolted and took revenge against the monarch is because they had been denied all political rights, oppressed, starved, abused and were forced to pay for the nobility's opulent lifestyle. It was even a criminal for them to kill rabbits who ran across their little plots of land for food, because it "interfered" with the nobles' hunting. The Catholic Church justified this oppression with its dogma that it was "God's plan" and that kings had a divine right to rule. Atheism did not cause people to rebel. Atheism was the response oppression by religion. It was the same kind of theocratic abuse that led to the creation of secular democracies and the U.S. Constitution.

Werner H. Baur

Illinois

Editor's note: Sign up to receive FFRF's daily calendar of nonbelievers in your inbox and start your day on a freethinking note: ffrf.org/news/day/.

Readers liked Walker column, March issue

I enjoyed reading Barbara Walker's "bible morality" in the March issue. It's interesting to get a sample of the arrogance in that revered document.

Isn't one missing? I have never read much of the bible. I started reading Genesis, but after reading about Adam and Eve, it was so nonsensical that I read no further.

However, I have seen in the Ten Commandants, No. 10, that says some-

Dave Pitts

Ohio

. . .

I'm horrified and amused simultaneously by the Crank Mail and the Black Collar Crime Blotter. However, I would like to know whether you improve the literacy of the atheist letters but not the Crank Mail so that we look better and they look worse.

Also, can you can let us know how crimes of the clergy compare statistically with those of the general population or of professions which deal with children? We should be told if clerics really are worse than the rest of us!

Thanks for all of your good work. **Barbara Griffiths** Connecticut

Editor's note: Of course we do minor edits of reader letters, as does every responsible, credible publication. (Incredible is but one

the STORIES of the BIBLE left in this drawer, please contact FREE-DOM FROM RELIGION FOUN-DATION:

My message will include FFRF's mailing and email addresses and phone number.

Leslie Biggs, Lifetime Member Florida

Editor's note: Great idea. FFRF also offers printed warning labels with skull and crossbones and the message, "Warning: Literal belief in this book may endanger your health and life." FFRF also sells "Gideon Exposed" bible warning labels. A dozen stickers are \$3 at ffrf.org/shop/ ("Stickers and Bible Warning labels" category).

Thanks for atheist interview opportunity

I enjoy the newspaper very much and look forward to its arrival each month. When I read the Crank Mail,

Eric Stone

New York

State/Church Bulletin

Hawaii settles suit with freethinkers

Mitch Kahle, FFRF member and 2011 Freethinker of the Year recipient, has settled his lawsuit for \$100,000 for being dragged out of the Hawaii Senate gallery for protesting prayer by lawmakers.

The state agreed to pay Kahle and Kevin Hughes, who videotaped the incident, to drop the suit. Both were roughed up by Capitol security in April 2010.

"We're pleased with the settlement, primarily because it sends a message to government that peaceful protest cannot be treated violently," Kahle told Honolulu Civil Beat on March 13.

The Legislature is moving two identical bills to create an "offense of disrespect" of the House and Senate for "disorderly or contemptuous behavior," including "making loud, boisterous, or incessant shouts" and "refusing to be or to remain seated on orders from the sheriff or sergeant-at-arms."

Kahle, head of Hawaii Citizens for the Separation of State and Church, calls SB 3026 the "Stop Mitch Kahle Bill."

SCOTUS denies cert for bible as text

The U.S. Supreme Court declined on March 26 to review the Idaho Public Charter School Commission's 2009 ban on religious texts.

The 9th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals held that because Nampa Classical Academy was a publicly funded charter school, it would could not use the bible as a textbook in a secular history class. The Alliance Defense Fund, a Christian legal group, denounced the decision.

Judge rules against **Okla. school vouchers**

Tulsa County District Judge Rebecca Nightingale struck down an Oklahoma law March 28 requiring public school districts to fund private-school scholarships for students with special-needs on grounds it violates the Oklahoma Constitution.

Thirty-eight of the 40 schools eligible for funding from the scholarships are specifically Christian, attorneys from both sides agreed.

cism. And even if the message is one protecting the oceans, it is the Virgin who is starting the message," wrote John Saurenman, a senior assistant attorney general.

High court to decide Indiana vouchers

The Indiana Supreme Court will hear a direct appeal of a Marion County judge's ruling that Indiana's school voucher program is constitutional.

Judge Michael Keele ruled in January the Choice Scholarship Program, which uses state tax dollars to pay tuition at private, often religious, schools is legal.

About 4,000 Indiana students had their private school tuition paid for by tax dollars this school year.

Biblical view of Constitution blasted

The Baltimore Sun reported Feb. 23 that Carroll County commissioners asked employees to attend a seminar on the Maryland Constitution led by conservative pastor David Whitney, a lecturer for the Institute on the Constitution. He bases lectures on the biblical view of American law and government.

Neil Ridgely, a former county department head, questioned the need for an \$800 course "with a religious twist."

"This is an outrageous misuse of public funds and an insult to the intelligence of county employees," he said. "The commissioners could have used the county attorney to give it for free."

Florida students set to get 'inspirational'

Florida Gov. Rick Scott signed a bill March 23 that lets schools set policies allowing students to deliver "inspirational messages" at school events.

David Barkey, Anti-Defamation League religious freedom counsel, criticized the law. "Our public schools are for all children regardless of their religion, but this law could require children as young as 5 to observe prayers to Allah, Buddha, Jesus or other faiths contrary to their religious upbringing at mandatory student assemblies."

During debate, the Orlando Se nel reported, Rep. Charles Van Zant, R-Keystone Heights, said, "Before we removed inspirational messages, the No. 1 problem was talking out of turn." Rep. Jeff Clemons, D-Wellington, read from the "Aryan Satanic Manifesto" and asked Van Zant if that would be considered "inspirational." Van Zant replied, "That would be the students' prerogative because of our constitutional freedom of speech."



FFRF debuts new campaign in Nashville

FFRF debuted a public relations campaign in Nashville, Tenn., featuring an eyecatching magenta billboard of a Tennessee student west of downtown Nashville on Interstate 40 about a mile east of I-440. The board is up through mid-April. FFRF member Grace Quiroz won her place on the billboard by submitting an entry to a "virtual billboard" online app at *ffrf.org/out* where nonbelievers make their own "billboard" hosted at FFRF's website.

"Grace's statement, 'This is what an atheist looks like,' not only inspired the Nashville billboard, but one of FFRF's most popular T-shirts," said Annie Laurie Gaylor, FFRF co-president. "Introducing the public to real atheists and agnostics is the best way to counter negative myths and stereotypes." With membership help, FFRF will take its "This is what an atheist looks like campaign" around the nation.

right legal standard — Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District — in his 2011 ruling instead of the forum standard in Morse v. Frederick. The latter allowed punishment of an Alaska student who held up a sign saying "Bong Hits 4 Jesus" at a school function.

Tinker v. Des Moines said schools can only control students' speech that materially disrupts classwork, creates substantial disorder or invades the rights of others.

6th Circuit rejects bible-study appeal

The 6th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Nashville ruled March 20 that a Tennessee fourth-grader's rights weren't violated by the school principal who stopped Luke Whitson from holding bible study at recess in 2005.

Principal Cathy Summa stated she felt that "an organized activity of this type . . . that is stationary or physically static in nature defeats the real purpose of recess. The purpose is to give students an opportunity to have some physical activity during the school day."

A jury in 2009 ruled in favor of the school district. The parents appealed. The 6th Circuit agreed that errors were made but ruled the errors were as "scientific controversies." harmless.

if they want to pray before receiving food. That led the agency that distributes federal food items to take back several pallets of food.

The national Emergency Food Assistance Program states that no religious service or teachings can be required to receive service. But on March 26, the Indianapolis Star said all parties were mulling a proposal to have volunteers wait until recipients get food before asking them about praying.

"It really wasn't a case of anyone objecting to them praying," said Cindy Hubert, president of Gleaners Food Bank of Indiana. "It is just that it can never be a requirement to get food. It can't even be perceived that way."

Shades of Scopes for **Tennessee schools**

Tennessee Gov. Bill Haslam said April 2 he will "probably" sign a bill derided by critics as the "monkey bill" for attacking evolution.

The bill, sponsored by Rep. Bill Dunn, R-Knoxville, and Sen. Bo Watson, R-Hixon, requires all administrators and educators to work to teach "scientific subjects" such as "biological evolution, the chemical origins of life, global warming and human cloning"

Virgin on surfboard barred from beach

The California Attorney General's Office issued an opinion March 7 that the Encinitas City Council could not enter a long-term agreement with the creator of "Surfing Madonna" to put the mosaic at the entrance of Moonlight State Beach due to the constitutional "no preference" clause.

The council had decided last May that it was "guerrilla art" that constituted graffiti and could be seen as endorsing religion. Artist Mark Patterson's work depicts the Virgin of Guadalupe on a surfboard.

"Because the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe is central to the mosaic, an objective observer would conclude that Parks wished to convey a message related to that potent symbol of Catholi-

School religious fliers OK'd by judge

U.S. District Judge A. Richard Caputo upheld his initial decision that let an 11-year-old hand out religious fliers at her Pennsylvania school. The fliers invited classmates to a Christmas party at her church, the Legal Intelligencer reported March 12.

Caputo reiterated he applied the

Prayer compromise at food bank?

Community Provisions of Jackson County in Seymour, Ind., came under fire in mid-March for asking clients

Both houses also passed a bill that authorizes replicas of certain "historically significant" documents, such as the Magna Carta, Declaration of Independence and Ten Commandments, to be placed in local government buildings.



We need Christ in the economy, Christ in the politics, Christ in the culture. Pastor Dan Cummins, Bridlewood Church, Bullard, Texas, supporting a new group called God and Country to fight state/church separation KYTX Tyler, 2-19-12

I'm a Christian. My master is Jesus Christ, so I obey him. State Rep. Thaddeus Kirkland, D-Delaware, objecting to an atheist billboard showing a shackled slave above a biblical passage that says, "Slaves, obey your masters."

Associated Press, 3-7-12

Madison, Wisconsin

April 2012



Lifetime Member Todd Peissig (left) and Eric Lawrence, his partner of 13 years, enjoy FFRF's pre-Reason Rally dinner party.



FFRF Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor with Winsie, a young student from Hong Kong who attended FFRF's post-rally dinner party.



Attendees pose with FFRF's Reason Rally placards the night before the big event.



CULAR

AND I VOTE

FFRF.ORG







THIS IS WHA

atheist looks like.





Photo at right: Victorious student litigant Jessica Ahlquist addresses the Reason Rally crowd March 23 in Washington, D.C.

Reason Rally Superstars



Former minister-turned-FFRF Co-President Dan Barker "performs" a tonguein-cheek debaptism at FFRF's busy booth. (Photos by Andrew Seidel)



Richard Dawkins at the Reason Rally. *The God Delusion* atheist celebrity will speak at FFRF's 35th annual national convention Oct. 12-13 in Portland, Ore.

Freethought Today back issues for sale

FFRF is pleased to announce back issues of Freethought Today are available for purchase. Now you can browse your favorite freethought columns from the comfort of your easy chair. Many of the earlier issues are not available online, and no issues are fully online.

Freethought Today archives are dated as early as 1985. The newspaper

debuted in 1983 and launched fully in 1984. FFRF has 18 complete year sets and many other single issues. Back issues can be purchased at *ffrf.org/shop/ back-issues/*.

There are a very limited number (only 1 set of each) of complete issues (full-year, 10 issues) available for the years 1984, 1985, 1986, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1993, 1994, 1999, 2000, 2002, 2003, 2006 and 2008.

Random issues are available for the years 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2011.

Full years may be purchased for \$20

Return to: FFRF, Attn: Convention, P.O. Box 750, Madison, WI 53701

per year plus \$6 postage. Random issues are \$3 each, including postage. If you order 10 random issues going to the same address, FFRF can offer a discount of \$2 each (\$20/\$6 postage).

To reserve your copies, visit *ffrf.org/ shop/back-issues/* for details or phone 608/256-8900.

FFRF 2012 convention 'early bird' registration opens

Reserve the weekend of Oct. 12-13, 2012, for FFRF's 35th annual national convention at the downtown Hilton Portland & Executive Tower, 921 SW Sixth Avenue, Portland, Ore. The Hilton is the largest certified green hotel in Portland.

Confirmed speakers include **Richard Dawkins**, the celebrated scientist, best-selling author and atheist, and mystery author **Sara Paretsky**, creator of V.I. Warshawski.

Hotel rooms are \$149 single to quadruple plus taxes and fees. Call the Hilton Portland at **1-503-226-1611** or use the personalized reservation link: *hilton.com/en/hi/groups/personalized/P/ PDXPHHH-FRF-20121010/index.jhtml*

Optional meals include the Saturday NonPrayer Breakfast, \$25: Country scrambled eggs, broiled roma tomato, crispy bacon, potato pancake, orange juice, apple pastry, cranberry muffins, pumpkin scones, fresh fruit garnish, freshly brewed coffee and teas, with vegetarian substitute for bacon. Dinner is fresh salad, roasted local organic chicken or vegetarian strudel followed by pear tartlet (the pear is Oregon's state fruit), \$55. Meals include a 22% service charge. Vegan and glutenfree options available. FFRF registration is \$60 per member, \$65 for nonmember accompanying member, and \$110 per nonmember (join for \$40 and save \$10). Sign up for a preconvention tour of the gorgeous Columbia River Gorge, including Multnomah Falls, from 1-5 p.m. Friday, Oct. 12, for a group rate of \$45. Buses will leave from the hotel at 1 p.m. (Official events begin at 7 p.m. with dinner on your own.)

Freedom From Religion Foundation's 35th Annual Convention October 12–13, 2012

Hilton Portland & Executive Tower Portland, Oregon

Make checks payable to "FFRF"

No. registering

FFRF Member registration(s) @ \$60 per person	\$
Non-member spouse or companion accompanying member @ \$65	\$
Non-member registration (s) $@$ \$110	\$

Watch for updates and more details at *ffrf.org/convention/*.

Non-member r	egistration(s) @ \$110	······································
(or join	a for \$40, save \$10!)	
Student registr	ation(s) @ \$25 (Ask about student group rate)	\$
Saturday Non-I	Prayer Breakfast @ \$25* per person	\$
Vegeta	arian option no. of vegetarian 🛛 🗌 Vegan option no. of ve	egan
Saturday Night	Dinner @ \$55* per person	\$
Vegeta	arian option no. of vegetarian Vegan option no. of ve	egan
Gluten-free m	neals required on above selections	0
	* Meal prices include 22% gratuity and 6% sales tax	
Columbia Rive	r Gorge Waterfall Tour @ \$45 (includes bus ticket)	\$
		Total:
		Total:
Name(s)	Please include names of all registrants for nametags	Total:
Name(s) Address	Please include names of all registrants for nametags	Total: