

Freethought Today

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April 2013

Ohio ACLU, FFRF rebuff school's Jesus 'switcheroo'

A month after the Freedom From Religion Foundation and the ACLU of Ohio sued the Jackson City School District over a portrait of Jesus in a middle school, the district moved it to Jackson High School.

The ACLU of Ohio and FFRF thwarted the overt attempt to elude the Constitution by filing an amended legal complaint in early April, adding as plaintiff "Sam Doe 4," who has a minor child attending Jackson High School, and "Sam Doe 5," a student who attends Jackson High School. Also filed is a motion for a temporary restraining order and memorandum in support of the motion.

FFRF Senior Staff Attorney Rebecca Markert first complained Jan. 2 about the unconstitutional painting. Superintendent Phil Howard refused to remove it, warning "it would take a court order to remove the picture." The lawsuit was filed Feb. 6 on behalf of several local plaintiffs, all parents of children or students in the district. The suit sought removal of the portrait and a permanent injunction barring "any

substantially similar display."

The devotional painting titled "the Head of Christ" was prominently displayed on an entrance wall at Jackson Middle School.

The Jesus painting was moved March 13 to the high school near its Fine Arts Department. The school board adopted a policy in February designating the high school space and the middle school foyer as "limited public forums."

At the portrait's new location in a public area at Jackson High, it's encountered by nearly 700 students, faculty, staff and community members. The school board meets at Jackson High, and the school hosts a variety of other events there that are open to the public.

The district also announced, a claim not previously made, that it did not even own the portrait, saying that it was owned by the Hi-Y Club, a Christian service club at the high school.

Howard, a co-defendant, told The Associated Press that the portrait was moved at the request of the club, which



The Jesus portrait in Jackson, Ohio, has been moved from the middle school to the high school, where it hangs in the hallway going to and from the cafeteria.

put it up in 1947 in the high school. In 2004, the high school moved to a new building and the previous building became the middle school. No middle school clubs claimed to own the portrait.

The plaintiffs note that district employees, not high schoolers with the Hi-Y Club, removed the portrait from the middle school, transported it to the new location and affixed it to the

Continued on page 5

Has Pennsylvania Religious Right no shame?

State rep attacks FFRF suit, plaintiff rights

Pennsylvania state Rep. Tim Krieger has introduced a bill in the General Assembly directly in response to current litigation by the Freedom From Religion

Foundation, which would have a chilling effect on plaintiffs and state/church lawsuits.

House Bill 922 would outlaw the use of pseudonyms in litigation challenging religious symbols on public property.

In a memo to representatives seeking co-sponsorship, Krieger cited lawsuits by FFRF and local families challenging two Ten Commandments monuments, donated by the Fraternal Order of Eagles, in front of public schools.

Krieger, who graduated from one of the defendant school districts, says he remembers the Ten Commandments monument at Connellsville Junior High School.

FFRF is suing over a second commandments monument in front of Valley High School in the New Kensington-Arnold School District.

The students and parents, with one exception, filed using pseudonyms because of community hostility and fear of retaliation. Some of the children represented in the suit are elementary students.

FFRF has received many hateful comments. Marie Schaub, the only named plaintiff in FFRF's New Kensington challenge, has been the sub-

ject of harassment. Last fall, a man posted this message on the "Keep the Ten Commandments at Valley High School" Facebook page, which has 1,200 followers:

"I'm sure if we look up the bitch she probably has a facebook account or a facebook page for her ridiculous group and we can slam the shit out of the bitch."

Another commenter asked whether "the families involved" have been identified, adding, "Someone needs to send that group back to Wisconsin with several black eyes!" Plaintiffs' counsel have also received harassing messages. Given the community reaction, parent plaintiffs are fearful their children will be subjected to religious bullying, harassment at school and by the public, and efforts to drive them out of the community.

A social media comment about FFRF's unnamed Connellsville plaintiffs stated, "These people need [to be] drug onto the nearest street and shot." A common refrain is that the plaintiffs must move out of the area.

"These legislators need to put their religious views aside and understand that protecting children from harm is a paramount interest of the state," said Annie Laurie Gaylor, FFRF co-presi-

dent.

She noted the long, documented history of threats and reprisal against Establishment Clause plaintiffs, most recently against Jessica Ahlquist, who became persona non grata when she filed suit and won a federal court ruling against religion in her Rhode Island high school.

Jessica at one point last year was attending school under police escort, and was subjected to cyberbullying, including death and rape threats and even threats against her younger siblings.

A Pennsylvania pastor weighing in on FFRF's litigation addressed the Connellsville Eagles Club on March 27, telling them that in filing to remove the monument from the junior high, FFRF is "trying to destroy our country," according to a news report in the Daily Courier.

Rev. Ewing Marietta, a leader of the "Save the Ten Commandments" group, called the court battle "ground zero." The newspaper reported that the pastor "drew parallels" seemingly comparing FFRF with Nazi Germany and commandments backers with the United States allies during World War II.

Ironically, the bill will have no im-

Continued on page 10

Inside This Issue

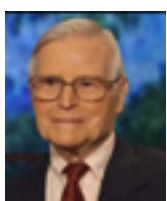
Student
activist
relates
painful
experience

Page 3



Freethought
poet
laureate's
spring sonnet

Page 4



Giving thanks
65 years later
to Vashti
McCollum

Page 12



Meet an Icelandic Activist

Name: Hope Knutsson.
Where I live: Reykjavik, Iceland.
Where I was born: Born and raised in Brooklyn, N.Y., of Russian, Hungarian, Polish and German descent. I have dual citizenship: Icelandic and American.
Family: Husband, Einar Knutsson; son, Tryggvi Einarsson; daughter, Katla Einarsdottir.
Education: B.A. in psychology and philosophy, master's in occupational therapy.
Original occupation: Psychiatric occupational therapist.
Career: Founder and president of Sidmennt, the Icelandic Ethical Humanist Association.

How I got where I am today: I've been a social activist all of my adult life, first in the U.S. and then in Iceland, where I've started and led various organizations and movements (a mental health association built on a self-help, empowerment model, an English-speaking foreigners association, a multicultural council and a secular humanist association). I established a civil confirmation program for teenagers and have been coordinating it for 25 years.

Civil confirmation is a secular alternative to religious confirmation and exists in all the Nordic countries and some other European nations. It consists of a course mainly about ethics, human rights, human relations, critical thinking and related subjects followed by a festive graduation ceremony.

Where I'm headed: I'll continue to work for complete religious freedom, separation of church and state and a secular society in Iceland.

What's it like to live in Iceland? I've lived here 39 years. The population is only 320,000, and everyone knows almost everyone else or is related. There are advantages and disadvantages to that.

There are some wonderful things about Iceland: It is a Nordic social democracy. It has no military. Nobody's tax money is spent on building bombs or training people to kill. About 86% of homes are heated by cheap geothermal energy. There are no nuclear power plants and little pollution. We have many volcanoes, hot springs, geysers and waterfalls.

Icelandic is an archaic, difficult and very limited language with only around 90,000 words, compared with close to a million in English. I can read, speak and understand it well, but even after 39 years I need other people to correct everything that I write.

The climate is temperate. In winter the temperature hovers around the

freezing point but rarely goes below that. There's a lot of strong wind here which can make it feel colder. However, Iceland is surrounded by the Gulf Stream, so it's warmer than people imagine because of the name. We don't get much snow in Reykjavik, and when it comes, it usually melts within hours. In summer the temperature is around 60 degrees, sometimes higher. We have midnight sun from June through August, which is fabulous. The darkest months are from the end of November through late January, when we have just under five hours of true daylight with an hour or so of twilight on either side of that. The Northern Lights are breathtaking and magical!

Person in history I admire: Thomas Paine and Carl Sagan. I think that using reason and critical thinking are positive approaches to life and help move humankind forward. Promoting the scientific method and popularizing scientific knowledge are noble and inspiring endeavors.

A quotation I like: It's good to have an open mind but not so open that your brains fall out.

- Science thrives on unanswered questions. Religion, in contrast, thrives on unquestioned answers.
- Insanity is continuing to do the same thing over and over again and expecting to get different results. (Einstein)
- I cannot believe in a god who wants to be praised all the time. (Nietzsche)
- If you don't pray in my school, I won't think in your church.
- You can't have everything. Where would you put it?
- The belief that some cosmic Jewish zombie can make you live forever if you symbolically eat his flesh and telepathically tell him that you accept him as your master, so he can remove an evil force from your soul that is present in humanity because a rib-woman was convinced by a talking snake to eat from a magical tree; makes perfect sense!

These are a few of my favorite things: Irish traditional music and other folk music, classical music, midnight sun, northern lights, trees, frogs, salamanders, newts and efts.

These are not: People jumping to conclusions with little evidence; extreme nationalism, which I view as a destructive and divisive force.

My doubts about religion started: I grew up in a secular home and am grateful for not having been indoctrinated with religion. My parents sent me to Sunday school for one winter when I was 8, and I remember thinking that all those bible stories sounded like fairy tales. I couldn't believe that



Photo: Annie Laurie Gaylor

Hope Knutsson in Reykjavik botanical garden.

anyone believed them.

Instead of "thank God" or "God bless you," I say: "Thank goodness" and "gesundheit."

Why I'm a freethinker: Majoring in philosophy and psychology in undergraduate school helped me to build on the tendency that I already had.

Ways I promote freethought: The organization which I helped to establish in 1990 and of which I have been president for many years, works to get religious indoctrination out of public

schools, to change laws and regulations at the local and national level so that all life stance [worldview] perspectives, as well as nonreligious spiritual or philosophical alternative organizations are treated equally, and to educate the public about freethought, skepticism, philosophy, science, religious freedom and secularism.

Conducting secular and humanist ceremonies also contribute to these goals.

FFRF welcomes 27 Lifetime Members

The Freedom From Religion Foundation is delighted to announce 27 new Lifetime Members. They include one new "Lifer" who prefers not to be named and:

Dennis Appleton, Dr. Lloyd Davidson, J. David Eisenberg, James Fanning, Dennis Fox, John Gehan, April Knutson (gift from John Gehan via the Elizabeth A. Ewen's John E. Forichette Memorial Trust), Wendy Goldberg, Alan Goldberg, Eric Grelle (who joined via a Combined Federal Campaign donation), Stuart Grief, Dr. Lloyd A. Jones, Dr. Lawrence S. Lerner, Kay T. Lilland, John Long, Alan Margolin, Housam Moursi, Dr. Hal E. Ott, Catherine Partyka, Don Phalp, Josh Robertson (gift from his father, FFRF member Jeff Robertson), Jay Sorensen, Hal Webre, Laurie Webre, Dr. Albert Yuen and John Zavodni.

States represented are Arizona, Cali-

fornia, Colorado, Florida, Illinois, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Missouri, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Virginia, Washington and Wisconsin, plus one ex-pat living in France.

Lifetime Memberships are offered on an individual basis for \$1,000 designated as a membership or membership renewal. A Lifetime Membership guarantees never another a renewal notice, goes into rainy day savings, and like all dues and donations, is deductible for income-tax purposes to the fullest extent of the law.

FFRF sends its warm thanks to "Anonymous," John, Albert, Laurie, Hal, Jay, Jeff on behalf of Josh, Don, Catherine, Hal, Housam, Alan, John, Kay, Larry, Lloyd, Stuart, Eric, Alan, Wendy, John on behalf of himself and April, Dennis, James David, Lloyd and Dennis!

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 it says April 2013 or earlier please renew! 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, ffrf.org/donate

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April 2013

The only freethought newspaper in the United States

2013 Paul J. Gaylor Memorial Student Activist Award

A. Roe: 12 years later

Nicole has received FFRF's 2013 Paul J. Gaylor Memorial Student Activist Award of \$1,000, sponsored by Annie Laurie Gaylor.

By Nicole M. Jacobsen

"Tolerance is giving to every other human being every right that you claim for yourself." — Robert G. Ingersoll

In April of 2001, A. Roe was 10 years old. Living in Dayton, Tenn., she was faced by very few challenges in her life other than weekly spelling homework or the panic of making it home before the inevitable flicker of streetlights.

In elementary school, A. Roe and her younger sister B. were taught many substantial life lessons: how to tie their shoes, to share with others, and once each week before recess, they learned how to accept Jesus Christ as their lord and savior. Impressionable as they were young, A. and B. brought home many of these lessons.

A. would pray to God every night that her peers would stop bullying her because of the Native American heritage that made her skin a little darker. During bubble baths, B. sang the catchy tunes she learned in school, her sweet voice singing, "Our God is an awesome God — he reigns from Heaven above."

The "Bible Education Ministry" classes that I sat through every Wednesday in my public school were in blatant disregard of my First Amendment rights, and as those laws were much beyond my understanding at that age, my parents sought justice for me and my siblings.

I learned about *Doe v. Porter*, the lawsuit my parents eventually filed against the school board with help from the Freedom From Religion Foundation, not from my parents but from my peers on the playground. The moniker "A. Roe" was used to represent me in court, as well as to hide my identity to protect me from the Christian majority that was our God-fearing community.

Unfortunately for that little girl, her name was also her curse. Unbeknownst to my mother and father, my classmates

were very much aware of my identity. While I was brought up to keep my mind open and my heart considerate, it seemed to me at the time that some of my peers were raised to believe that people who didn't attend church and believe in God were sinners, and I was no exception.

Just as my parents kept their lawsuit a secret from me to keep me safe, I kept from them the parts of my school day that involved my hair being pulled and my fingers being shut between locker doors. Girls who I thought were my friends called me names I wouldn't repeat even at my age now. While school board members and religious activists bashed my parents' character in the local newspaper, their offspring exiled me with the same blind rage to the other end of an empty cafeteria.

A. Roe was alone for bigger reasons than she thought she would ever understand. The fact that she was bullied daily to such a terrifying level over such grown-up issues was incomprehensible to her at the time.

In 2004 my parents moved our family to Boone, Iowa, and eventually won the lawsuit for the amount of a single dollar bill. While I was occasionally made fun of for having braces, or blushing at the sight of a high school crush, it was nothing compared to the relief I felt by being able to finally identify myself openly as belonging to an atheist household without judgment.

I celebrated my 22nd birthday in February as Nicole M. Jacobsen — A. Roe a distant memory. However, when our family friend Dan Barker asked me to tell my story, it felt like it was just yesterday that I cried in a bathroom stall over religious intolerance I didn't understand.

I don't condemn the wonderful people of my hometown or those who treated me poorly in the past. It's quite the opposite; their memory has helped me grow as a person. I still keep in contact with some of those old classmates to this day, and it's just another reminder to me that there is no right or wrong when it comes to religion.

Peace is truly found in acceptance and tolerance of another, no matter what their beliefs.

*Nicole still lives in Iowa and is completing her studies toward certification as a pharmacy technician. The case she writes so eloquently about is **John Doe, Mary Roe and the Freedom From Religion Foundation v. Rhea County School District**, which was filed in federal court in 2001. Nashville attorney Alvin Harris, an FFRF Life Member, ably represented the plaintiffs' challenge of K-5 religious instruction for*



Nicole M. Jacobsen, aka A. Roe.

A. Roe was alone for bigger reasons than she thought she would ever understand.

30 minutes a week in three public schools during school hours by bible students from Bryan College (motto: "Christ Above All"). It was chartered in 1925 in Dayton after the 1925 Scopes "monkey trial" to memorialize William Jennings Bryan, the lead attorney arguing against the teaching of evolution.

Judge R. Allan Edgar ruled for the plaintiffs in 2002, writing "This is not a close case." His decision was upheld in 2004 by the 6th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals.

See page 12 for more on the case's 65th anniversary.

Survey: 20% in U.S. say 'no religion'

American religious affiliation is at its lowest point since tracking started in the 1930s, according to analysis of new survey data by researchers from the University of California-Berkeley and Duke University. One in five Americans surveyed in 2012 said they had no religious preference, more than double the number reported in 1990.

The survey asked, "What is your religious preference? Is it Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, some other religion, or no religion?"

Sociologists analyzed data on religious attitudes as part of the General Social Survey, a biannual poll conducted by NORC, a research institute at the University of Chicago.

Researchers found that 20% of a nationally representative group reported no preference. The figure was 8% in 1990 and 5% in 1972.

Study authors said they are careful to distinguish the survey category of "no [organized] religion" from "atheists," who made up 3% of those interviewed last year. About 8% said they were raised with no religion.

Other results: 40% of self-identified liberals claimed "no religion" compared to 9% of conservatives; "no religion" among males was 24% and 16%

among females; 21% of whites, 17% of African Americans and 14% of Latinos said "no religion."

The secular community is fearful of seeming to proselytize. When giving talks on college campuses, I used to avoid personal discussions of my atheism. But over the years, I have changed my mind because such diffidence contributes to the false image of the atheist as someone whose convictions are removed from ordinary experience. It is vital to show that there are indeed atheists in foxholes, and wherever else human beings suffer and die.

FFRF Honorary Director Susan Jacoby, "Blessings of atheism"

Dallas Morning News, 1-13-13

Corrections

In "Meet a foxhole atheist" [March 13] George H.W. Bush was erroneously referred to as President Richard Nixon's vice president.

Also in March, Wallis Warfield Simpson was identified as marrying the former King Edward VI of the United Kingdom. She married the former King Edward VIII.

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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.

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*Freedom Depends
on Freethinkers*



FREEDOM FROM RELIGION FOUNDATION

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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.

What Is a Freethinker?



free-think-er n. A person who forms opinions

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

Heads Up

A Poetry Column by Philip Appleman

A note from the poet: Here in New York City we’ve been waiting for spring ever since spring “began” March 20 — but day after day we’re faced with more of the same: freezing cold, gusty winds, clouds, and snow or rain — and they say there’s more to come.

So, being the oldest guy in the neighborhood, I feel obligated to assure you from loong experience, that despite appearances, spring will indeed come along, one of these days, and then we’ll all break out our bikinis and skip around picking wildflowers. I urge you not to despair, just hang in there with blind faith, and know that it’ll happen. Really, really!

That’s the wisdom of old age. Take heed, youngsters. I sign off with a poem acknowledging the bright promise of spring, although it seems to be a poem about summer. It’s my take on Shakespeare’s sonnet 18 (“Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day?”), a poem I’m sure you know by heart. (You don’t have to memorize this version!) So take heart, hang in, have courage.

— The Ancient Mariner

Sonnet 18 ½ (for Margie)

Who, me? Compare you to a summer’s day?
Heck, no, it’s hot and sweaty here — and hey,
The days are getting shorter anyway.
Summer can’t be counted on to stay.

But you’re no winter day, I’m sure of that:
You’re not all blow and bluster, slop and splat,
You never blew off anybody’s hat.
Compared to summer, winter’s one spoiled brat.

Sometimes you’re sweet like autumn, turning gold,
With moods from kinda warm to kinda cold,
Sometimes a little shy, and sometimes bold,
But amber leaves will never make you old.

Other seasons may yet play a part,
But you are always springtime in my heart.

© 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*.



Overheard

The here and now is all you have, and if you play it right, it’s all you need.
The late Texas Gov. Ann Richards, quoted and portrayed by Holland Taylor in the one-woman show “Ann” at Lincoln Center
New York Times, 3-8-13

Halfway into their two-week annual meeting, delegates to the [U.N.] Commission on the Status of Women fear they will not be able to agree on a final communique, just like last year. Who is to blame? Delegates and activists are pointing fingers at the Vatican, Iran and Russia for trying to eliminate language in a draft communique asserting that the familiar excuses — religion, custom, tradition — cannot be used by governments to duck their obligation to eliminate violence.
Editorial, “Unholy Alliance: The Vatican, Iran and Russia work to block global standards on protecting women”
New York Times, 3-12-13

Violence against women must be seen as a human rights issue, and that has nothing to do with culture or religion.
Inga Marta Thorkildsen, Norway’s gender equality minister
New York Times, 3-12-13

Catholicism has never excelled at letting nonbelievers live as they believe they should. The right to legal abortion, for one, will be a ruthless field of that battle: “Our” pope will surely never allow his own country, where legal abortion remains severely limited, to set a bad example. Here, as everywhere, the Vatican is a main lobbying force for conservative, even reactionary, issues. An Argentine pope can bring this power to uncharted heights.
“God Is an Argentine,” op-ed by novelist Martin Caparros
New York Times, 3-15-13

Americans don’t appreciate the vast powers that investigating magistrates have in Europe. It only takes one who wants to make a name for him or herself to issue an arrest warrant for the former pope.
Nicholas Cafardi, canon lawyer and professor at Duquesne Law School in Pittsburgh, “Victims raise legal questions about retired pope”
WTOP, 3-5-13

One-Lung Rabbi Feels Kinship With One-Lung Pope
Headline on news story about Pope Francis I and Henry Jay Karp, rabbi at Temple Emanuel synagogue, Daven-

port, Iowa
ABC News, 3-14-13

I’d pity the poor lady who is married to a Catholic priest. Catholics have very high demands on their priests.
Joseph Whittel, pastor at St. Paul in Chains Catholic Church, Waterford, Conn., where the previous pastor was arrested for possessing child pornography
Waterford Patch, 3-14-13

People like to read small, happy messages while sitting on the toilet. The vast majority of the feedback has been positive. Our intention was to spread love and joy, not religious messages.
Christina von Trampe, spokeswoman for a Finnish company criticized for putting bible quotes on Lambi brand toilet paper
Reuters, 3-4-13

People with Parkinson’s disease even have a tendency to lose their interest in religion — a change more readily considered philosophical than pathological. According to research by Patrick McNamara, Ph.D., of Boston University School of Medicine, people with PD report significantly lower levels of interest in religion. Brain scans show that this lack of interest coincides with changes in the prefrontal cortex but does not correlate with depression, age, education, intelligence or medication.
Article, “Losing Religion?”
Neurology Now, Dec. 2012/Jan. 2013

The mission of the Freethinking Frogs is to organize, unite, educate and serve students and student communities that promote the ideals of scientific and critical inquiry, democracy, secularism, and human-based ethics. We envision a future in which nontheistic students are respected voices in public discourse and vital partners in the secular movement’s charge against irrationality and dogma.
Statement of a new group at Texas Christian University [mascot, Horned Frogs] seeking recognition from the Fort Worth school
Facebook, 2-28-13

Extensive discrimination by governments against atheists, humanists and the nonreligious occurs worldwide.
Statement to the United Nations’ Human Rights Council by the International Humanist and Ethical Union, which has 120 member bodies in 45 countries
Reuters, 2-25-13

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

Newdow, FFRF challenge 'In God We Trust'

The Freedom From Religion Foundation and 19 other plaintiffs are suing the U.S. Treasury for stamping "In God We Trust" on currency in defiance of the godless and entirely secular U.S. Constitution.

FFRF Honorary Director Mike Newdow is acting as legal counsel in the lawsuit, which was filed Feb. 1 in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York. Plaintiffs include Rosalyn Newdow, Mike's mother and a longtime FFRF member and numismatist who has stopped buying coins to collect because the godly phrase on them offends her.

The legal complaint, a tour de force of historical research, unequivocally shows that there was a purely religious purpose and intent behind placing "God" on U.S. coinage.

"In God We Trust" first appeared on a coin in 1864 after a crusade by Rev. M.R. Watkinson. He wrote Treasury Secretary Salmon P. Chase, noting such recognition was important to "relieve us from the ignominy of heathenism."

The complaint alleges that the religious motto, a Johnny-come-lately adopted only in 1956, is proselytizing, discriminatory and an establishment of monotheism in violation of the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment. Congress voted to require the motto on all currency in 1955, and it first appeared on bills in 1957.

Many Americans mistakenly assume our founders chose "In God We Trust" as a motto, but for most of U.S. history, our money was as free of religion as our Constitution. The original secular motto "E Pluribus Unum" (from many



Pre-1957 "clean" currency, minus the religious tampering.

[come] one) was chosen by a distinguished committee of Jefferson, Adams and Franklin.

Newdow cites statements by members of Congress who expressed hope that the proselytizing message on U.S. currency would spread worldwide.

Pennsylvania U.S. Rep. Herman P. Eberharter said, "[T]he American dollar travels all over the world, into every country of the world, and frequently gets behind the Iron Curtain, and if it carries this message in that way I think it would be very good. I think that is one of the most compelling reasons why we should put it on our currency."

Eberharter added, "[T]he principles laid down by God and the teachings of our way of life should be kept alive in the hearts and minds of our friends enslaved behind the Iron Curtain."

The plaintiffs, Newdow alleges, are forced to proselytize, by an Act of Congress, for a deity in which they don't believe whenever they handle money.

"Our government is prohibited from endorsing one religion over

another *but also prohibited from endorsing religion over nonreligion*. The placement of a theistic ideal on our nation's currency violates this stricture and is therefore unconstitutional," said FFRF Co-President Dan Barker.

"As Anne Nicol Gaylor, FFRF's principal founder, has always put it, 'In God We Trust' isn't even accurate. In order to be accurate, it would have to say 'In God *Some of Us* Trust,' and wouldn't that be silly?" Barker added.

The plaintiffs point out that the motto is discriminatory, necessarily excluding nonbelievers and others who don't believe in one god. The phrase falsely links citizenship to piety. In the words of Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, that sends the "message to members of the audience who are nonadherents 'that they are outsiders, not full members of the political community and an accompanying message to adherents that they are insiders, favored members of the political community.'"

As Newdow points out in the complaint, a similar provision discriminat-

ing against Jews, Catholics, women, blacks, Latinos, Asians or any other minority group would never be tolerated.

FFRF previously challenged the motto in a lawsuit in 1994 taken by attorney Robert R. Tiernan in Colorado. The 10th Circuit federal judge dismissed FFRF's lawsuit on the grounds that it was not a religious phrase. FFRF had commissioned a poll in 1994 of 900 individuals which found that a majority found the words "In God We Trust" to be religious, to endorse a belief in God and to endorse religion over atheism.

The poll is entered into the new lawsuit's exhibits. FFRF's case caught the eye of Michael Newdow, a California emergency room doctor who "moonlights" as an Establishment Clause litigator, and in part inspired his landmark challenge of "under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Newdow won a major victory before the 9th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals in 2002, which ruled that public schools should stop using the religious pledge. It was vacated on the basis of his standing in 2004.

"We greatly admire Mike's never-say-die perseverance, his dedication to our country's secular roots and his pro bono representation of FFRF and our membership," added Annie Laurie Gaylor, FFRF co-president.

"You're not truly educated as a secularist until you've read Mike's very thorough summary of the secular history of the United States, and the history of religion on coins and currency," she adds.

See: ffrf.org/uploads/legal/IGWTComplaint.pdf

Ohio ACLU, FFRF rebuff school's Jesus 'switcheroo'

Continued from front page

'This is a transparent effort to shake off a lawsuit.' — Annie Laurie Gaylor, FFRF co-president

high school wall with permanent bolts.

At the school board's March 12 meeting, Howard acknowledged that the limited public forum policy was new and that the portrait violates the Establishment Clause if it is government speech.

"We have to respect the rights of the club," Howard is quoted as saying. "Failure to do so might open the district to even another lawsuit — this time by the H-Y Club" — or violate the Constitution by "turning the portrait into government speech."

Howard claimed that "it's student speech, not government speech."

The plaintiffs suspect that the district hoped FFRF and the ACLU of Ohio, which had a middle school plaintiff and others with standing to sue, wouldn't be able to find a plaintiff who attended the high school.

"This is a transparent effort to shake off a lawsuit, and we're grateful to the high school student and parent of a student who have come forward to ensure the challenge continues," commented FFRF Co-President Annie Lau-

rie Gaylor.

"It doesn't matter which public building the portrait is in. It's an unconstitutional endorsement of religion on the part of a public school," said Nick Worner, with the ACLU of Ohio.

FFRF and the ACLU allege that display of the portrait infringes on the plaintiffs' First Amendment right to freedom of religion, causing them to question whether their religious beliefs will be respected by the school district. The display forces them to view a portrait representing religious views promoted by the district that differ from the way they choose to view religion and morality.

The school district actions have "no legitimate secular purpose."

"None of the rationales offered by the school board can obscure what any reasonable observer would recognize: 1) that the prominent display of a portrait of Jesus in a school hallway is government speech 2) that the display and maintenance of the portrait endorses one particular religion; and 3) and that the school board acted with a predominantly religious purpose when it accepted, installed and displayed the portrait of Jesus Christ at Jackson City High School."

The plaintiffs charge that the so-called "limited public forum" is a contrivance, lacking any evidence of a written or well-established prelitigation policy for such usage. Two of the school's only three noncurriculum-related clubs are Christian-based organizations. The Jackson High School stu-

dent handbook lacks a procedure for creating new clubs on currently unrepresented interests, creating "de facto, viewpoint discrimination" in terms of access to the limited public forum.

The facts of the case are nearly identical to those in a 1994 case de-

cided by the 6th Circuit appeals court in which the court held it's impermissible to place a copy of the same 'Head of Christ,' a famous portrait by Warner Sallman, in a public school hallway with trophy cases.

State/Church Bulletin

Atheist officer sues religious supervisors

The American Civil Liberties Union of Puerto Rico filed a suit March 9 on behalf of Alvin Marrero Mendez, 38, an atheist police officer who refused to take part in Christian prayers at his precinct. Defendants are four top police officials.

Marrero alleged his supervisors once led a prayer in a mall parking lot during an incident. The 14-year department veteran was demoted after filing a complaint, stripped of his gun, made to wash patrol cars and act as a messenger.

The line between state and church can get blurred in Puerto Rico. Two years ago, the Treasury Department organized a Catholic Mass, complete with altar, in the building's lobby. Prayer circles have been held at the Supreme Court, and in March 2012, former Police Chief Emilio Diaz Colon promoted more than 470 officers at a ceremony in a church.

Judge to library: Unblock websites

U.S. District Judge E. Richard Weber ruled March 5 that the Salem [Mo.] Public Library must stop blocking access to websites related to Wicca and other minority religions.

"Even libraries that are required by federal law to install filtering software to block certain sexually explicit content should never use software to prevent patrons from learning about different cultures," said Tony Rothert, an attorney for the American Civil Liberties Union of Eastern Missouri.

According to the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, the suit said the library's Netsweeper software blocked sites such as the official webpage of the Wiccan church, the Wikipedia entry for Wicca, Astrology.com and the *Encyclopedia on Death and Dying*, which has entries on death and death rituals for several cultures and religions.

Hortons hears a worldview, or two

There's life after debates but not death

By Dan Barker
FFRF co-president

On March 7, at the University of Windsor in Ontario, Canada, I debated the question “Is There Life After Death?” It was sponsored by the Windsor/Essex County Atheist Society and Intervarsity Christian Fellowship. More than 400 people attended, including FFRF members who drove many miles.

The event started 90 minutes late because Joe Boot, my opponent, had a car accident on the way. His car was badly damaged but he wasn't hurt. (He did not have a “near death” experience.)

He does believe that “all things work together for good,” and for some reason his God, who controls everything, thought it was important to inconvenience hundreds of people, some of whom had traveled a long distance. Boot, a native of England, is senior pastor at Westminster Chapel in Toronto and founder of the Ezra Institute for Contemporary Christianity.

We managed to fill up the hour and a half with some impromptu speeches. Shawna Scott, who represented the atheist group, gave a brief talk about her organization's activities. Shawna is the student who successfully stopped graduation prayers at the university and received an FFRF scholarship award for her activism.

An Intervarsity organizer then spoke about its efforts to publicize the message of Jesus on campus. The moderator of the debate, Dr. Gordon Drake, a theistic physics professor, spoke about the complete compatibility (he thinks) of science and religion.

Still stalling for time, I got up and described FFRF's history and legal activities, mentioning that, at that very moment, Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor was in Champaign, Ill., to take part in the 65th anniversary celebration of the *McCollum* Supreme Court victory, a legal precedent that removes religious instruction from U.S. public schools. I deliberately steered clear of the debate topic so as not to prejudice the audience.

But I did offer one proof of the truth of atheism. I held up a red paper coffee cup from Tim Hortons. Little did I realize how powerful that symbol was before that audience. I learned from some of the locals that the restaurant chain is one of the closest things to national pride the Canadians celebrate these days and is tied in with Horton's 24-year National Hockey League career. He founded the chain, Canada's largest, before dying in 1974 at age 44 in an automobile accident.

Before the debate, while the room was being set up, some of us had gone to the Hortons on campus for coffee and snacks. I ordered a medium regular coffee, which they handed to me in that red paper cup. At the table I noticed that one of the students had taken the lid off his own coffee cup and was rolling up the curved top rim. “Darn, I didn't win anything,” he said.

Tim Hortons has a contest where

some of the cups are printed with prize announcements to lucky winners. When I finished my coffee, I did the same thing, after Currie, one of the atheist students, showed me the arrow on the cup pointing to where the prize might be. When I rolled up the rim, surprise! I won a free caffe latte.

Maybe that doesn't sound like a big deal, but when I held that cup up to the audience, they were impressed. “This is proof of the power of nonprayer,” I announced. “I did *not* pray to win, and I won!”

Joe did finally show up, around 8:30, surprisingly composed after his long day, and gave his opening statement. When it was my turn to speak, I walked over and handed the cup to Joe, as a gift. Not having heard my story, he was a bit perplexed, but quickly asked “Did I win?” The crowd loved it!



Paucity of evidence

The debate was a good show, as these things go. Joe Boot was articulate, attractive and feisty, which makes for a much better event than some other debates I have done where the opponent mainly lectures, or worse, where we agree on too many issues. A debate should be a contest.

But intellectually, it was extremely disappointing. I had prepared carefully, and my notebook was stuffed with information to rebut attempts to provide evidence for the afterlife, including near-death experiences and the supposed resurrection of Jesus. But Joe only mentioned these in passing, and said they were not the real issues. He offered no evidence at all for life after death, admitting “the paucity of empirical evidence.”

Instead, he based his whole case on the supposed philosophical weaknesses of naturalism and atheism and simply asserted that the God of Christian scripture is the best explanation for “a universe of meaning,” and since God exists, then his promise of eternal life must be true.

He thinks we have to choose between one of two worldviews: 1) naturalism, where all reality is one, and 2) dualism, where reality is split between that which is created and that which is not. (Are you a one-ist or a two-ist?)

He admitted that his worldview has assumptions and biases, but claimed that they are no worse than the atheist's assumptions and biases. Without God, the universe is an “absurdity,”



FFRF Co-President debated March 7 with Rev. Joe Boot at the University of Windsor. Here, Dan gathered with members of the Windsor/Essex County Atheist Society. Back (from left) are Chris, Pat, Kristen, Jamie, Currie, Derek, Shawna Scott (society president), Dr. Gordon Drake, Dan Barker, Doug, (front) Andrew, Satpreet, Jordan, Hamid, Joshua, Rob and Joe.

Misdirection: ‘Is there life after death?’ became ‘Is atheism absurd?’

a cosmos with no meaning. But with God, we can entertain the existence of soul, spirit, immaterial objects such as mind and consciousness that can exist apart from the body.

“We are more than the sum of our parts,” he insisted, “and more than mere matter in motion.”

And that was it! A debate on one topic was morphed by sleight of hand into something else: “Is there life after death?” became “Is atheism absurd?”

Burden of proof unmet

When it was my turn, I quickly pointed out that this was not an either-or contest between two exclusive worldviews, a kind of cosmic multiple choice test. He was making a truth claim — “There is life after death” — and in any debate, the burden of proof is on the shoulders of the one making the claim.

Joe and I both believe in the existence of the natural universe, but he believes in something extra — that there is a supernatural realm populated by immaterial personalities. We both admit that human beings are biological organisms in a natural environment, but he believes that we are also something more than that — souls, spirits, immaterial entities.

We both start from naturalism, where we agree, and argue from there. My skepticism about his additional claims about the universe is not based on an opposite worldview, but on the default view that we both share, which he is trying to enlarge.

If I claim I've invented a perpetual motion machine, and you ask me for proof, it would be me like saying “Prove that I didn't.”

Not only did Joe fail to meet the burden of proof, he did not even step up to the plate. He did not accept any burden of proof at all. He even admitted, “we don't have a debate here.”

Apparently, the way to show that there is life after death is to simply beat up on atheists. Quoting Christopher Hitchens, I replied, “That which can be asserted without evidence can be dismissed without evidence.”

The debate was much more than that, of course — broader if not deeper. We dove into epistemology and definitions. I accused him of equivocation, and he replied by claiming that my simplistic, old-fashioned, worn-out and biased naturalistic diatribe was nothing more than “cereal box atheism.”

I was sorely tempted to reply that I would rather be a cereal box than a flake, but you can see from the video that I bit my tongue in mid-sentence. I think it looks better if the mud slings from only one side.

During cross-examination, I asked Joe to define “spirit.” He sidestepped the question by claiming that my materialistic biases automatically exclude a nonmaterial definition, and anyway, we naturalists don't know how to define “energy.”

He claimed that consciousness is an immaterial object, while I insisted that it is not a thing at all: Consciousness and mind are labels for functions of an organ that cease to have meaning when the organ stops operating, just like software stops running when you unplug the computer.

Science has shown us the complete dependence of consciousness on the brain. I pointed out that asking if there is life after death is like asking if digestion continues to exist after the stomach disappears.

Questions from the audience were astute, directed at both of us. Up to that point I would say that Joe had been keeping his head up, speaking articulately (if not coherently), but when a question was asked about evolution, that's when he lost the debate, as I heard from many members of the audience.

He asserted that humans are a special creation, that all species were created as separate kinds by God, and that there are serious problems with natural selection. “Darwin himself wondered where all the transitional fossils were,” he exulted, apparently not realizing that much work has been done since Darwin first announced his ideas.

After the debate, about 20 of us went to an Ethiopian restaurant and talked until way after midnight. Shawna handed me a gift from the group — not a Tim Hortons cup, but an elegant personalized pen that I can use to autograph books and sign FFRF legal letters.

This event was their first large public meeting, and because it was so successful, they are energized to do more activities on campus promoting reason, science and real human morality. There may not be life after death, but with so many smart, concerned activist students like the Windsor/Essex County Atheist Society, there is certainly life after debates!

Let's observe Dec. 25, but not as Christmas

The New York Times' "Room for Debate" series Feb. 13 included this op-ed by FFRF Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor. The series addressed the question, "Should the U.S. have more or different official holidays?"

By Annie Laurie Gaylor

If I had my druthers, Christmas would not be a federal holiday. It's a no-brainer. The First Amendment categorically states, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion."

Clearly, designating the date upon which Christians observe the birth of their messiah as a federal holiday is making a law respecting an establishment of religion and placing governmental weight behind Christianity.

Would I have U.S. citizens forgo end-of-the-year festivals or miss out on a federal day off? Not for the world. I would propose one of two remedies. Option 1: Rename Dec. 25 as something secular like "Family Day." Uru-



FFRF Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor

guay has long celebrated Dec. 25 as *Día de la Familia*. Option 2: Make Dec. 21 (the winter solstice), not Dec. 25 (Christmas), the federal holiday. The shortest, darkest day of the year is already a natural holiday, so why not make it a federal holiday as well?

The winter solstice is, after all, the reason for the season. It signals the rebirth of the sun and the natural new year. For millennia, our ancestors in

the Northern Hemisphere have greeted this seasonal event with festivals of light, gift exchanges and feasts. The federal government's description of Christmas as a federal holiday claims: "Decorating houses and yards with lights, putting up Christmas trees, giving gifts, and sending greeting cards have become holiday traditions even for many non-Christian Americans."

But it is the Christians who stole Christmas. We don't mind sharing the season with them, but we don't like their pretense that it's the birthday of Jesus. It is, if anything, the birthday of the Unconquered Sun. The winter solstice has astronomical significance all Americans can mark, without reference to their religious beliefs.

Should we compound the current constitutional violation by turning minority religious observances into federal holidays? Banish the thought! Think how unworkable (given the hundreds of religious "holy days") that would be.

The Freedom From Religion Foundation successfully overturned a statute declaring Good Friday to be a state holiday in Wisconsin. This statute even

directed citizens when to worship! Our legal victory did not deny state workers a half-day off. Instead, workers get to choose their own half-holiday instead of being told by their government to worship. It is not the business of our secular government to celebrate anyone's "holy days." Accommodate, yes.

Recognizing the winter solstice would violate no constitutional provision. Accommodating family time, universal weariness during our darkest days and allowing our national "well" to fill up after a hectic year — these would indeed serve secular purposes. Let's hear it for Family Day!

Besides Gaylor, others answering the question were Khyati Joshi, associate professor of education at Fairleigh Dickinson University ("Keep Christmas, and add other faiths' holy days"); Mark Rienzi, senior counsel at the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty and professor of constitutional law at the Catholic University of America ("Secular reasons to mark religious days"); and Norman Ornstein, resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute ("No need for an election holiday; vote on the weekend").

Sixth Circuit censors criticism of religion in FFRF case

A federal appeals court ruled Feb. 25 that a Michigan mayor can censor nonreligious speech, while continuing to endorse a nativity scene in the city atrium in Warren.

A three-judge panel of the 6th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals ruled against the fight by FFRF and its local member against censorship at Christmastime.

"The Sixth Circuit incorrectly characterized this case as a 'religious symbol on government property,' when in reality this case is about free speech," noted FFRF Senior Staff Attorney Rebecca Markert.

Mayor James Fouts routinely placed a nativity scene in the Warren Civic Center, a primary municipal building also containing the public library. FFRF and member Douglas Marshall of Warren wrote letters protesting the display.

On Dec. 8, 2010, Fouts wrote FFRF that "all religions are welcome to celebrate their religious seasons with a display in city hall." Marshall tried in vain repeatedly to get permission to place an FFRF winter solstice sign in the building's atrium.

Fouts called FFRF's sign "highly offensive" and without intended irony compared FFRF's request to place the sign saying "there are no gods" to putting up a "sandwich board saying that there is no Santa Claus." Fouts stated, "I cannot and will not sanction the desecration of religion in the Warren City Hall atrium."

"We're not a Christian nation," said FFRF Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor. "Under our secular constitution, city governments are forbidden to endorse one religion over another, or religion over nonreligion, much less to sit in judgment of what is or isn't a 'desecration' of religion."

FFRF filed the lawsuit after Fouts invited other individuals and groups to place items in the atrium and after the mayor denied FFRF's request based solely on its solstice message — a

fact completely ignored by the appeals court.

FFRF's winter solstice sign, specifically coined to counter religious displays on government property, reads: "At this season of the Winter Solstice, let reason prevail. There are no gods, no devils, no angels, no heaven or hell. There is only our natural world. Religion is but myth and superstition that hardens hearts and enslaves minds."

The panel found the holiday display to be government speech, but failed to reconcile this decision with its recently decided *Satawa* ruling in May 2012. That allowed a private individual to erect a large nativity scene on the median of a highway in Michigan, calling it a public forum. Douglas Marshall placed a banner last December on the median, but it was tampered with and later stolen.

Judge Jeffrey Sutton, who wrote the opinion, is considered one of the most conservative 6th Circuit judges. All three judges were appointed either by Presidents George W. Bush or George H.W. Bush. A New York Times analysis of appeals court appointees last fall showed that 63% of appointments to it were made by Republican presidents.

FFRF had asked the court to enjoin the mayor from barring the FFRF sign and to find that the city had violated FFRF's and Marshall's rights.

Sutton wrote that "a government may provide benefits to faith-based entities if the benefits are available to secular and religious entities alike," clearly contradicted by Fouts' action, or "may invoke the divine through words and symbols if they have religious and historical meanings or faith-based and solemnizing effects, and in the process offer at most incidental benefits to any one faith or to faith in general."

The decision makes no note of Fouts' declaration of the atrium as a public forum for religion but decides the case based on the *Lynch v. Donnelly* decision, which held that reindeer by a



Doug Marshall at the 2012 FFRF convention in Portland, Ore.

nativity display supposedly secularized the religious message.

Sutton also quoted Justice William O. Douglas declaring in *Zorach v. Clauson*, "We are a religious people whose institutions presuppose a Supreme Being" in a 1952 case. But Sutton failed to add that in the very next sentence, Douglas added, "We guarantee the freedom to worship as one chooses. We make room for as wide a variety of beliefs and creeds as the spiritual needs of man deem necessary."

Douglas explained his statement in *McGowan v. Maryland* in 1961: "[I]f a religious haven is to be worked into

the affairs of our people, it is to be done by individuals and groups, not by the Government. This necessarily means, first, that the dogma, creed, scruples, or practices of no religious group or sect are to be preferred over those of any others."

Douglas added, "The First Amendment commands government to have no interest in theology or ritual; it admonishes government to be interested in allowing religious freedom to flourish — whether the result is to produce Catholics, Jews, or Protestants, or to turn the people toward the path of Buddha, or to end in a predominantly Moslem nation, or to produce in the long run atheists or agnostics. On matters of this kind government must be neutral."

In 2004, FFRF won a solid 6th Circuit victory in *Doe v. Porter*, a case successfully challenging devotional religious instruction taught by bible students in elementary schools in Dayton, Tenn. (See a story on page 3 about the experiences of one of the child plaintiffs.)

"We extend our warmest gratitude to plaintiff Douglas Marshall and to our pro bono counsel Danielle Hessel," said FFRF Co-President Dan Barker.

The appeals court did not accept FFRF's petition for an en banc review in the Warren case. A request for en banc review was rejected.



Women Without Superstition No Gods — No Masters

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FFRF action gets polls moved from church

With the help of activist member Kurt Bocksenaum, FFRF has gotten a polling place in Brown Deer, Wis. moved from St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church to a new community center.

During the spring 2011 election, citizens who voted at the church were confronted by religious symbols such as a Latin cross and a painting of Jesus, which loomed directly over voting booths. Bocksenaum asked Village Manager Russell Van Gompel to remove or cover up the religious displays while the polls were open.

After consulting with legal counsel, Van Gompel removed the display. Reportedly, church officials immediately protested and put the display back up.

During the July 2011 recall elections, Bocksenaum complained again

about the displays and was confronted by the church president, who said that the religious displays would not be taken down while the church was used as a polling place.

FFRF Staff Attorney Patrick Elliott had sent a letter on Bocksenaum's behalf to village officials July 14, 2011, asking them to move the polling place to a secular location. Elliott wrote, "The Village Board has the great responsibility of assuring compliance with election laws and selecting polling places accessible to the public but which will remain free of intimidation."

After looking into alternatives, the village's attorney stated that a planned community center would be used for voting once construction was complete. In the interim, Bocksenaum voted by absentee ballot.



Voters in Brown Deer, Wis., will no longer face this cheesy Jesus image while filling out their ballots.

At a Feb. 18 meeting, the board unanimously approved moving the polling place to the community center, citing "controversy over having some religious pictures on the wall in the

room where voting was held."

FFRF sent a letter of thanks to the board for making the change.

Evolution-bashing schools head backs off

An Oklahoma school district superintendent instructed teachers not to promote religion in classrooms after correspondence with the Freedom From Religion Foundation.

A concerned family in the Wynnewood Public Schools District contacted FFRF with concerns about a sixth grade teacher displaying posters with bible quotes and promoting Christianity to students at Wynne Middle School. The social studies teacher attacked evolution and misinformed students that the U.S. Constitution, an entirely secular and godless document, is derived from the bible.

A parent had complained to the principal, who is married to the offending teacher. The principal removed the posters but insisted it was the teacher's "First Amendment right" to talk about her personal religious views with students.

FFRF Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel



‘Evolution is as much a fact as gravity.’
— Andrew Seidel

contacted Superintendent Randy Cole in a Feb. 28 letter which cited numerous Supreme Court cases showing that public schools can't promote religion. Seidel noted that "the First Amendment is not a license for uncontrolled expression at variance with established curricular content" and that courts have upheld the termination of teachers who violate the Establishment Clause.

On March 4, Seidel received an official email from Cole, who conceded the teacher should not have placed religious posters in her classroom. Cole said he told her to "stay strictly with the information presented in the book." But he volunteered that student-led prayer is constitutional.

Although Cole said he has "a degree in science," he argued against evolution. He also asked Seidel whether he's a believer and sermonized, "What happens when you die, if you're wrong? If I'm wrong, when I die I just die, but if you're wrong, when you die —"

He also said "the further we separate God from our schools the nearer we bring violence and evil."

Seidel responded, "Evolution is as much a fact as gravity," and called it "disturbing" that a superintendent does not "believe in" evolution. He recommended Cole read books by Richard Dawkins and Jerry Coyne.

Seidel then addressed Cole's condescending question: "Please understand that my personal beliefs have no bearing on the illegality of the Carters' actions. But since you asked, I believe in the First Amendment. I believe in protecting minorities from the tyranny of the majority. I believe that religion is the single most divisive force on this planet, and that it has no place in our public schools. I believe that ideas should be subjected to reason, debate and inquiry, not blindly accepted."

Seidel added, "I believe in love, in family and in making the most of this life because it's the only one we have. In short, I am an atheist."

Seidel called Cole's assertion that secularism causes school shootings "appalling," adding, "Murder rates are actually lower in more secular nations and higher in more religious nations where belief in God is deep and widespread. And within America, the states with the highest murder rates tend to be highly religious, such as Louisiana and Alabama, but the states with the lowest murder rates tend to be among the least religious in the country, such as Vermont and Oregon."

In a March 6 email, Cole said he instructed district principals to hold meetings by the end of the week on the topic of not promoting religion in the classroom. He added, "You raise some good and interesting points, as I said, it would be foolish of me to argue with a lawyer."

Seidel said Cole got one more thing wrong: "It's not foolish to argue with a lawyer; it's foolish to argue with an atheist."

FFRF halts multiple state/church violations

By Sarah Eucalano

Festival drops discount for Catholic Mass

Mexican Fiesta in Milwaukee will no longer give festival-goers discounts for attending Catholic Mass per the terms of a settlement with Richard Halasz, a Wisconsin FFRF member.

The annual festival, held on the Summerfest grounds, had discounted entrance tickets for attending Mass on the grounds before the festival opened to the general public.

The regular rate at the gate was \$13, but Mass attendees were charged only \$5. FFRF first objected to the discriminatory discount Aug. 14, informing organizers it violated Wisconsin's public accommodations law. A week later, FFRF advised organizers it would file a complaint with the state if the festival

didn't drop the discount.

Halasz, an atheist, attended Mexican Fiesta on Aug. 26 and wasn't able to get the discount, which led to Staff Attorney Patrick Elliott filing a complaint with the state's Equal Rights Division.

According the settlement, "future Mexican Fiesta promotions will not be timed to coincide with times of entry or exit of the annual Mass." Organizers apologized to Halasz and gave him an \$8 refund. Halasz agreed to withdraw his complaint and he and FFRF waived recovery of any attorneys' fees.

"I'm thankful to the Freedom From Religion Foundation for standing up for our First Amendment and civil rights," Halasz said.



Patrick Elliott

Carolina soccer coach won't lead prayers

A soccer coach at a Charleston, S.C., suburb high school will no longer lead prayers before matches, and coaches at all middle and high schools in the district will review guidelines on state-church separation.

A concerned parent of a student at Ashley Ridge High School in Summerville told FFRF that the coach led prayers before matches and at the annual banquet.

Staff Attorney Patrick Elliott sent a March 6 letter to Superintendent Joseph Pye in order to get the violations corrected.

Pye responded March 12: "[The coach] was directed to cease leading or directing prayer immediately, and he gave his assurance this would be the case."

FFRF makes bibles history in Oklahoma

The Gideons will no longer distribute New Testament bibles to fifth-graders in the Grove [Okla.] School District. Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel requested in an Oct. 19 letter to Board Chairman Jim Rutter on behalf of concerned parents that the district should stop the illegal distribution of bibles.

"The Gideon practice is a usurpation of parental authority, and can pose safety risks when children have to run a gauntlet of aggressive adults hawking religious literature on school property," Seidel noted.

The Grove Board of Education has changed its policy to exclude external sources from distributing materials. Rutter confirmed in a Jan. 7 email that the policy prohibits bible distribution.

...

Cross Timbers Elementary School in Tecumseh, Okla., is reviewing its policy on bible distribution after fifth-graders were given Jehovah’s Witness bibles at school. They were told to write their names inside the bibles and take them home.

Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel told Superintendent Tom Wilsie in an Oct. 26 letter that schools have a constitutional obligation to remain neutral toward religion. Seidel said the district should not allow anyone to enter schools to distribute religious literature.

Wilsie responded Jan. 7 to say the materials distribution policy is under review.

God no longer copilot on USAF plane

The U.S. Air Force removed a “Commando Prayer” from the side of one of its aircraft after Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel sent a Feb. 25 letter on behalf of a concerned service member to the commanding colonel.

“Service members have the constitutional right to decide how or whether to observe religious practices,” Seidel said. “While non-Christians and non-believers are fighting to protect the freedoms for all Americans, their freedoms are being trampled upon.”

In a March 8 email, the complainant informed FFRF that the prayer was removed.

Tenn. teacher bios can’t endorse religion

FFRF, acting on behalf of a local complainant, has stopped religious content from being posted on school district websites in Jackson, Tenn. Proselytizing messages will no longer be allowed on teachers’ biographical sections in Jackson-Madison County Schools.

Senior Staff Attorney Rebecca Markert wrote a July 9 letter to Superintendent Thomas White to request that the religious messages be scrubbed from the schools’ websites. She criticized the teachers’ endorsement of Christianity on Web pages.

Markert cited teacher messages from the website such as, “I see teaching as my ministry and Christian outreach to our community,” as well as direct quotes from the bible.

Markert received word Jan. 22 that the district has updated its policy to include “District staff will not post quotes from religious texts or post information about their personal religious mission or calling, while on the district network.”

FFRF puts an end to religious bullying

A school in Sulphur, Okla., will no longer require students to take part in plays and songs with Christian themes. A concerned second-grade parent at Sulphur Elementary School contacted FFRF when her daughter’s class sang a song in a play held Dec. 6 with references to “the reason for the season” in the “form of a baby boy.”

When the parent discussed the problem with the principal, she was told no child had to participate. How-

ever, three students who chose not to were forced to do homework in the principal’s office.

The parent tried to make headway with other school officials, but they expressed surprise and took offense at the idea of her atheism. Later, her daughter was made to sit in the hallway when carolers came to the class because “Mom might get mad,” the teacher said.

Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel wrote Jan. 9 to Superintendent Gary Jones to object to the religious song and mistreatment of the child. He called for the teacher to be disciplined for her unacceptable and juvenile behavior.

Jones responded Jan. 11, stating that principals and music teachers have been instructed to be more selective in choosing songs and were told not to place any child in a situation in which they feel uncomfortable or ostracized.

Schools warned about lunchtime prayer

Two grade schools in Albertville, Ala., have been reminded by FFRF that teacher-led prayer is unconstitutional. Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel told Superintendent Frederic Ayer in a Jan. 7 letter about parental complaints over prayer before lunch.

Seidel has been notified that Ayer sent a letter Jan. 14 to all administrators and teachers asking them not to ask, lead or direct students to pray or to set aside class time for students to pray.

Ohio town ‘crossed’ line on building

FFRF has successfully petitioned the town of Stratton, Ohio, to remove a large display of a Latin cross from its Municipal Building. Two large crosses, one Latin and the other Greek, were prominently displayed on the building façade.

Senior Staff Attorney Rebecca Markert wrote Oct. 16 to Mayor John Abdalla to ask that the unconstitutional endorsement of Christianity be removed.

A Stratton resident confirmed in a Dec. 17 email to FFRF that both crosses had been removed. He said secular decorations were added to the building to celebrate the winter holidays.

Honor Society forced to go prayerless

Utah’s Iron County Schools will no longer allow prayers to be given at school-sponsored events. FFRF received a complaint from a concerned parent that there were two student-led prayers given at Canyon View High School’s National Honor Society induction ceremony in Cedar City.

School officials participated in the prayer, bowing their heads. The parent reported that such incidents are frequent in schools.

Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel wrote Sept. 19 to Superintendent Jim Johnson, who responded Jan. 7 that he had cautioned principals that prayers are not to be given during school events.

Christ off the wall at Florida VA facility

A Veterans Administration medical center in Lake City, Fla., removed a bible verse from a waiting room wall after FFRF contacted the facility on behalf of a local complainant. The verse was

Cities’ prayer breakfast promotions are toast

The city of Springfield, Ill., and its mayor will no longer be associated with an annual prayer breakfast after action by FFRF and citizens of Springfield.

Senior Staff Attorney Rebecca Markert sent a letter Nov. 13 to Mayor J. Michael Houston outlining how the event violated the Establishment Clause. She asked Houston to refrain from using public resources to promote the breakfast.

Markert received a response Nov. 8 that in the future an independent group not affiliated with the city will run the prayer breakfast.

• • •

FFRF curtailed government endorsement of a mayoral prayer breakfast in Jacksonville, Fla. Mayor Alvin Brown held an Interfaith Celebration on April 20, 2012. The event was promoted on the city’s official

Philippians 4:13, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”

Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel wrote Director Thomas Wisnieski on Jan. 4: “The message implies Jesus is an important element in the rehabilitation of the patient. When one is healed by doctors using taxpayer funds at this federal hospital, the patient is invited to credit the Christian god.”

Wisnieski responded that the verse was removed and said he asked supervisors to avoid inappropriate postings.

FFRF stands up to bullying bus driver

FFRF stopped religious bullying in Honolulu of students who identify as gay or lesbian. Two female Pearl City High School students were reprimanded by their bus driver for public displays of affection while riding the bus. They were harassed twice in December.

During the first incident, the driver pulled the bus over and asked the girls if they were both female and then told them to separate because she was Christian and did not approve of their behavior. Several days later, the driver yelled at the girls when one leaned her head on the other’s shoulder, reiterating her Christian connection.

Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel contacted Kathryn Matayoshi, state Department of Education superintendent, in a Dec. 11 letter, asking her to conduct an immediate investigation of the incidents. “The bus driver’s behavior creates a hostile and intimidating environment for LGBT students and non-Christian students, who now know that their driver demands conformity with [her] particular sect,” Seidel wrote. “This behavior is nothing short of bullying.”

James Kauhi, director of Student Transportation Services, responded Jan. 16 to say that an investigation was under way and that the woman driver was relieved of driving duties.

School won’t include religious ‘history’

An Alabama Baptist church will no longer use school assemblies on the “History of Easter” and the “History of Christmas” to proselytize students. A concerned parent of two young children in the Houston County Schools system contacted FFRF after the Co-

website and local media reported city financial sponsorship.

FFRF Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor sent a letter to Brown on May 8 asking him to refrain from sponsoring religious events while acting in the official capacity as mayor. Gaylor noted that private groups may host such breakfasts and invite public officials to attend as individuals, but that public officials may not sponsor religious events.

FFRF filed an open records request for city records of the 2012 prayer breakfast to learn what government resources were used.

The city’s legal counsel responded that references to the prayer breakfast have been removed from the city’s website and that Brown has been advised on what activities are constitutional.

lumbia Baptist Association came to her children’s school.

The school routinely held proselytizing assemblies. Around Christmas time, a teacher gave students handouts with bible verses, told them about “the true meaning of Christmas” and referenced a local church. After talking with teachers, the parent received a note and conflicting information from the teacher about a “History of Easter” assembly.

She then contacted Superintendent Tom Pitchford in a March 4 letter, requesting religious activities be stopped. Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel also sent Pitchford a letter on March 6: “The [church’s] attempt to insinuate themselves into public schools by camouflaging their purposes as ‘history’ does not make the assemblies legal. That a baby was born of a virgin and a person rose from the dead after three days are matters of faith, not history.”

Seidel also said allowing students to opt out is not an option, because it excludes students and leads to bullying.

In a March 7 conversation, Pitchford told the parent the “History of Easter” assembly was cancelled, along with all future religious assemblies.

All godly hope gets swooped from Swope

A publicly funded health clinic in Independence, Mo., will no longer post religious plaques and decorations on the walls. A client at Swope Health East contacted FFRF about the displays near the check-in and other areas.

Staff Attorney Elizabeth Cavell contacted Dave Barker, Swope Health Services president and CEO, in a March 5 letter, asking the company to respect patients’ diverse religious views. On March 10, the complainant informed FFRF that the religious postings were removed.

FFRF finds foxhole atheists for school

Assemblies at Lawrence B. Morris Elementary School, Jim Thorpe, Pa., will no longer include organized

Continued on next page



Rebecca Markert



Liz Cavell

Continued from front page
prayer. FFRF was contacted by a concerned parent after a Veterans Day assembly included opening and closing prayer by a chaplain.

Senior Staff Attorney Rebecca Markert wrote Superintendent Barbara Conway on Nov. 21. Markert noted that prayers alienate nonreligious members of the school and mislead children into believing only religious people serve in the military, while citing the statistic that about 23% percent of military personnel identify as having no religious preference.

“These prayers further perpetuate the myth that there are no ‘atheists in foxholes’ and that the only veterans worth memorializing are Christians,” Markert wrote.

The district’s attorney responded March 14 to say that the violation will not recur and that all outside entities making presentations in the district “will not engage in offending behavior.”

FFRF plagues teacher who proselytized

Students at Harrison Elementary School in Riverside, Calif., weren’t required to complete a religious homework assignment after Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel sent a letter of complaint.

A concerned parent contacted FFRF after a sixth-grade teacher assigned homework that treated religious events, such as the biblical 10 plagues on the Egyptians, as historical facts. Assignments also required students to read the bible and copy the Ten Commandments.

Renee Hill, director of elementary education for Riverside Unified School District, responded Feb. 27 to say students would not be required to turn in the assignment and would not be penalized if they choose not to complete it.

School won’t repeat play on nativity

A winter program at Jackson Elementary School in Santa Ana, Calif., that included a 15-minute play reenacting Jesus’ birth naturally didn’t sit well with a parent, who contacted FFRF. The play was performed and narrated entirely by students and included children in praying positions reciting lines such as, “God told Mary she was going to have a baby.”

Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel wrote Superintendent Thelma Melendez de Santa Ana on Jan. 7 about the obvious and egregious constitutional violation.

The district’s attorney responded March 1 by letter, admitting that the nativity play was inappropriate and assuring FFRF that the district has taken measures to make sure similar performances do not happen in the future. Next holiday season, district staff will be reminded about the Establishment Clause.

Jesus prayer out at Michigan school

At the 2012 graduation for West Michigan Academy of Arts and Academics, a public elementary charter school in Spring Lake, a pastor delivered a Christian prayer that referenced Jesus.

Senior Staff Attorney Rebecca Markert sent a letter March 8 to Timothy

Wood, special assistant to the president for charter schools, urging that schools must remain neutral toward religion and remove religious rituals from graduation ceremonies.

Wood said March 11 that he would inform the school board about the violation and make sure “they understand that religious rituals are not allowed at graduation ceremonies or any other school-sponsored event.”

Texas coach ordered to stop prayer

Football games at Stephenville [Texas] High School frequently included postgame prayers led by coaches, including a coach putting his hands on a player’s head as the coach prayed.

Staff Attorney Elizabeth Cavell wrote a letter of complaint March 13 to Superintendent Darrell Floyd: “Parents trust their children to the coach’s charge, and the coaches through their own example must be sure that athletes are not only treated fairly but also imbued with a sense of community and camaraderie.”

Floyd said in a March 17 response that the district “will take immediate action to stop all school-sponsored prayers occurring at district events.”

Wall of separation topples ‘Firewall’

A high school in Haysville, Kansas, will no longer invite clergy to proselytize students after getting Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel’s March 9 letter to Superintendent John Burke. The school’s religious class, called “Firewall,” was held every Wednesday in the school during the lunch period. Staff members frequently attended and solicited students to do the same. Posters advertising the class were hung around the school, and food was provided to entice students.

One of the pastors, after quoting copiously from the bible, told students, “A life lived with God is more valuable than anything you can achieve.”

Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel contacted Superintendent John Burke on March 9, calling the inappropriate arrangement “predatory conduct [that] should raise many red flags.”

Seidel corrected several calculation

It Pays to Complain

Secular students succeed at Ripon

Ripon College’s Secular Student Alliance chapter in Ripon, Wis., has successfully petitioned the administration to confine religious speech and prayers to the school’s optional baccalaureate ceremony. No more prayers will be heard at the campus-wide commencement ceremony.

Ripon College, privately founded in 1851, originally had formal ties with the Presbyterian and Congregational churches but cut them in 1868. Its first six presidents had clerical backgrounds, but the school has long been religiously unaffiliated.

Professor Steve Martin, an FFRF member and the college’s Communication Department chair, helped students draft the petition to the commencement planning committee. He’s also the group’s faculty adviser.

The petition begins, “We, the undersigned, respectfully request that religious speech be removed from commencement ceremonies and other public events. The college’s mission and values are entirely secu-

lar. Any form of religious speech at public events suggests otherwise. As such, we contend that prayers at events violate Ripon’s stated goals of teaching students of diverse interests. Furthermore, we believe it goes directly against one of Ripon College’s core values: ‘Differences of perspective, experience, background, and heritage enrich the college. Relationships are sincere, friendly, welcoming and supportive.’”

The students noted that “having ‘interfaith’ or ‘nondenominational’ invocations does not solve the main problem. Such prayers still show a clear preference for belief over non-belief, religion over no religion, and theism over atheism.”

The petition further noted the value of tradition, but added the college “has had no affiliation with any church or religious group for at least 150 years. We believe it is time our public ceremonies reflect our secular mission and values. Thank you for considering our request.”

errors one pastor made while “solving” a math problem about King Solomon and gold.

On March 13, FFRF was informed that the school will end “Firewall.”

School can’t encourage bible acceptance

FFRF has put an end to another case of the Gideons peddling bibles to children in public schools, this time in Bartow County, Georgia.

A parent of a student at White Elementary contacted FFRF in September with concerns that her child was coerced by the Gideons to take a bible. Students were also encouraged by the principal during morning announcements to take one.

Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel objected in October to Superintendent John Harper, who finally responded

Jan. 16 to say that no school official will encourage students to accept a bible.

School to teachers: Don’t lead prayer

A concerned parent contacted FFRF after a kindergarten teacher at Clay Elementary School in Clay, Ala., required students to learn a prayer and recite it several times during the school year.

Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel contacted Superintendent Stephen Nowlin on Feb. 5, requesting he end the unconstitutional teacher-led prayer. Nowlin responded Feb. 12 to say the teacher has been told she must stop leading prayer and that all teachers in the district have been instructed not to lead prayers.

See all legal victories online:
ffrf.org/legal/other-legal-successes

State rep attacks FFRF suit, plaintiff rights

Continued from front page
pact on the type of legal challenges it seeks to regulate. Both of the Ten Commandments cases were filed in federal court.

“One would expect that elected legislators would have a basic understanding of government and know that they lack the ability to regulate the First Amendment and the federal judiciary,” added Gaylor. The U.S. Supreme Court promulgates the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, not state legislatures.

Judge Terrance McVerry of the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania issued an order in December allowing the plaintiffs in FFRF’s New Kensington case to proceed using pseudonyms. McVerry found that community members had expressed threats of violence and ostracism and ruled:

“The Court finds that this basis upon which the Does fear disclosure is substantial and that there is a sub-

stantial public interest in ensuring that litigants not face such retribution in their attempt to seek redress for what they view as a Constitutional violation, a pure legal issue.”

McVerry also issued a protective order March 28 limiting disclosure of the plaintiff’s identities. FFRF and its attorneys had asked that disclosure be limited to an appropriate district employee who could verify school enrollment by the plaintiffs’ children. The district fought to be able to disclose to any former or school staff. The judge ruled that only members of the school board and superintendent may know the identities, but must keep them confidential.

FFRF and its attorneys plan to proceed with a similar request for pseudonyms and a protective order in Connelsville.

If Krieger’s bill is passed, it likely wouldn’t stand for long, Bruce Ant-

kowiak, St. Vincent College law professor, told the Pittsburgh Tribune-Review. “I think the legislation would be challenged immediately as being unconstitutional,” he said.

In FFRF’s 2012 challenge of the Pennsylvania Assembly’s “Year of the Bible” resolution, U.S. District Judge Christopher Conner dismissed the case on jurisdictional grounds but took the House to task.

Connor wrote that his rebuke of legislators was “directed to the blatant use of legislative resources in contravention of the spirit — if not the letter — of the Establishment Clause.”

He continued, “At a time when the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania faces massive public policy challenges, these resources would be far better utilized in meaningful legislative efforts for the benefit all of the citizens of the Commonwealth, regardless of their religious beliefs.”

Denying contraception is new form of rape



By Janet Brazill

Rape became a familiar word in the last election, sometimes with a modifier of “legitimate.” That definition is not found in the recognized categories, which list anger rape, power rape, sadistic rape and gang rape.

The abortion discussion also mentioned rape, with some candidates insisting that a raped woman should be forced to continue the pregnancy.

To understand why the subject of rape was brought up so much in this election, and why the raped woman’s fate was often treated as being “incon-

sequential,” one should consider the avowed religiosity of these candidates and their source: the bible.

We find that rape is a prominent theme in the Old Testament, sometimes used by an avenging male whose honor has been stained. The end result is a total degradation of women, with utter disregard for the trauma of rape (see Judges 19: 22-29).

There are many examples throughout that part of the bible of women being allotted to captors without regard for the women’s feelings. Virgins were considered booty of war, to be kept alive for the troops’ pleasure (Judges 21:10-12).

In Numbers 31:17-18, soldiers are told: “But all the women-children, that have not known a man by lying with him, keep alive for yourselves.” Judges 5:30 tells of dividing the spoils of war, saying there must be a damsel or two for each man.

Perhaps this is what is meant by “legitimate rape?”

In II Samuel 12:11-14, we read that the Lord punishes David by giving his wives to his neighbor to rape in broad daylight. Then he forgives David’s “sin,” but kills the baby that resulted from that sin as a punishment to David.

One of the most horrifying stories in the bible is found in Genesis, Chapter 19. Two angels disguised as men visit a man named Lot. A mob surrounds his home, demanding that Lot turn over his guests to them. Quick-thinking Lot, no doubt fearing heavenly wrath if he did as they demanded, proposes a substitute plan: “Behold now, I have

They cannot bear to see women with the power to control reproduction.

two daughters which have not known man: let me, I pray you, bring them out unto you, and do ye to them as is good in your eyes; only unto those men do nothing. . .”

This story of Lot’s offering up his little girls for mob pleasure is much more revolting than the possibility of men attacking men, but one never hears religionists express revulsion at this part of the account. Indeed, they regard Lot as a hero for saving the angels from molestation, and they use this fable as a basis for their current opposition to homosexuality. Never mind the two children brutally attacked.

We should be appalled by such tales, and recognize them as stories of primitive civilizations whose “Lord” represented their own undeveloped morals. Today, any father offering his daughters for prostitution would be sentenced in a court of law, since coercion of any sexual act is no longer condoned by society. This shows that morality has clearly evolved since biblical times when “rape” was a way to “subordinate.”

Sadly, however, our current culture still has many members dedicated to

this 5,000-year-old biblical thinking. And some are serving in our U.S. Congress!

Members of Congress and others working to oppose the Affordable Care Act’s mandate to provide contraceptive coverage to women are reflective of this antiquated way of thinking. They cannot bear to see women with the power to control reproduction — that has always been a man’s role. It practically defines his “manhood.”

Withholding contraceptives prevents a woman from being able to control her sexuality, so it becomes another way to dominate women.

Perhaps these senators and representatives, like actual rapists, enjoy the power such action gives them. According to the description of “power rape,” such control “feeds their issues of mastery, strength, authority and capability.”

Contraception, it seems, has become a “pawn of power” to those members of Congress, and withholding its availability has become a new way to rape women.

FFRF member Janet Brazill is a retired computer systems analyst living in Colorado Springs, Colo., often called the Vatican of Evangelicalism. She has been long involved in fighting the Religious Right there, as well as the Catholic Church, on reproductive rights.

*For more on the bible’s subjugation of women, read **Woe to the Women: The Bible Tells Me So** by Annie Laurie Gaylor, available at ffrf.org/shop/.*

State/Church Bulletin

Rapists blame women for Egypt assaults

On the two-year anniversary on Jan. 25 of the Egyptian revolution, at least 18 women were sexually assaulted during a demonstration against the government in Tahrir (Liberation) Square in Cairo, the symbolic heart of the 2011 revolt against former President Hosni Mubarak.

The New York Times reported March 25 that due to the 18 attacks

on women documented that day by human rights groups, six women were hospitalized, one was stabbed in her genitals and another needed a hysterectomy. Hania Moheeb, 42, a journalist, said in a TV interview that a group of men surrounded her, stripped off her clothes and violated her for 45 minutes.

Yasmine Al Baramawy said she was circled in November by attackers who stripped her clothes off with knives in the square and drove her around for

an hour. “They told people I had a bomb on my abdomen to stop anybody from rescuing me,” she said.

The victims got no sympathy from hardliners. “Sometimes,” said Adel Abdel Maqsood Afifi, a lawmaker and ultraconservative Islamist, “a girl contributes 100% to her own raping when she puts herself in these conditions.” “You see those women speaking like ogres, without shame, politeness, fear or even femininity,” said Sheik Abu Islam, a TV preacher. Such a woman

is “like a demon,” he said, wondering why anyone should sympathize with those “naked” women who “went there to get raped.”

Dawkins cancellation lawsuit settled

Wyndgate Country Club of Rochester Hills, Mich., agreed to an undisclosed settlement Feb. 26 with the Center for Inquiry for breach of contract and violating civil rights laws by canceling a CFI event in October 2011 at which atheist biologist Richard Dawkins was to appear.

“We’re very pleased with the outcome of this case, which we regard as an unqualified vindication of the rights of nonbelievers,” said Ronald Lindsay, CFI president. “We are confident it will send a strong message that as much as this country now rejects discrimination based on race, sexual orientation and religion, so must we reject just as strongly discrimination against those with no religion.”

CFI believes it may be the first time that federal and state civil rights laws have been successfully invoked by nonbelievers in a public accommodations lawsuit.

The club justified breaking the contract by stating “the owner does not wish to associate with certain individuals and philosophies.” A club representative cited concern over Dawkins’ appearance on “The O’Reilly Factor” a few days before.

In memoriam: Jerry Dincin, 1930–2013

Jerry Dincin, 82, Highland Park, Ill., died of prostate cancer in a Highland Park hospice on March 26, 2013.

Jerry was an innovator in the field of psychiatric rehabilitation, a nationally known activist in the death-with-dignity movement and a committed member of the Freedom From Religion Foundation. He and three other members of the Final Exit Network were charged last year in the 2007 death of a Minnesota woman who committed suicide. A judge recently declined to dismiss the indictment but ruled Minnesota’s law against “advising” suicide was unconstitutionally overbroad.

He was born Aug. 20, 1930, in Brooklyn, N.Y., to Herman and Renee Dincin, émigrés from Russia and Rumania. When his father died when Jerry was 16, he and his mother took over the family furniture business.

He received a bachelor’s degree from Brooklyn College, a master’s in sociology from Case Western Reserve University and a Ph.D. in clinical psychology from Northwestern University.

In 1958 he began work at New York City’s Fountain House, a psychiatric rehabilitation center that served as a model for many facilities in the U.S. In 1965 he moved to Chicago to take over an organization called Thresholds, which had a staff of four. When he retired in 2002, the staff had grown to 900 and the facility had become a premier psychiatric rehabilitation center.

He was diagnosed with cancer in 2001 just two weeks after marrying Suzanne Streicker, who survives him. “I wasn’t prepared to die, and I didn’t like my attitude about death and dying,” he later said. “Our culture avoids the subject and treats it like a taboo,

which is unfortunate.”

In 2005 he became active in the Final Exit Network, which has the goal of allowing competent adults to end their lives on their own terms if they are suffering from irreversible illness or intractable pain. “I was an exit guide 14 times, and I never did anything but be there as a witness. I felt like I was giving the biggest gift possible to a fellow human who was suffering deeply — the gift of your compassionate presence.”

As network president from 2009-12, he encouraged the group to use billboards for advertising, an idea he said he got from FFRF’s billboard campaign.

Survivors also include a sister, four children and seven grandchildren.

FFRF extends its sincerest condolences to Jerry’s family and friends.

Giving thanks for the McCollum decision

By Annie Laurie Gaylor

We don't pray at the Freedom From Religion Foundation, naturally. But not one workday goes by that we fail to give thanks — to the McCollum family for winning a landmark ruling on the separation of state and church. March 8, 2013, marked the 65th anniversary of *McCollum v. Board of Education*, a decision noting that the “wall between Church and State . . . must be kept high and impregnable.”

McCollum is a decision which endures, protecting schoolchildren and personal conscience throughout the land.

In the ruling, the Supreme Court struck down the practice of religious instruction as part of the school day in public schools in Champaign, Ill. Vashti McCollum brought the dramatic lawsuit after her son Jim was targeted for not participating. Soon the entire family found themselves targeted. In the face of bitter defeat in two lower courts, social shunning, hate mail, reprisals against herself, her family, her children, and her cat, Vashti never wavered. She was rewarded with a historic 8–1 decision in her favor.

FFRF daily invokes the *McCollum* precedent in our legal letters of complaint over state/church violations in public schools. The 1948 decision is the bedrock upon which rests all other Supreme Court rulings on the Establishment Clause, particularly those against religious encroachments and devotions in public schools. (FFRF literally invoked the direct *McCollum* precedent in *Doe v. Porter*, our 2004 victory in the 6th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals nixing devotional instruction taught by bible students in Dayton, Tenn. (See story on page 3.)

One of the great privileges of being a part of FFRF has been meeting and working with so many champions of the First Amendment. It was an honor to meet Vashti and her husband, John (“Pappy”), who died in 1984, and their sons Jim and Dannel, who remain committed to championing the Establishment Clause.

My mother and I first made Vashti's acquaintance in the late 1970s, shortly after founding FFRF. Always intrepid, Vashti was famous for traveling solo and adventurously with the local population around the world in her golden years. She entertained more than one FFRF convention with her beautifully photographed travelogues.

Vashti and her sons were interviewed for FFRF's 1989 film “Champions of the First Amendment.” (Watch the half-hour film, featuring prime sources talking about their Supreme Court victories, at FFRF's YouTube channel.)

Family of fighters

In 1993, FFRF received permission from Vashti to reprint her remarkable, timely and engaging book *One Woman's Fight*, first published in 1951, but long out of print. FFRF's reprint (available at ffrf.org/shop) includes fascinating family photographs and the text of the Supreme Court decision, with a foreword by Anne Nicol Gaylor, and a personal epilogue by Vashti, then age 80.

Jim, the small boy at the center of



Photo by Charles “Stretch” Leiford

Jay Rosenstein, Annie Laurie Gaylor, and Dannel McCollum at the 65th anniversary celebration of the historic *McCollum v. Board of Education* decision.



Vashti McCollum then; Jay Rosenstein now.

this legal storm, survived, thrived, became an attorney, teaches constitutional law in his semi-retirement and is a Lifetime Member of FFRF. He'll be speaking at FFRF's 36th annual convention in Madison, Wis., on the weekend of Sept. 27–29, 2013.

In quite a vindication, Jim's younger brother, Dannel, was elected three-term mayor of Champaign.

Vashti died in 2006 at age 93 before the release of the 2010 documentary bringing her case to life, “The Lord Is Not on Trial Here Today,” edited and produced by University of Illinois media professor Jay Rosenstein. The film, which took more than five years to make and carefully traces the Champaign battle, won a Peabody Award and has aired on many PBS stations. Remarkably, Rosenstein did all the filmwork himself, hiring help only for some of the editing.

I was invited to a celebration of that decision in Champaign, the city of origin, where Vashti brought her brave and unpopular challenge and where Rosenstein teaches. The University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana appropriately aired the film to celebrate the 65th anniversary.

Rosenstein's documentary captures the drama and the scope of this decision for posterity, and is a poignant lesson for today.

He interviewed Vashti in the last year of her life, as well as other family members, and prime players on both sides of the issue, making an unforgettable contribution to the cause of understanding the importance of keeping divisive religion out of public schools.

He was kind enough to invite me as a representative of the Freedom From Religion Foundation to be on the post-screening panel, which also included Ken Paulson, president of the First Amendment Center; Adam Schwartz, senior staff counsel, ACLU of Illinois; and Daniel Hamilton, professor of law and history, University of Illinois School of Law.

The film's title comes from a famous remark at the trial, which also formed

the title for Dan McCollum's book about his mother's case, *The Lord Was Not on Trial*. Dan attended the event and spoke briefly from the audience.

The decision

Justice Hugo Black wrote the main opinion, concluding: “Here not only are the state's tax-supported public school buildings used for the dissemination of religious doctrines. The State also affords sectarian groups an invaluable aid in that it helps to provide pupils for their religious classes through use of the state's compulsory public school machinery. This is not separation of Church and State.”

Four justices, represented by Justice Felix Frankfurter, issued a strong concurrence. Frankfurter wrote:

“Separation means separation, not something less. Jefferson's metaphor in describing the relation between Church and State speaks of a ‘wall of separation,’ not of a fine line easily overstepped. The public school is at once the symbol of our democracy and the most pervasive means for promoting our common destiny. In no activity of the State is it more vital to keep out divisive forces than in its schools, to avoid confusing, not to say fusing, what the Constitution sought to keep strictly apart. ‘The great American principle

‘Separation means separation, not something less.’

— Justice Felix Frankfurter

of eternal separation’ — Elihu Root's phrase bears repetition — is one of the vital reliances of our Constitutional system for assuring unities among our people stronger than our diversities.”

The precedent against religious instruction and devotions in public schools remains “high and unimpregnable,” thanks to *McCollum* and the many cases against school prayer that followed it. But it must be noted that the Supreme Court has egregiously deviated from those principles in its 2001 *Good News Club v. Milford Central School District* decision.

Evangelism industry

A major child evangelism industry is permitted to set up shop in our public schools and take advantage of their machinery, truancy laws and classrooms to conduct evangelism clubs of indoctrination. What the court stopped during the school day, it now blesses as soon as the bell rings at the end of the school day.

The *Good News Club* decision was bad news that cannot be squared with Justice Black's analysis of what is impermissible under *McCollum*, nor can the Supreme Court's green light on school voucher funding. We have our work cut out for us.

As Vashti wrote in the epilogue of FFRF's reprint of *One Woman's Fight*: “The *McCollum* case represents only one of many bricks in the wall separating church and state. But now that I am eighty years old, others must step forward to lay the bricks and defend the wall.”

Nothing could inspire more state/church activism than reading (or re-reading) *One Woman's Fight*. Vashti won the big one. Take a moment to savor this strong ruling, then go to work to defend its precedent.

Annie Laurie Gaylor, with her mother Anne Nicol Gaylor, FFRF president emerita, is a co-founder of FFRF. Since late 2004, Annie Laurie and her husband, Dan Barker, have been FFRF co-presidents. Annie Laurie is author of *Woe to the Women: The Bible Tells Me So* and editor of the anthology *Women Without Superstition: No Gods — No Masters*, both published by FFRF and available at ffrf.org/shop.

One Woman's Fight

by Vashti McCollum

Celebrate 65th anniversary of McCollum ruling!

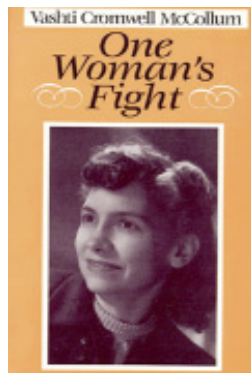
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FFRF member sues city over Christian flag

Steven Hewett, an FFRF Lifetime Member and foxhole atheist from North Carolina, is suing the city of King for violating the U.S. and state constitutions by displaying Christian symbols as part of the Veterans' Memorial it built in 2004 in its public Central Park.

Hewett, represented by Americans United for Separation of Church and State, brought the suit in November 2012 in U.S. District Court for the Middle District of North Carolina after first trying to get the city to remove the symbols in 2010. He's a former police officer and military veteran who served in Afghanistan, where he was awarded the Combat Action Badge and the Bronze Star. He's lived in King since 1999.

The suit, which has caused an uproar among the city's 7,000 residents, says the city "intensified its promotion of Christianity" by adding to the memorial in early 2010 a "shadow" statue of a soldier kneeling and praying before a cross. Tax dollars paid for the addition as well.

When Hewett first objected, King's city manager warned him he would answer "to God and Jesus Christ upon [his] death." The mayor stated at a city

council meeting that he "needs us to pray for him."

Responding to complaints by Hewett and Americans United, the council voted in September 2010 to remove the Christian flag, but the removal was temporary. The city, with help from the Alliance Defending Freedom, a Religious Right law firm, then created a "limited public forum" in which a flagpole was reserved for a rotating group of preapproved flags.

But the result of the lottery was that the Christian flag flew at the memorial for 47 weeks in both 2011 and 2012. The suit calls it "a sham public forum."

Recently, the Texas-based Liberty Institute, another conservative Christian advocacy group, filed a motion to intervene in the suit on behalf of American Legion Post 290.

In a statement, Hewett said, "I proudly served alongside a diverse group of soldiers with a variety of different religious beliefs. The city of King should be honoring everyone who served our country, not using their service as an excuse to promote a single religion."

The suit is *Hewett v. City of King*.



Steven Hewett stands at the display in King, N.C., which includes a Christian flag (left) and a soldier kneeling before a cross.

Celebrating 123-year-old case

Weiss 'Edgerton' case held bible reading unconstitutional

More than 70 years before the U.S. Supreme Court declared prayer and bible devotionals in public schools unconstitutional, the Wisconsin Supreme Court issued a clarion call to keep divisive religion out of the schools.

Known as the "Edgerton bible case," the lawsuit was brought by Catholic residents, taxpayers and parents outraged over the practice by teachers of reading the King James Bible to pupils, without comment, during school hours.

As Roman Catholics, they considered the Protestant version incomplete and incorrect, felt the Catholic Church was the only "infallible" interpreter of scriptures, and that the reading of other versions of the bible by teachers led to "dangerous errors."

The parents argued that because the Edgerton school was public, such practices led to the misuse of state funds to support a place of worship, in violation of the Wisconsin Constitution.

In a narrative that sounds familiar, the school board had responded that students were "at liberty to withdraw during such reading if they desire to do so." They also insisted "that every person has the right to read the bible and interpret it for himself," therefore the Catholic Church could not be the only "infallible" interpreter.

A majority opinion in *State ex. Rel. Weiss v. District Board* by Chief Justice William P. Lyon, issued on March 18, 1890, noted that the Wisconsin Constitution, Article X, Section 3, clearly states that "no sectarian instruction shall be allowed" in public schools. Lyon also cited Art. I, Section 18, which guarantees "the dictates of conscience shall never be infringed; nor shall any person be compelled to attend, erect or support any place of worship, or to

maintain any ministry, without consent, nor shall any control of, or interference with, the rights of conscience be permitted, or any preference be given by law to any religious establishments or modes of worship."

Lyon noted many differences between the King James and Douay versions and ruled that passages read at the Edgerton schools — concerning the divinity of Jesus Christ, predes-

tinuation and eternal punishment — amounted to sectarian instruction.

In concurrences, Justices John Casoday and Harlow Orton wrote that reading the bible in public schools forces taxpayers to support a place of worship, and that the use of state treasury funds must be entirely secular. The reading of the bible is viewed by many, if not most sects as the essence of worship. Orton, in his eloquent

concurrence, included these lines, oft-recited by the Freedom From Religion Foundation:

"There is no such source and cause of strife, quarrel, fights, malignant opposition, persecution, and war, and all evil in the state, as religion. Let it once enter our civil affairs, our government would soon be destroyed. Let it once enter our common schools, they would be destroyed."

— Justice Orton, Supreme Court of Wisconsin
Weiss v. District Board, March 18, 1890

Religious child care restrictions set

Under terms of a lawsuit settlement March 20, child care agencies that contract with the state of Kentucky will be forbidden to discriminate against children based on religion or to pressure them to participate in religious worship or instruction. Publicly funded agencies and foster homes also will be barred from placing religious items in

children's rooms without their consent, and religious materials will be given only to children who request them.

The suit, filed in 2000, alleged proselytizing at Sunrise Children's Services, a contractor affiliated with the Kentucky Baptist Convention. Taxpayers challenging the state were represented by the American Civil Liberties Union,

the ACLU of Kentucky and Americans United for Separation of Church and State.

Since 2000, the Baptist-affiliated ministry has received more than \$100 million in government funds. In fiscal 2011, the state paid \$14.8 million of the ministry's expenses of \$24.7 million.

They Said What??

God is speaking, and it’s time to listen. I will stand up for the Ten Commandments in my courtroom and in the annex.

Montague County Judge Tommie Sapington, supporting a monument at the courthouse as a way to stop a long drought

Wichita Falls Times Record News, 2-14-13

[Parents need to be stricter or] we’ll be looking at caskets week after week after week. I know you don’t want to hear this, but it’s the truth: God allows things to happen for a reason. This is a love wake-up call. If you don’t wake up now, it’s going to get worse and worse. **Phillip Shealey, pastor of Greater Apostolic Faith Church in Warren, Ohio, tying God’s love to the deaths of six teens in a car accident**

Youngstown News, 3-19-13

Can demonic spirits attach themselves to inanimate objects? The answer is yes. But I don’t think every sweater you get from Goodwill has demons in it. [He laughs.] But in a sense, your mother’s just being super cautious, so hey, it isn’t gonna hurt you any to rebuke any spirits that happen to have attached themselves to those clothes.

Rev. Pat Robertson, answering a teen whose mother told her she needed to pray over items she bought second-hand

“The 700 Club,” 2-25-13

The issue here isn’t about evolution, or

even the existence of God. It’s about the [atheist’s] pleasure of guilt-free sexual sin. Christianity threatens that freedom by saying that fornication and lust are morally wrong, and that God will hold them accountable.

Evangelist Ray Comfort, on the real reason atheists rebel against his teaching

Skepticism Examiner, 2-25-13

We prayed. There was jubilation. **Public school science teacher John Freshwater, Mount Vernon, Ohio, expressing comfort with how his appeal for being fired for proselytizing students was presented before the state Supreme Court**

Columbus Dispatch, 2-27-13

The thing that prompted me, Bryan, is the four groups that are actively working to secularize and destroy America: humanists, atheists, militant homosexuals and Muslims.

American Family Radio host Alex McFarland, explaining to Bryan Fischer of AFA his Project 2026, named for the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence

afa.net, 2-27-13

I’m going to have a great day and more to come because of the sermon. It was great for the soldiers and I think it helped with the division’s camaraderie. **Sylvia Phipps, wife of Maj. Gen. Warren Phipps Jr., First Army Division West commander, on a prayer break-**



This would seem to be a very fundamental(ist) misunderstanding of atheism, wouldn’t you say? The church, in Midwest City, Okla., was founded in 1943 and added a “cry room” in 2004, according to its website.

fast at the Theodore Roosevelt Dining Facility, Fort Hood, Texas

Fort Hood Sentinel, 3-14-13

I don’t believe they intentionally portrayed the Lucifer character to look like Mr. Obama. I think God guided the hand of the makeup artist and blinded the eyes of everybody on the movie set while it was being recorded, and the spiritual blinders were removed Sunday night when the program was broadcast nationally on the History Channel. How many clues do we need from heaven to understand

that the man in the White House is a devil from hell?

Radio host Rick Wiles, on how the actor playing Satan in “The Bible” mini-series bears an uncanny resemblance to the president

rightwingwatch.org, 3-20-13

The following colors must be avoided: A. Red. B. Nude. C. Orange, yellow or green, in bright shades. D. Gold, silver or shining cloth.

Rabbi Shlomo Aviner, Jerusalem, dress code for women and girls

ynetnews.com, 1-6-13

Sharing the Crank Mail

Below are “Best in Crank Mail” entries, printed as received, commenting on FFRF’s work nationwide to keep state and church separate. Everybody’s a critic these days!

slam: Whats wrong you assclown afraid of Islam? You screwballs have nothing to say or do to that fucked up piece of pig shit so called religion that teaches to kill everyone thats not like them. Where you fucks at on them hum. you bunch of chicken shits — *David Lupton*

Rapid City prayer: We are a group of Wealthy citizens of South Dakota, and many who not reside outside of South Dakota. We have informed certain Rapid City politicians that we stand ready to provide significant financial support to defend their religious practices, views, and opinions. Please feel free to pursue any and all legal action you feel is necessary to attack the citizens of Rapid City, but be prepared for lengthy and expensive legal costs, as we will fund any and all state court action, as well as federal court action. God Bless Freedom of Religion! — *Our Lord Jesus Christ, Sioux Falls, South Dakota*

hello: Tell me something. how do I get freedom from your group? No good atheists. All I can say is God help you. you people are going to need it. — *Jason Hamilton*

KISD: As a Christian Mom I stand By Kountze Lions as You try take away God from Us NewYork is legalizing full term abortions! Get Your Priorities straight!—*Erin Tanner, Lumberton, Texas*

Christmas: Annie Laurie Gaylor is a real dumbass. She thinks that because the government recognizes Christmas as a holiday that the government is passing a law to respect the establishment of religion. The ‘Establishment of Religion’ part of the First Amendment means that Congress can’t create a ‘Church of America’ similar to Britons ‘Church of England’ at the time before the American Revolution. This stupid bitch needs to get her head out of her orifice. So GET YOUR HEAD OUT OF YOUR ASS YOU STUPID BLONDE BITCH!!!! :-)

Prominent Atheist Activist Calls Gov’t Observance of Christmas Unconstitutional: Dear Mrs., Annie Laurie Gaylor, I just read this

article about you proposing to the government to rename Christmas to “Family day”. This nation was founded and started on Christian principles found in the Holy Bible. I am a very strong, and powerful man, I can take on anyone in a fight, and win. I have taken on people bigger than you and won. Good day, God bless you. — *Jay Sanders. Child of God, Brother to Jesus, American Patriot, NRA Supporter*

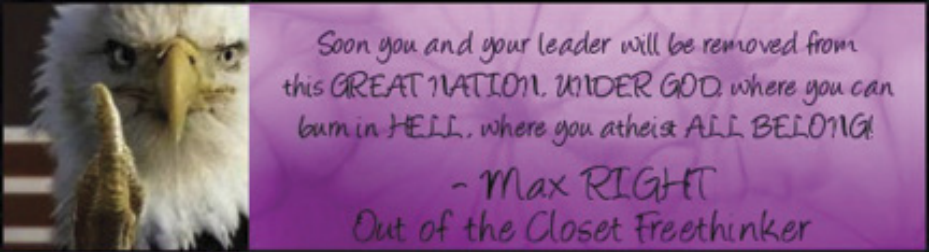
No Subject: All of ypu people are going STRAIGHT to hell. The sooner the better you FREAKS. FUCK OFF — *Tonya Haas*

stay out: Yall need to stay out of the affairs in pickens sc we aint hurtin anyone and noone here minds the praying b4 meeting — *Butch Mcalster*

Back off: I laugh as you burn in hell you liberal faggot bastards tired of hearing more about freedom from religion than I do religion you fucks are the only ones pushing you views on anyone. Ps burn in hell you godless fucks and back off. — *Worst Nightmare*

for the people who are raping and killing are country: u say this country is not christian or goddly. you all are full of shit are four father left england so they could worship god without all politics. its funny christianity is the only religion that is be taking out of stuff. and for your info, the women so many years ago that started all thisso long ago. ended up getting her head cut of and was a athist and her son turns into a preacher and that carma. and now theres a muslim run the country in the ground and you all are try to hurt any one you can but carma get u alive or dad.and i am not christian and believe in christianity so go bit one — *Adam Phillips, Greenville, South Carolina*

About being Ungodly: Is your organization all about being completely Godless and getting people to follow satan instead of God, I’m confused. Separation of church and state is being misinterpreted completely, its me being able to pray anywhere I find myself a school, senate floor, congress or even in the oval office. Cowardly as most of you are I doubt you will engage someone like myself. Jesus Loves all of you even if in the end he has to send you into the depths of hell. We are all born with an innate sense of right and wrong and I think



Crank mailer Max tried to get cute with a virtual billboard.

‘Jesus Loves all of you even if in the end he has to send you into the depths of hell.’

people involved in organizations like yours are focused on hate and anything ungodly or against God. I find that the majority of all you people are cowards, just like the ACLU. P.S. Ron Reagan wasn’t properly disciplined as a child, he rebelled to get his name thrown out there. He would’ve been better off to jump in front of a train. — *Eric*

Christianity: Why can’t you mind your own business and stayed your evil asses in WI Who do you think you are??? You are nothing but the scum of Hell. You are nothing but COWARDS! If you don’t love it then leave it! — *Jesus Christ, Pickens, South Carolina*

freedom from you: What Highschool Cheerleaders put on their banners at football games, seems like you people don’t have anything else to do except start trouble . So go crawl under a rock . — *Bret Butler*

your BS about currency: i hope there is a god and he gives all your members and their families cancer

Your scumbags: You stupid scumbags will lose and I will write another email when you do to laugh right at your ignorant asses. While I know you will roast for eternity, it gives me great pleasure to tell every single one of you that you are the lowest form of scum. — *AB Brown, Gato-rade, Wisconsin*

Go to Russia or China! If you don’t want god in a god fearing country go home to Russia or CHINA! This country is based on religious freedom and beliefs. Nuff said. — *In God We Trust*

Get A FUCKING LIFE!!!!!!!!!!!!!!: YOU DUMB

MOTHERFUCKERS. IF YOU DON’T LIKE IT THE FUCK OUT!!! IT’S VERY SIMPLE HAVE SOMEBODY WITH BRAINS EXPLAIN IT TO YOU! — *Mike Griffin, Avon, Indiana*

IN GOD WE TRUST ON MONEY: So,you don’t like In GOD We Trust on the money ? JESUS is Pissed and he’s makinga COMEBACK and when he does COME BACK and he will I hope he strikes you heathens down and sends you straight to hell.You will not get into the Happy Zone I’m tired of people tearing down everything that stands for something.You’re allSICK — *Ann Smith, New Orleans*

The jesus portrait: the building is not the school its the people as a body that make the school, and when those people are attending school they are not the state property they are free citizens, thank god,why dont you realize that your worldview is a belief system and that eventually the argument you use against christianity will be used against your belief system because we will show that it is more intolerant than recognized religion,s soon your beliefs will be hate speech for your intolerant views, think about that — *David Williamson, Mira Loma, California*

Jesus christ: You came to a Christian Community,and pushed your demands on us. I don’t understand why people are afraid of you people. When Jesus comes back, you all will be afraid then. — *Chris Sheehan*

religion: This is MY country founded on christianity and GOD! If you don’t like it, don’t listen or look at it OR MOVE THE HELL OUT OF HERE!!! Quit wasting the time and money of legal suits trying to stop religious beliefs and practices in the country.

State/Church Bulletin

County board ordered to stop prayers

U.S. District Judge Michael Urbanski ruled March 27 that the Pittsylvania County Board of Supervisors violated the First Amendment rights of ACLU of Virginia client Barbara Hudson by opening meetings with exclusively Christian prayers.

"This ruling sends a clear message to localities that government officials may not impose their own religious beliefs on the entire community by leading sectarian prayers at public meetings," said ACLU of Virginia Legal Director Rebecca Glenberg. "The Supreme Court and the 4th Circuit Court of Appeals have ruled repeatedly that our right to religious liberty precludes the government from expressing favor for one set of beliefs over others."

In August 2011, Hudson notified the ACLU that the board started each meeting with a Christian prayer delivered by board members on a rotating basis. Hudson sued after the board said it wouldn't change its practice.

In February 2012, Urbanski granted a preliminary injunction to Hudson and ordered the board to stop "invoking the name of a specific deity associated with any one specific faith or belief in prayers given at Board meetings" while the lawsuit was pending. The board has since opened meetings with silent prayer.

After mediation ordered in December failed, Urbanski issued his opinion.

• • •

By reciting only Christian prayers to open meetings, the Brentwood, Md., Town Council violated the U.S. Constitution, Americans United for Separation of Church and State said in a federal lawsuit filed Feb. 26. Plaintiffs are local residents Dolores Pomerleau, a Catholic, and Anne Christine Warden, a Buddhist.

According to the complaint, Mayor Roger Rudder usually opens council sessions by leading the Lord's Prayer. Those in the audience are asked to stand and join in.

Since AU first protested, the council agenda was changed to call the invocation a "moment of silence and/or prayer," but the recitation of the Lord's Prayer stayed.

Indiana high court OKs voucher scheme

The Indiana Supreme Court voted 5-0 on March 26 to uphold the broadest school voucher program in the U.S. A family of four with an annual income of \$64,000 a year is eligible for vouchers worth up to \$4,500 per child.

Opponents had sued to block the program because almost all of the voucher money has gone to religious schools. That doesn't matter as long as parents decide where to use the tuition vouchers, the court said.

"Whether the Indiana program is wise educational or public policy is not a consideration," Chief Justice Brent Dickson wrote. The program is constitutional because it doesn't directly benefit religious schools, wrote Dickson, "but rather directly benefit lower-income families with school children."

The U.S. Supreme Court used similar reasoning in a 2002 ruling upholding a voucher program in Cleveland. "Just because the Indiana Supreme Court said it's OK by our constitution doesn't mean this is a good idea," said

plaintiff Teresa Meredith, Indiana State Teachers Association vice president. "It's still, at the end of the day, funding religious instruction" with tax dollars, she said, according to Reuters.

The New York Times reported March 28 that 17 states offer 33 programs that let parents use taxpayer money to send their children to private schools, according to the American Federation for Children, which advocates for vouchers and tax-credit scholarship programs.

Earlier in March, Alabama Republican Gov. Robert Bentley of Alabama signed tax-credit legislation similar to Arizona's law.

"This movement is doing more than threaten the core of our traditional public school system," said Timothy Ogle, executive director of the Arizona School Boards Association. "It's pushing a national policy agenda embraced by conservatives across states that are receptive to conservative ideas."

Split appeals court approves vouchers

A Colorado appeals court ruled 2-1 on Feb. 28 that a voucher plan adopted by the Douglas County School District is constitutional. The "Choice Scholarship Pilot Program" offered vouchers worth \$4,575 to 500 students at religious and other private schools.

To be eligible for state per-pupil educational funds, Douglas County still counted these children as "public school students," attending an imaginary school that exists only on paper, according to the American Civil Liberties Union of Colorado, which sued along with Americans United for Separation of Church and State on behalf of parents.

When the suit was filed, 18 of the 23 approved voucher schools were religious.

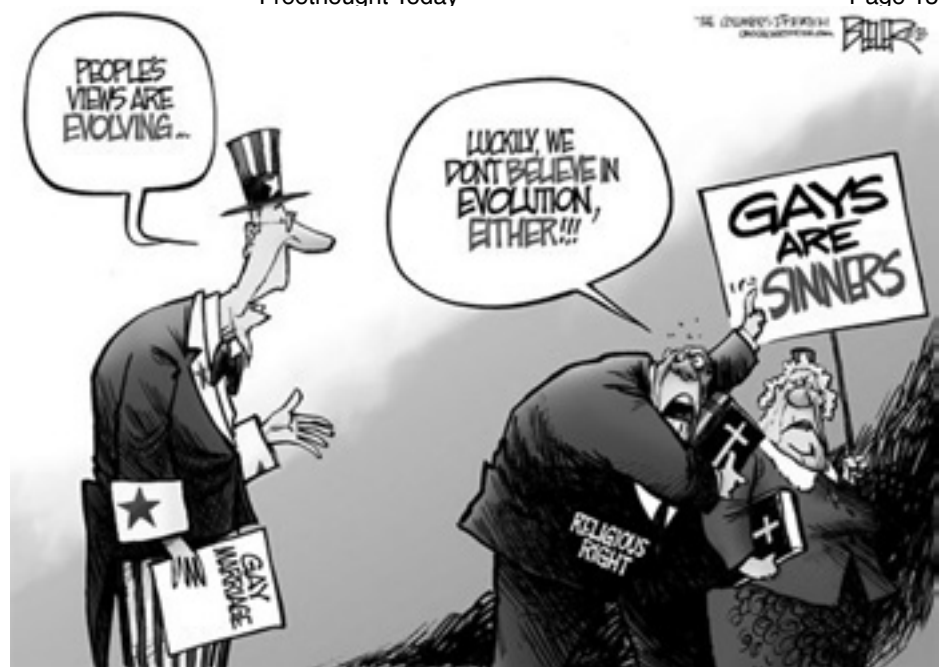
Judge Steve Bernard dissented, writing, "[The Colorado Constitution] prohibits public school districts from channeling public money to private religious schools. I think that the Choice Scholarship Program is a pipeline that violates this direct and clear constitutional command

Employer's religious preference illegal

The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission reported settlement on March 19 of its lawsuit against Voss Lighting in Tulsa, Okla. Pending court approval, Voss will pay \$82,500 to Edward Wolfe and "undertake specified companywide actions designed to prevent future religious discrimination." Voss has 21 locations in 12 states.

According to the suit, Voss advertised for an "operations supervisor" on the website of a Tulsa-area church attended by a company supervisor. Wolfe, who had relevant experience but didn't attend the church, applied and had two interviews, one with the incumbent supervisor, who recommended hiring Wolfe.

The suit alleged that most of a second interview, with the branch manager, dwelled on Wolfe's religious activities. He was asked to name every church he'd attended, where and when he was "saved" and if he "would have a problem" coming into work early for bible study before clocking in. He was not hired.



"Refusing to hire a qualified job applicant because his religious beliefs do not comport with those of the employer's leadership is illegal, even if the for-profit company purports to have a religious mission or purpose," said Barbara Seely, regional attorney for EEOC's St. Louis District Office. "The evidence in this case suggested widespread religious discrimination throughout the company, not just its Oklahoma locations."

Seely said if Voss doesn't change its hiring practices, "we will be back in court again."

Courts dismiss suits challenging ACA

U.S. courts have dismissed for lack of ripeness 16 out of 18 religious challenges to the Affordable Care Act's contraceptive coverage mandate. In a March 22 ruling, an Ohio federal court denied challenges by Franciscan University of Steubenville and the Michigan Catholic Conference.

The court concluded: "The 'safe harbor' provision, which protects Plaintiffs from enforcement presently, coupled with ongoing process to amend the ACA regulations to address Plaintiffs' concerns, which is substantiated by the recently published NPRM, makes the harm Plaintiffs allege unlikely to ever occur."

In *Eternal Word Television Network v. Sebelius*, an Alabama federal district court dismissed a similar challenge March 25.

U.S. District Judge Audrey Fleissig struck down a Missouri law March 14 that exempts so-called moral objectors from providing mandatory contraceptive coverage. Fleissig cites a provision in the U.S. Constitution declaring that federal laws take precedence over contradictory state laws, according to The Associated Press.

The anti-abortion group Campaign Life Missouri denounced the ruling as "a radical departure from America's tradition of religious freedom."

The state's Republican-led Legislature overrode Democratic Gov. Jay Nixon's veto in order to enact the law. Our Lady's Inn, a St. Louis Catholic group that provides homes and counseling for pregnant women, supported the bill.

9th Circuit upholds city's Jesus prayers

In *Rubin v. City of Lancaster* on March 26, a three-judge panel of the 9th Circuit appeals court unanimously struck down a challenge to the California city's practice of opening council meetings with sectarian prayer.

The court ruled that Christian references aren't prohibited by the Establishment Clause as long as a governing

body hasn't affiliated itself with Christianity. That most of the prayers are Christian is merely due to demographics, wrote Judge Diarmuid O'Scannlain for the court: "The City cannot control which religious congregations settle within its limits."

The court added that asking judges to decide what amounts to a sectarian reference "not only embroils judges in precisely those intrareligious controversies that the Constitution requires us to avoid, but also imposes on us a task that we are incompetent to perform."

Editor's note: What part of "in Jesus' name" did the judges not understand?

N.D. abortion laws severest in nation

Arkansas lost its No. 1 ranking for least-friendly state for reproductive choice after only three weeks on top. On March 26, North Dakota Republican Gov. Jack Dalrymple signed a bill banning abortion once a fetal heart-beat is detectable, which occurs at about six weeks. Arkansas' new law cut the *Roe v. Wade* guideline of 24 weeks in half to 12 weeks.

Fetal heartbeats are detectable at six weeks only by using an invasive, transvaginal ultrasound. Heartbeats can be heard at 10 to 12 weeks with an abdominal ultrasound.

Dalrymple also signed a bill requiring abortion providers to get admitting privileges at a local hospital, which could force the closing of the state's only abortion clinic in Fargo.

He also signed a third bill to ban abortion for purposes of sex selection (the first such law in the U.S.) or because of genetic defects such as Down syndrome.

The New York Times reported the reaction of Republican state Rep. Bette Grande, primary sponsor of the "heart-beat" bill. "This is just a great day for babies in North Dakota," said Grande, a Methodist director of Christian education and co-chair of the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) in the state. Law critics say it has no chance of withstanding a federal court challenge.

The newspaper also reported that Arkansas state Sen. Jason Rapert, who pushed his state's ban, runs a Christian missionary society and preached at local churches. Liberty Counsel, affiliated with Rev. Jerry Falwell, has offered legal help to defend the North Dakota and Arkansas laws.

Lawmakers also gave final approval in March to a proposed "personhood" amendment to North Dakota Constitution. The resolution states: "The inalienable right to life of every human being at any stage of development must be recognized and protected."

It will be on the 2014 general election ballot.

A close encounter of the Baptist kind



By Judy Ellis

For several years, I had a grant that required me to give presentations to groups of underprivileged people and senior citizens about powers of attorney and living wills. Those interested could sign up to get free documents. The program took me into all sorts of places I never would have otherwise wandered, including trailer parks, retirement homes and churches. One lovely spring day, I gave a presentation at a Baptist church in Pinellas Park, Fla. (aka KKK country just north of St. Pete). A couple of weeks later, I

returned to have clients sign their papers and was invited to come early and join them for lunch. Ever mindful of the public relations aspect of my job, I agreed, even though I knew it would involve a whole lot of talk with an invisible friend. Arriving at 11:30, I was given “the book,” a blue binder containing the words to about a gazillion hymns. The gathering of 25 was singing a cappella, never noticing that all the songs had the same tune with different words. I sat in the back and smiled a lot. This was followed by Pastor Tom leading a prayer for all the people they were praying for that day, including a mechanic’s mother whose name they didn’t know — presumably, God would be able to sort that out. More singing. A woman with some sort of neck problem, her head cast toward her left shoulder, rose up and began to read a lengthy parable about God opening and closing doors and windows, but she seemed semi-literate and had a lot of trouble getting it out. In the midst of it, a man with “that look” in his eye got up and walked over to me. He was the only one in the room who had BYO’d a bible, always a bad sign. He asked for a few of my business cards, and we had the following dialogue: **HIM:** It won’t be obvious to you now why I need these cards, but God will make it clear to you. **ME:** OK. **HIM:** You know, I talk to a lot of

A tidal wave of ignorance threatened to engulf me. people about coming to Jesus, and I don’t know whether it’s a sin or what, but sometimes I have a hard time getting the message across. **ME:** Maybe they don’t share your belief system. **HIM:** What? **ME:** Maybe they have a different faith. I, for instance, am a Buddhist. **HIM:** A what? **ME:** A Buddhist. **HIM:** I’ll talk to you later. Pastor Tom returned to lead us all in another prayer, this one for the food, which sorely needed it, consisting as it did of a *very* boiled weenie in a squishy generic bun with squeeze-packet condiments that must have dated from World War I. The mustard came out like a brick. Accompaniments were either canned three-bean salad or slumgullion, a word Pastor Tom could not get his mouth around. Dessert was sponge cake with watery, partly defrosted strawberries and Cool Whip. (Lunch with the black Baptists was a much better affair. Those women can cook! I still have fond memories of one feast in a little church in Palmetto that started

with ass-kickin’ fried chicken and ended with sweet potato pie. But I digress.) I took my lunch back to the table, where Pastor Tom was already gnawing on his weenie. He’d been joined by a breathtakingly unattractive mother/daughter combination. They were intensely relaying to the pastor how they’d been trying to get this black man named Ernest, apparently a neighbor, to see the light and how God had sent them to witness for him. I had a hard time maintaining an appetite during this discourse because a tidal wave of ignorance and superstition kept coming up over the edge of the table, threatening to engulf me. Finally, lunch was over and I pulled my six clients to the other end of the room and got them through the process without a hitch. When it was over, and God had been asked several times to bless me, I departed, confident that I was safe to wander the planet for another day or two. *Florida FFRF member Judy Ellis lives in St. Petersburg. Her family’s move there in 1980 from the New York City suburbs was a culture shock of the first magnitude. Up north, she didn’t know anyone who believed in God. Now she was in a place where the first question is always, “What church do you go to?” She is a retired paralegal, occasional author and third-generation atheist. She devotes considerable time to managing a large homeowners’ association, a job that dovetails perfectly with the vow she made when she retired to become a professional pest.*

Satire: Infidels’ aid effort crashed by police

Like so much of religion, what follows is fiction, except for the data quoted from Time magazine, which is factual. The “incident” at KFC was reported in The Onion, which is satirical.

By Don Ardell

Recently in St. Petersburg, Fla., a group of about three dozen infidels staged a curious demonstration at a nonprofit Catholic hospital. The action by the nonbelievers was designed to give the lie to an oft-heard charge by fundamentalist Christians that, without a belief in a god who punishes wrongdoers with eternal torture, there can be no morality or decency. Christians decry atheists because, they affirm, why be good if you think that there is no cosmic gendarme who sees all, knows all and judges all in the next life — and smites those who performed dirty tricks in this one? The infidel demonstration at St. Anthony Hospital, one of Florida’s largest faith-based health care institutions, was inspired by a report of a protest event at a KFC (formerly Kentucky Fried Chicken) in Forest Lake, Minn. There, United Nations aid workers reportedly delivered much-needed “real” food to critically malnourished patrons. A quote from Gloria Dominguez, U.N. humanitarian affairs director, deeply touched many of the atheist group members, who decided that they, too, must do something of a humanitarian nature. “In all my years in

the field, I’ve never come across a group of people who have gone so long without a proper meal,” Dominguez said. (See “U.N. Aid Workers Distributing Food To Malnourished KFC Customers,” The Onion, 3/6/13.) Volunteers distributed fruits, vegetables, grains, nuts and other plant-based nutrients to desperate patrons. But the infidels were unsure what to distribute and where until someone brought the latest issue of Time magazine to their attention. The Time exposé (Steven Brill, “Bitter Pill: Why Medical Bills Are Killing Us,” 2/20/13) was of the nonprofit health care sector of our economy. The story shocked the infidel group and led to a resolve to do something to help Americans oppressed, exploited and often financially ruined by rapacious, out-of-control mad dogs of unfettered capitalism. They learned the following from the Time exposé: • The U.S. “health” system is a profit-driven, sickness management industry posing as a health care resource. • Time’s line-by-line analysis of costs for products used in hospitals depicted a veritable gold rush of overbilling to a grotesque degree. (Examples include \$1.50 for a generic version



Don Ardell

of a Tylenol pill — 100 sell at retail for \$1.49; \$13,702 for an injection of 600 milligrams of Rituximab that cost the hospital less than \$3,000 — a markup of about 400%.) • Tax-exempt, “nonprofit” hospitals have become the most profitable businesses in nearly every town where they exist, and are run by the most richly compensated executives. • Nonprofit hospitals put demands on taxpayers to a degree “unequaled anywhere else on Earth.” About 20% of U.S. gross national product goes for medical care, twice that of other developed countries. • In every measurable way, this predatory system fails to produce better health outcomes than are seen in other countries. How does this happen, the infidels wondered? Then they read that the U.S. health care industry has spent well over \$5 billion lobbying Congress since 1998, about two and a half times more than any other industry, including the defense industry. Something had to be done to help the victims of this ghastly system. Where better to start than close to home? That’s when the idea came to the infidels to provide a bit of humani-

tarian assistance to besieged patients at St. Anthony Hospital. On Thursday, the infidels showed up with signs and a wide variety of over-the-counter drugs such as aspirin, boxes of Band-Aids, adhesive tape, dressing gowns, water bottles and other items that would be donated to hospital patients at no charge. Patients who accepted these items would save hundreds, quite possibly thousands of dollars by avoiding being billed for the same products at inflated prices. Unfortunately, the free distribution program was terminated shortly after it began. It seems that hospital administrators called police, demanding that the infidels be dispersed and removed from the property (something about restraint of trade). Still, the media, alerted in advance, were present during the distribution of humanitarian assistance by the free-thinkers, and many interviews were aired on local stations. Later, the protesters convened for a debriefing, at which all agreed that their mission had been accomplished. Asked by one reporter if anyone expected to be rewarded in the next life for this or any other good deed, none responded in the affirmative. However, most of the supplies gathered to assist unfortunate patients entering the proverbial lion’s den are still on hand, so look for further humanitarian efforts in the weeks to come at nonprofit hospitals near you. *Florida FFRF member Don Ardell has a doctorate in health and public policy and publishes the Ardell Wellness Report online.*

‘Naked Truth’ on adult entertainment

Theocrats eager to legislate morality

By Judith Lynne Hanna

My first lessons about the Christian assault on exotic dance began in 1995 when I was asked to be an expert witness in Seattle in a First Amendment court case related to exotic dance. They wanted me to apply the same approach that I used when I studied dance in African villages and cities and U.S. schools and concert theaters. Being a strong free speech advocate, and excited to apply my knowledge to a world I did not know, I agreed.

I had to break through “Washington Together Against Pornography!” demonstrators to begin to discover what went on inside exotic dance clubs. Men, women and children picketing the club held screaming banners of denunciation. A Christian church was behind the opposition. In the more than 100 successive cases nationwide that I conducted research for, a pastor or church group was spearheading efforts to wipe out the alleged “moral cancer” of “toxic” exotic dance. Yet it’s a form of dance, art and theater that communicates within its own aesthetic. What I keep learning frightens me and is under most people’s radar.

Legislatures and local governments respond to vocal constituents, often a “segment of the politically active Christian Right” (SPACR) that wants to eliminate adult entertainment. The implications are frightening for all of us who believe in freedom from religion.

Biblical injunctions concerning the use of the body, modesty, a male-female polarity and patriarchy are why SPACR is hostile to strip clubs. So too are beliefs about the inherent uncontrollable nature of men. Consequently, “sexual jihadists” are struggling to reorganize American life and impose their own political organization, a scripture-based theocracy. Some current legislators are members of SPACR, seeking to destroy the separation of church and state. It is irrelevant to them that their laws and proposed laws violate federal and state constitutions. Of course, some members of the Christian Right eschew political engagement and choose to engage in fighting poverty, for example.

The SPACR views exotic dance as perilous to the biblical patriarchal social order: The “ungodly” exotic dance clubs destroy femininity and undermine men because they draw women out of the home and into “demimonde” (a class of woman not considered respectable because of indiscreet or promiscuous behavior) employment.

Single dancers compete with married women for men’s attention and admiration, challenging their self-esteem, and with men economically, challenging their sense of masculinity. Thus the outrage when a “passive,” “modest” woman steps out of the domestic realm into the public arena where she shamelessly removes her clothing and moves her nude, or semi-nude, body for sexual fantasy, commercial purpose and economic independence. Existence of the exotic dancer signals the males’ insufficient surveillance (only the husband should see the woman’s nude body) and weak-

It is irrelevant to them that their laws and proposed laws violate federal and state constitutions.

ened masculinity.

Men’s uncontrollable nature is due, says Christian Right author Tim LaHaye, to their “constant production of sperm and seminal fluid.” The male sex drive is “almost volcanic in its latent ability to erupt at the slightest provocation.” Women are “candles among gunpowder” and must dress so as not to “blow up the fire of men’s lust.”

Because sexuality outside of marriage is threatening, SPACR has “prudential” lifestyle rules that interdict behaviors believed to lead a person to perdition, e.g., eliminate adult cabarets to avoid being tempted by them. The notion is that after the fall, humans were left with a powerful sinful nature, so prudent Christians must keep themselves from drifting astray.

Attack strategies

Prominent in the Christian Right is dominionism, a political religious movement that has what its leaders call a grand design to supplant our constitutional democracy with a scripture-based Christian governing elite. Political activism is considered a duty.

A website of one active Christian Right group says:

“Welcome to the Citizens for Community Values of Indiana Website. Citizens for Community Values is an educational organization devoted to protecting families from the harms of the porn/sex industry in all of its forms. . . . We believe that there is a great culture war for the soul of our nation being waged by many kinds of sexual revolutionaries that oppose the principles governing human sexual relations established by God.”

Expansion of state control over sexuality is a key to creating a salutary environment for their children and making way for their ideal state. SPACR fights adult entertainment by harnessing an organizational network fueled by technology, money, lawyers, public relations outfits and “researchers.”

From Psalm 127, an emphasis is placed on militaristic imagery. Children become the arrows of the parents, part of their tools of war, in order to go out against the enemy. The language is filled with metaphors about the use of excessive force and violence against God’s enemies. Christians’ task is to recruit soldiers in the army of Jesus Christ. Clergy are known to speak of themselves as generals or admirals and their evangelist followers as powerful warriors.

SPACR lobbies local governments to pass adult cabaret restrictions to drive them out of business. Members of SPACR burrow into government as “holy hires” or get elected so they can legislate and adjudicate against exotic dance. Attorneys are hired to

help draft and defend restrictive laws. Most prominent is Tennessee-based Scott Bergthold, likened to an old-time snake oil salesman riding the circuit. I have seen him in courtrooms everywhere reading from a hymnal of spin to defend challenged regulations he drafted to destroy the adult hospitality business. Double dipping, perhaps?

Part of the mobilization effort is an “electric church” network of preachers who appear on some 1,300 radio and TV stations and claim audiences of up to 130 million and profits of \$500 million to billions. An “e-army” inundates legislators with emails for or against proposed bills. Voter guides are sent to churches, and prayer groups transform into political action committees. Anti-club combatants also engage in physical threats and assaults on property.

Opponents are well-armed with financial and communication resources. According to a 2012 report by Americans United for Separation of Church and State, James Dobson’s Focus on the Family brought in \$104.4 million. With a budget of \$14.8 million, Tony Perkins’ Family Research Council lobbies for the Christian Right agenda. Pat Robertson’s Christian Broadcasting Network operated with \$435 million in contributions. Donald Wildmon’s American Family Association has a radio empire with revenues of \$18 million annually. At the top of the heap was Jerry Falwell Ministries/Liberty University/Liberty Counsel with \$523 million.

Jeff Sharlet in his 2008 book, *The Family: The Secret Fundamentalism at the Heart of American Power*, speaks of an “invisible” association in Washington, D.C., organized around public men, conservative Republicans, would-be theocrats. The Family has operated under many guises; its Fellowship Foundation alone has an annual budget of nearly \$14 million.

SPACR attempts to strip the First, Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments, corset the exotic dancer, micromanage businesses and dismantle the club industry through local and state government actions and “street” tactics (like those against abortion clinics). I could go on about this steamroller, but I think you get the idea.

Not surprisingly, some politicians, especially at election time, use cabarets as a red herring to divert attention from government failure to cope with the real problems of education, crime, health and traffic.

Playing defense

Who is trying to stop this juggernaut? Free speech advocates, consumers and involved businesses fight back to preserve the separation of church and state. The problem is an unending marathon, not a sprint.

The costs of proaction — e.g., quashing bills before they surface —



Judith Lynne Hanna

are far less than going to court after a bad bill becomes an even worse law. Organizations such as the Association of Club Executives (ACE) and its statewide chapters have had some successes. Voters in Scottsdale, Ariz., and Seattle overturned restrictive city ordinances, not wanting to be known as “moral scolds.”

In Atlanta, smack in the bible belt, business trumped the religion. The International Poultry Exposition (known affectionately as Chicken Pluckers of America), which is the city’s largest convention, told the city that if it interfered with exotic dance clubs, they would move the convention.

The industry is under the worst unrelenting attack in its history, with draconian regulations implemented or being considered in several states. Kansas, Kentucky, Alaska, Alabama, Nevada, Iowa and Georgia are expected to introduce their own Community Defense Acts, as they are known. A glut of new “sin taxes” is likely to follow.

The implications are frightening for all of us who believe in freedom from religion in an American democracy. This campaign is a lens through which to view a broader effort of a minority to impose its views and supplant the Constitution with a bible-based theocracy.

Why should we care about a racy form of entertainment? Professor and attorney Nadine Strossen pointed out in 1995:

“Once we cede to the government the power to violate one right for one person, or group, then no right is safe for any person or group. So when we defend sexual expression, we are really making a stand not only against a specific kind of censorship . . . but human rights in general.”

Maryland FFRF member Judith Lynne Hanna has a Ph.D. in anthropology from Columbia University and is affiliate senior research scientist in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Maryland in College Park. She’s the author of eight books on dance and society, has served as an expert witness in more than 100 court cases and appeared recently on “The Colbert Report.” Her latest book is *Naked Truth: Strip Clubs, Democracy and a Christian Right* (University of Texas Press, 2012). Her website is judithhanna.com.

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Black Collar Crime Blotter

Compiled by Bill Dunn

Arrested / Charged

Mark A. Hooper, 42, and **Susan A. Hooper**, 40, Mt. Jewett, **PA**: Endangering the welfare of children. Mark Hooper, pastor of Cobb Street Baptist Church in Johnsonburg, and his wife are accused of starving their 9-year-old adopted daughter between May 1, 2011, and Feb. 11, 2013, when the girl ran away.

State Trooper Mary Gausman said the girl weighed about 31 pounds. *Source: Courier-Express, 3-20-13*

Darin L. Evans, 41, Dover, **OH**: 11 counts of criminal sexual assault and 2 counts of aggravated criminal sexual abuse. Evans is accused of abuse allegedly taking place in 2004-06 when he was associate pastor of West Suburban Community Church, in Elmhurst, IL.

A senior pastor at the church read Evans' letter of confession to the congregation in February. He also apologized to the female who made the allegations. He also served on the Elmhurst Commission on Youth and worked with Young Life, a Christian high school group. *Source: my-surburbanlife.com, 3-19-13*

Artelino Vallada, 36, **Toronto**: 4 counts of sexual assault and 2 counts each of sexual interference and invitation to sexual touching. Vallada, pastor at Jesus Christ the Open Door Church, is accused of molesting 4 females as young as 14 between November 2010 and January 2013. There may be other victims, police said. *Source: cp24.com, 3-15-13*

Robert A. Lyzenga, 56, Lafayette, **IN**: 5 counts each of child exploitation and voyeurism. Charges stem from an investigation last year in which cameras were found hidden inside women's bathroom stalls at Sunrise Christian Reformed Church, where Lyzenga was pastor.

Videos from the church were allegedly found showing females as young as 5 in the stalls in various stages of undress. *Source: WANE, 3-14-13*

Hank D. Guilliams, 42, Siloam Springs, **AR**: 4 counts of 1st-degree sexual assault. Court documents allege Guilliams admitted during treatment in a Tennessee rehabilitation facility that he'd molested a 16-year-old girl at Eastgate Church of Christ when he was pastor there 2 years ago.

According to the probable cause report, the alleged victim told police that Guilliams' wife "told the young girls in the church not to dress provocatively to prevent Doug Guilliams from lusting after them."

Another alleged victim, now 17, said she heard the pastor's wife make similar comments. *Source: KARK, 3-13-13*

Eusebio Martinez, Edinburg, **TX**: Criminal mischief. Martinez, pastor of Holy Family Catholic Church, was allegedly caught on video drilling holes in a family's car tires. Court documents said he was stalking Martin Villanueva by sending him text messages telling him where he was at and installed a GPS tracking device under his wife's car.

The diocese has suspended Martinez during the investigation. *Source: KGBT, 3-13-13*

Julio Guarin-Sosa, 43, a Colombian Catholic priest, is charged with molestation of a minor, sexual battery and illegal entry in connection with an alleged incident at a residence in Yuba City, **CA**, where he'd been called to perform a private Mass.

Guarin-Sosa, who was filling in for his vacationing brother as pastor at a Lodi parish, told police he was asked by a 16-year-old girl's family to speak to her privately. They went into a bedroom, sat on a bed and held hands in prayer, according to Guarin-Sosa, who claims he only hugged the girl afterward and kissed her cheek near her mouth. *Source: KXTV, 3-12-13*

Jason L. Ray, Jackson, **TN**: Theft. Ray, secretary/treasurer and youth pastor at First Assembly of God, is accused of taking at least \$60,000 from the church's general fund between May 2011 and December 2012. *Source: WBBJ, 3-12-13*

Marguerite Kloos, 54, **Cincinnati**: Illegal voting. Kloos, a Catholic Sisters of Charity nun, is charged with forging her deceased roommate's signature on an absentee ballot. The roommate had requested the ballot, which came in the mail a few days before she died.

Kloos has resigned as a dean at the College of Mount St. Joseph, where she was also an associate professor in the Department of Religious and Pastoral Studies. *Source: cincinnati.com, 3-12-13*

George Spencer, 48, Kansas City, **MO**: Statutory sodomy, forcible sodomy, 3 counts of child molestation and 2 counts of sexual misconduct involving a child. Allegations stem from incidents with a 13-year-old girl in February 2012 when Spencer was associate pastor at the Greater Works CME Church.

Spencer was convicted in 1998 of raping a



girl and is listed as "noncompliant" on the state sex offender website. *Source: KCTV, 3-11-13*

Ted Simpson, 83, Solihull, **UK**: Suspicion of sexual activity with a minor. Simpson, a priest based at a Franciscan friary, had close ties with Our Lady of Compassion primary school.

A police spokesman said Simpson "is currently on police bail while inquiries continue." *Source: Birmingham Mail, 3-7-13*

Robert Kondratick, 67, Venice, **FL**: Grand theft. Kondratick, pastor at Holy Spirit Orthodox Church, allegedly and fraudulently wrote out 28 checks totaling \$54,000 to "Cash" or to himself. He'd asked for blank checks to pay church expenses.

His salary was \$3,673 a month, and he was reimbursed for medical insurance and received an automobile allowance. Kondratick was the subject of a similar probe at a church in New York in 2007 but no criminal charges were ever filed, an affidavit said. *Source: News-Press, 3-6-13*

Aaron E. Springer, 27, Lancaster, **PA**: 1st-degree misdemeanor corruption of minors. Springer, youth pastor at First Assembly of God, allegedly had sex with a 16-year-old female member of his youth group about 10 times at church or in his vehicle on church property between November 2011 and July 2012. He admitted to the incidents, the complaint states. *Source: Lancaster News, 3-6-13*

Nemani Ravouvou, aka Nemesio Kolikoli, Lautoka, **Fiji**: 8 counts of rape and 10 counts of indecent assault. Ravouvou, a Catholic priest, "has been questioned and is the prime suspect in a series of alleged rape cases," said police spokesman Naina Ragigia. There's more than 1 alleged victim, he said.

Archbishop-elect Peter Loy Chong said, "Rape is an intrinsically evil act. If someone does wrong then they should be prepared to face the consequences." *Source: Fiji Times, 3-6-13*

Glenn D. Barton, 62, Kilgore, **TX**: Aggravated sexual assault of a child. Barton, senior pastor of Calvary Way Church, allegedly started molesting a child in 2009. The boy told workers at a children's advocacy center that Barton put his hands in the boy's pants and later forced him to perform sex acts on regular occasions.

The complaint said, "Victim provided law enforcement an audio conversation to support the outcry. The defendant is heard to state, 'I expect you to do what we've always done, and that's cover for each other.'"

Calvary Way operates a day care and a K-12 school. *Source: Longview News-Journal, 3-6-13*

Michael Elder, 53, **Oklahoma City**: 1st-degree murder. Elder, senior pastor at Cross Baptist Church, is accused in the fatal shooting of Gary Davidson, 27, who was his son-in-law.

Police said Davidson was shot as he tried to pull his estranged wife from a moving truck. Elder is jailed without bond. *Source: AP, 3-5-13*

James "Alex" Gillespie, 48, Middleton, **WI**: 2 counts of sexual assault of a child. Gillespie was director of music ministry at St. Luke's Lutheran Church. Senior Pastor Roger Eigenfeld said Gillespie has been fired.

The complaint states a 14-year-old runaway boy visited Gillespie at home late at night to have sex. The boy allegedly posed as being 18.

A Mount Horeb police sergeant, **Dennis Jenks**, 44, is charged with repeated sexual assault of a child involving the same youth, whom both defendants met through social media, court documents say. *Source: WKOW, 2-28-13*

Louis J. Bristol, 28, Carpinteria, **CA**: Multiple counts of child molestation, child rape, lewd acts upon a child and furnishing an illegal substance to minors. Bristol allegedly used his positions as youth pastor at Carpinteria Community Church and assistant manager at Holiday Inn Express to molest 2 female juveniles. He met

the teens at church and allegedly took them to vacant hotel rooms. He's also accused of selling marijuana to youth group members. *Source: KTLA, 2-28-13*

Haden Conrad, 32, Chesapeake, **VA**: Computer solicitation of a child under 15. Haden, pastor at Chesapeake Avenue United Methodist Church and Chesapeake Police Department chaplain, was arrested after search warrants were served on his home and office during an investigation by the Internet Crimes Against Children unit. He allegedly exposed himself on a webcam. *Source: WAVY, 2-28-13*

Marukudiyil C. Velan, 64, Brick Township, **NJ**: Velan, pastor at Visitation Catholic Church, was arrested in July on 3 criminal counts but has now been indicted by a grand jury on several more sexual contact charges involving 3 alleged victims, an adult and 2 children. *Source: Brick Patch, 2-28-13*

Gaetano Incardona, 73, Siracusa, **SIC**: Incardona, pastor at Madre di Augusta Catholic Church, is accused by a 21-year-old congregation member of groping and kissing her during confession. *Source: Sud Italia News, 2-28-13*

Emilson S. Correa, Niteroi, **Brazil**: Correa, a priest in the Archdiocese of Niteroi, is under investigation on allegations of sexual abuse of 3 minor girls from his parish. He's been suspended from his duties.

An alleged victim, now 19, claims the abuse started when she was 13.

A police spokeswoman said Correa "acknowledged he maintained consensual sexual relations with the woman and her 15-year-old friend, but denied he committed any kind of abuse with the 10-year-old girl."

The spokeswoman said the woman and a 15-year-old friend videotaped a man they said was the priest having sex with them. The woman alleged her father gave her the camera to record the encounter as evidence. *Source: AP, 2-27-13*

An **unidentified pastor**, 32, of Judah African Revival Mission Church in Kya Sand, **S.AFR.**, was arrested for allegedly raping a 13-year-old girl 5 times in October-December 2012.

The girl's mother told police the pastor became a family friend and often visited their home. He allegedly told the girl he was sick and that having sex would make him well.

The mother said she discovered text messages on her daughter's phone, including one of comfort from the pastor to the girl, who had complained of "feeling sore." *Source: The Star, 2-26-13*

David James, 29, Las Vegas, **NV**: 9 counts of lewdness with a child under 14 years old. Police said James used bible study classes at "several different religious centers" to gain access to victims.

He was earlier charged with 10 counts of sexual assault with a minor under 14, 2 counts of sexual assault with a minor under 16 and 10 counts of lewdness with a minor under 14. *Source: Review-Journal, 2-26-13*

Derrick W. Jones, Seneca, **SC**: Unlawful conduct toward a child. Jones, bishop and senior pastor at the Church of God in Seneca, was suspended from pastoral duties after his daughter, 16, told investigators he punched her and threw her on the floor during an argument. Police found her bloodied and bruised at her boyfriend's home. *Source: WBTW, 2-25-13*

Ryan B. Tyna, 42, Hudson, **OH**: Soliciting and criminal tools. Tyna, head girls basketball coach at Cuyahoga Valley Christian Academy, was among 12 men showing up at a motel after responding to a police ad offering a 30-minute session with a 20-year-old woman for \$100. Tyna also teaches social studies at a public school. *Source: fox8.com, 2-25-13*

Donald R. Jung, 59, La Grange, **IL**: Predatory criminal sexual assault. Jung, head pastor

'I expect you to do what we've always done, and that's cover for each other.'

—Pastor Glenn D. Barton

at Second Baptist Church, is charged with molesting a 9-year-old girl at his home. Court documents alleged Jung told police he sexually assaulted another young family member 22 years ago when she was 10, but didn't admit his guilt in the current case. He was in the Army for 18 years. *Source: CBS Chicago, 2-23-13*

Susan M. Droessler, 54, Columbus, **WI**: Felony theft of more than \$10,000 in a business setting. Droessler, secretary and bookkeeper for St. Jerome Parish and School, is accused of using parish money for personal expenses, dating to 2007, and enrolling herself in full-time benefits she was never entitled to that amounted to more than \$88,000. *Source: Portage Daily Register, 2-22-13*

John K. Lawlor, 54, Everett, **WA**: Commercial sexual abuse of a minor. Lawlor, pastor at First Baptist Church, is accused of arranging to meet a person he believed was a 16-year-old girl for sex. He's offered his resignation to the church.

Court documents allege he responded to an online "Casual Encounters" ad in which a detective posed as a girl "full of energy" who wanted to be paid for sex. *Source: Seattle Times, 2-22-13*

Chaim Halpern, 54, Barnet, **UK**: Suspicion of sexual assault and suspicion of perverting the course of justice. Halpern, rabbi at an Orthodox synagogue in Golders Green, and 3 other men, ages 25, 62 and 64, are allegedly involved in abuse cases in the north London community.

Halpern denies he's acted inappropriately with women. *Source: BBC, 2-21-13*

Pleaded / Convicted

William Finnegan, 59, Castleford, **UK**: Guilty of sexually assaulting a 17-year-old girl on Easter Sunday 2012. During the trial, his lawyers told the court Finnegan, a Catholic priest, has been secretly married for 13 years to a woman he met in Cyprus in 1999.

He denied touching the girl's buttocks and forcefully kissing her, but a jury of 9 women and 3 men found him guilty by 11-1. *Source: Bradford Telegraph & Argus, 3-15-13*

Matthew D. Feeney, 44, Cottage Grove, **MN**: Pleaded guilty to 2nd- and 4th-degree criminal sexual conduct. Feeney, former Catholic youth leader at the Church of St. Joseph in St. Joseph, was accused of molesting 2 brothers, ages 9 and 14 when the alleged assaults started. Feeney was also owner and casting director of a talent management company when he first came in contact with the boys' family in 2007.

He was convicted in 1992 of 4th-degree criminal sexual conduct while he was a counselor at a Catholic youth camp. *Source: St. Cloud Times, 3-12-13*

Hafiz Khan, 77, Miami, **FL**: Guilty by jury of 2 counts each of conspiracy and providing material support to terrorists. Khan, a Muslim imam, was recorded by an FBI informant allegedly expressing support for the Taliban and sent \$50,000 to Pakistan. Khan testified he sent the money for family, charity and business reasons. *Source: AP, 3-4-13*

Ryan J. Muelhauser, 55, Cambridge, **MN**: Pleaded guilty to 2 counts of criminal sexual conduct. When the alleged incidents occurred, Muelhauser, pastor at Lakeside Christian Church, was helping the victim with his "homosexual tendencies," the complaint said.

During the assaults, occurring over 4 to 5 months, Muelhauser told the victim he was "hearing the Lord tell him what to do." *Source: WCCO, 2-28-13*

Philip Jacobs, 63, Saanich, **BC**: Guilty of sexually touching a person between the ages of 14 and 18. Jacobs, a Catholic priest, is accused of molesting a boy he was tutoring at St. Joseph the Worker School in Saanich in 2000-01.

He also served Ohio parishes in the past and taught philosophy at the Pontifical College Josephinum in Columbus. He was accused of several incidents of sexual misconduct there but wasn't criminally charged. When the Ohio allegations were made public in 2002, Jacobs resigned from St. Joseph's. He was arrested in 2010.

Another complainant testified Jacobs never touched him sexually but said he told him "The penis is a muscle. I want you to flex that muscle three times with me." *Source: Victoria Times Colonist, 1-27-13*

Michael Wilkerson, 47, Pottstown, **PA**:

Guilty of mortgage fraud. Wilkerson, pastor of New Millennium Life Restoration Fellowship, recruited congregants and their families to act as “straw purchasers” of real estate, which resulted in fraudulently obtaining \$6 million in loans from Chase Manhattan.

Wilkerson’s wife, Joyce, pleaded guilty to assisting in the scheme by writing checks to the “straws” and posing as co-purchaser at settlement. *Source: Phoenixville Patch, 2-26-13*

Edward Fairley, Paterson, **NJ**: Guilty of attempted murder, stalking, terroristic threats and possession of a weapon for an unlawful purpose. Fairley, pastor at Koinonia and Christian Ministries, was charged with stabbing his mistress, who was also his associate pastor, 28 times and leaving her for dead. Fairley represented himself at trial, even cross-examining Simone Shields-Oliver, his lover-turned-victim.

They’d become intimate before he was married and kept seeing each other afterward until Shields-Oliver got engaged and tried to break off the affair. *Source: Christian Post, 2-26-13*

Stanley Wilkinson, 61, Rochester, **MN**: Pleaded guilty to intentional discharge of a firearm that endangers safety. Wilkinson, a Seventh-day Adventist pastor, fired 2 shots through the door with a pistol at an intruder at his home, but it turned out it was his granddaughter, 16, who was hit in the neck but will recover. *Source: KARE, 2-25-13*

Sentenced

Jack Schaap, 55, Hammond, **IN**: 12 years in prison and 5 years’ probation after pleading guilty to taking a minor across state lines with intent to engage in criminal sexual activity. Hammond, pastor of the 40,000-member First Baptist Church, had an ongoing sexual relationship with a 17-year-old congregation member.

At one point the married pastor wrote to her that their relationship was “exactly what Christ desires for us. He wants to marry us + become eternal lovers!”

Schaap also reportedly texted the girl often, as many as 662 times in one month. *Source: Chicago Tribune, 3-20-13*

Arthur Schirmer, 64, Reeders, **PA**: Life in prison without parole on a conviction of 1st-degree murder. Schirmer, a United Methodist pastor, was accused of beating his second wife to death in 2008 with a crowbar and staging a car accident to cover it up. He’s also awaiting trial for the death of his first wife in 1999. *Source: WHTM, 3-18-13*

George A. Smith, 75, Kinkora, **PEI**: 11 years in prison after pleading guilty to 38 counts of sexual and indecent assault involving 13 children between 1969-89. Smith was suspended from his duties as a Catholic priest at a Prince Edward Island parish in 2010 when charges were made.

Victims were often altar boys or children of families involved with churches where Smith served. The court was told Smith would ply boys with alcohol. At times they would wake up while Smith was molesting them. *Source: CBC, 3-14-13*

Robert E. Ruark, 65, Suisun City, **CA**: 18 years in prison and a \$10,000 fine after pleading guilty to 19 felony counts related to molesting children while he was pastor at St. Timothy Orthodox Church. Ruark must serve 85 percent of his sentence before becoming eligible for parole.

He was originally charged with more than 30 counts involving children as young as 13 and sometimes photographing them naked, police said. *Source: Vacaville Reporter, 3-12-13*

Kenneth L. Miller, Stuart’s Draft, **VA**: 27 months in prison for abetting parental kidnapping. Miller, head of a Beachy Amish-Mennonite church, was released pending appeal, which could take 2 years. He was convicted for helping Lisa A. Miller (not related) flee to Nicaragua with her daughter, 7, in 2009.

Ms. Miller was applauded by conservative Christians for refusing to allow court-mandated visits with the girl from her other legal mother, Ms. Miller’s former partner in a civil union in Vermont. After the couple split, Miller became a born-again Christian and denounced lesbianism. *Source: N.Y. Times, 3-4-13*

Leib Glanz, 54, Brooklyn, **NY**: 45 days in prison after pleading guilty to defrauding the federal government of \$36,000 in Section 8 housing subsidies. Rabbi Glanz is a leader in the Satmar Hasidic community and a prison chaplain.

His brother, Menashe Glanz, 51, also was part of the fraud scheme, and was sentenced to 6 months in prison and 6 months’ home confinement. *Source: N.Y. Times, 2-28-13*

Lowe Dongor, 37, Fitchburg, **MA**: 2½ years in prison, suspended, and 5 years’ probation after pleading guilty to possessing child pornography and theft. Dongor was a priest at St. Joseph’s Catholic Church who fled in 2011 to his native Philippines after porn was found on his computer and collection money turned up missing. He returned to the U.S. in November.

Worcester Bishop Robert McManus has asked the Vatican to defrock Dongor. *Source: Boston Herald, 2-28-13*

John Fitzmaurice, 57, Christchurch, **NZ**: 2 years and 3 months in prison after pleading

‘Mr. Johnson shared that for many years he has struggled with a persistent sin issue.’

— *Letter to parents*

guilty to 8 counts of fraud related to his service as a priest at the Catholic Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament and Sacred Heart Parish.

He wrote checks on parish accounts totaling about \$150,000 over 5 years and spent most of the money gambling, court documents said. *Source: New Zealand Herald, 2-27-13*

Caesar Belchez, Bonneauville, **PA**: 11½ to 23 months in county prison, 14 years’ probation and restitution of \$384,750 to the Catholic Diocese of Harrisburg. Belchez, pastor at St. Joseph the Worker Parish, pleaded guilty to theft by unlawful taking and access device, occurring between June 2006 and June 2011.

Belchez admitted he used money donated to the parish and parish credit and debit cards for his personal use. Irregularities were uncovered when he was transferred to Dallastown. *Source: Evening Sun, 2-26-13*

Gregory “Jamie” Coots, Middlesboro, **KY**: 1 year probation for violating the exotic animals statute. Coots, pastor at Full Gospel Tabernacle in Jesus’ Name, was pulled over in Tennessee for having dark-tinted windows when the officer spotted boxes with 3 rattlesnakes and 2 copper-head snakes. Coots uses snakes in his church services. The snakes, which he bought for \$800 in Alabama, were confiscated.

Coots was charged in 2008 for having 74 snakes in his home. *Source: UPI, 2-26-13*

Civil Lawsuits Filed

St. Peter’s Catholic Church in Mount Clemens, **MI**, the **Archdiocese of Detroit** and **Fr. Michael Cooney** are being sued for alleged failure to protect a 14-year-old girl.

The suit alleges **Michael Lentini**, 19 in 2011, sexually assaulted the girl at a pancake breakfast at the church. Both were church members. Lentini pleaded guilty to 3rd-degree criminal sexual conduct and was sentenced to 2 years’ probation.

Before the assault, the girl’s parents had confronted Lentini, his family and church officials about Lentini’s inappropriate communications, including photos he sent the girl. *Source: Macomb Daily, 3-11-13*

Mordechai Rachminov, 69, Queens, **NY**, is being sued by Gavriel Barukh, who alleges the rabbi botched a 2011 bris and removed part of his 8-day-old son’s corona glandis. The suit claims that Rachminov assured Barukh that the child did not need to see a doctor despite the apparent damage. *Source: Queens Chronicle, 3-7-13*

A plaintiff from Alberta, who alleges an **unidentified, now-dead Catholic priest** molested him in the early 1970s when he was 10 and the priest taught at St. Mary’s Boys School in **Edmonton**, is suing for \$475,000. Defendants are the **Salesian Society**, **Archdiocese of Edmonton**, **Fr. Joseph MacNeil** and **Fr. Anthony Jordan**.

The plaintiff alleges the priest told him his parents “would die and go to hell” if he told them. *Source: Sun News, 3-7-13*

Another suit against **Pennsylvania Catholic leaders** has been filed on behalf of 3 former students at Bishop McCort High School who alleged **Brother Stephen Baker** molested them. Baker taught religion and was baseball coach and athletic trainer.

Baker, 62, fatally stabbed himself in the heart Jan. 26 at a monastery where he’d been living since 2000, the year Franciscan officials were told Baker was accused of sexually abusing students.

Defendants include the school, the **Franciscans** and the **Johnstown-Altoona Diocese**.

Not until 10 days before Baker killed himself did the allegations become widely known. That’s when Boston attorney Mitchell Garabedian announced he’d negotiated settlements for 11 former students of Baker’s at different schools. *Source: WBKN, 2-25-13*

“John Doe I” is suing **Mark A. Broussard**, 57, Duson, **LA**, alleging the Catholic priest “raped and sexually molested, abused and exploited [him] on a daily basis during his preadolescent years from 1985 to 1988,” court papers say.

Defendants include the **Vatican**, the **Archdiocese of New Orleans**, **Archbishop Gregory Aymond** and the **Diocese of Lake Charles**. Doe seeks \$18 million in damages.

Broussard also faces 10 counts of sex crimes against 3 boys, including aggravated rape and aggravated oral sexual battery. *Source: The Advocate, 2-25-13*

Civil Lawsuits Settled

The Catholic **Diocese of Green Bay**, **WI**,

has agreed to pay \$700,000 to brothers Todd and Troy Merryfield for sexual assaults by a now-defrocked priest, **Fr. John P. Feeney**, in 1978. A jury had awarded the brothers that amount last May but a judge overturned the verdict due to juror misconduct. A new trial was set for this May.

The diocese was also ordered in November to pay \$500,000 to a Nevada man molested by Feeney in the 1980s. It’s appealing that judgment.

Feeney assaulted the Merryfields at St. Nicholas Parish in Freedom when they were 12 and 14 years old. He was sentenced in 2004 to 15 years in prison and was released in 2011. He was defrocked in 2005.

Todd Merryfield lives in Port Washington. Troy lives in Virginia. They accused the diocese of fraud for moving Feeney from parish to parish without revealing his sexual history. *Source: Journal Sentinel, 3-20-13*

The Catholic **Diocese of Joliet, IL**, will release as part of a lawsuit settlement more than 7,000 internal documents that reportedly show every one of its bishops since the 1950s has been aware of accusations of about 15 diocesan priests molesting children.

David Rudofski was among 3 plaintiffs in the settlement. He alleged he was molested at age 8 while making his first confession to **Fr. James Burnett** in the 1980s. The settlement includes an undisclosed amount of money for Rudofski and a written statement from Bishop R. Daniel Conlon admitting Burnett’s sexual abuse of Rudofski, Daniel Shanahan and another man whose identity hasn’t been made public.

The diocese has updated its website to list 34 priests who have had substantiated or credible allegations of abuse made against them. *Source: Joliet Patch/CBS Chicago, 3-13-13*

The Catholic **Archdiocese of Los Angeles** will pay about \$10 million to settle 4 cases of alleged abuse by now-defrocked priest **Michael Baker**, who told **Cardinal Roger Mahony** nearly 30 years ago he’d molested children. The cases were from 1974 to 2000.

Two suits claimed Mahony, who retired in 2011 as archbishop and has been publicly rebuked by his successor, didn’t do enough to stop Baker. However, Mahony was allowed to go to Rome to vote for a new pope.

Two brothers who are plaintiffs will get \$4 million each, and 2 others will get nearly \$1 million each. Church documents show Baker met with Mahony in 1986 and confessed to molesting 2 boys over 7 years, but he wasn’t removed from ministry until 2000.

“I hope the new pope defrocks the cardinal,” plaintiff Michael Duran said at a courthouse press conference. *Source: AP, 3-12-13*

Legal Developments

An **unidentified Israeli Hasidic rabbi**, 70, who fled to the U.S. amid sex abuse allegations, is expected to return to Israel.

An Army Radio report said a follower of the rabbi alleged he saw him naked with a woman during a purported “purification session.” Other followers allegedly threatened the man to keep quiet.

Another man told Army Radio, which is run by the Israel Defense Forces, that his 15-year-old daughter told him the rabbi grabbed her breasts as he kissed her. The girl’s sister alleged he molested her 3 years earlier when she was 17. *Source: Times of Israel, 3-11-13*

Richard J. McCormick, 71, New Rochelle, **NY**, former head of the Catholic Salesian Brothers of Don Bosco, had more rape charges added to previous ones involving alleged abuse of a boy who was 9 and 10.

The new indictment charges McCormick raped a boy between the ages of 7 and 9 in 1981-83 in Ipswich, MA. McCormick has been living since October at the Vianney Renewal Center near St. Louis, which has a program for pedophile clergy. *Source: Salem News, 3-7-13*

Terry Greer, pastor at Gardendale-Mt. Vernon **[AL]** United Methodist Church, was released from the hospital and taken to jail. He’s charged with his wife’s murder and attempted murder of their daughter in their home Jan. 10. The daughter got away and called police, who arrived to find Greer in the bathroom stabbing himself multiple times. *Source: WBRC, 3-4-13*

Allegations

Ronald Pickering, a now-deceased Catholic priest, allegedly groomed young Australian boys sexually by using money, alcohol and cigarettes, according to testimony at a parliamentary inquiry into clergy sexual abuse. Raymond D’Brass, an altar boy at St. James Parish in Gardenvale, **VIC**, in 1979-83, said he was molested frequently by Pickering for 4 years.

Some victims used money Pickering gave them to buy heroin, a fact known to the priest, according to testimony. *Source: The Age, 3-4-13*

Removed / Resigned

John Gow, pastor of St. Patrick Catholic Church in Dixon, **IL**, has been suspended. A letter from Msgr. Eric Barr, vicar of the Diocese of Rockford, said Gow “will not be returning” to the parish. The letter said the diocese has been told that authorities are investigating Gow’s comput-

er use. *Source: saukvalley.com, 3-15-13*

Hayden Vaverek, former pastor at Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church in Greenwood, **SC**, has had “his priestly faculties withdrawn,” according to the Diocese of Charleston. Diocesan officials said sexual misconduct between Gow and a minor allegedly occurred more than 15 years ago: “[N]o parishioners of that parish were involved in the reported allegation.”

Gow started working in 2011 for the Catholic Near East Welfare Association based in New York City. *Source: Fox Carolina, 3-10-13*

The Vatican has defrocked 3 **Massachusetts** priests for alleged sexual abuse. **David Blizard**, **Thomas Kane** and **Robert Shauris** may not function as priests in any capacity, said Bishop of Worcester Robert McManus. They were removed from the ministry, respectively, in 1988, 1993 and 1995. *Source: International Business Times, 3-5-13*

Keith O’Brien, 75, a cardinal and head of the **Scottish Catholic Bishops Conference**, who in November resigned and admitted he’d committed sexual indiscretions, is now accused of groping a man at a party in Rome the day O’Brien became a cardinal in 2003.

His accuser, a London priest, is said to have complained to the Vatican last year, allegedly speeding O’Brien’s departure, which came after separate allegations from the 1980s. Three of the 4 men making allegations are active priests. O’Brien, who didn’t participate in the conclave to select the new pope, said he will retire from public life. *Source: Daily Mail, 3-3-13; The Telegraph, 3-14-13*

Ray Johnson, superintendent of Grace Christian Schools, Medford, **OR**, resigned after working with Grace Christian since 1976. A letter to parents from the board said “Mr. Johnson shared that for many years he has struggled with a persistent sin issue.”

The letter didn’t name the sin but said it “is clearly in direct contradiction to biblical principles, the leadership requirements for First Baptist Church, and the Christian lifestyle agreement that all school employees sign.” *Source: Mail Tribune, 2-26-13*

[*Editor’s note: Sue M., Oregon, wonders if the sin was eating oysters, wearing mixed fibers or working on the Sabbath.*]

The Catholic **Archdiocese of Anchorage, AK**, announced its starting the process to defrock **Fr. J. Michael Hornick** for alleged inappropriate sexual contact with 5 women.

The archdiocese suspended Hornick in January 2011 after an allegation. Since then, 2 other women have come forward with accusations from when they were minors. Hornick served in Anchorage for more than 40 years.

The first accusation against him came in 1997, after which he was sent to a treatment facility. He could face criminal charges for the new accusations. *Source: Alaska Dispatch, 2-25-13*

Msgr. John Allard, pastor at St. Agatha and Precious Blood Catholic parishes in Woonsocket, **RI**, has acknowledged he abused a minor in 1981 and has resigned from both churches.

In a statement, the Diocese of Providence, apologized for the abuse. The male victim reportedly decided not to press charges, although the statute of limitations has expired. *Source: Valley Breeze, 2-25-13*

Dennis Druggan, president and rector of St. Lawrence Seminary High School in Mount Calvary, **WI**, has been removed from public ministry due to allegations of sexual misconduct involving a minor in Montana more than 25 years ago, according to a statement from the Capuchin Province of St. Joseph. A second complainant came forward after the initial complaint.

St. Lawrence is an all-male college preparatory boarding school with about 225 students. Druggan will be encouraged to live a life of prayer and penance in a suitable friary. *Source: Fond du Lac Reporter, 2-19-13*

Other

In the run-up to electing a pope to replace Benedict XVI, the Chicago-based Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests released a **“Dirty Dozen” list** of papal candidates SNAP considered the worst in terms of exposing corruption and working with victims of clergy sex abuse.

On the list was New York Cardinal **Timothy Dolan**, who headed the Milwaukee archdiocese from 2002-09. He was recently deposed about clergy sex abuse in the archdiocese’s bankruptcy case.

Dolan was joined on the list by Cardinals **Sean O’Malley** of Boston, **Donald Wuerl** of Washington, **Andres Rodriguez Maradiaga** of Honduras, **Norberto Rivera** of Mexico, **Marc Ouellet** of Canada, **Peter Turkson** of Ghana, **George Pell** of Australia, **Tarcisio Bertone** of Italy, **Angelo Scola** of Italy, **Leonardo Sandri** of Argentina and **Dominik Duka** of the Czech Republic.

“We want to urge Catholic prelates to stop pretending that the worst is over regarding the clergy sex abuse and cover-up crisis. Tragically, the worst is almost certainly ahead,” SNAP’s statement said. *Source: Journal Sentinel, 3-6-13*

Email: blackcollar@ffrf.org

Letterbox

France’s ‘Cartesian doubt’ attracted ‘Lifer’

Having been a subscriber for quite awhile and seeing your excellent work around the U.S., I’ve decided to become a Lifetime Member. Enclosed is a check for \$1,000.

Though I was born in Chicago and raised in a Catholic, conservative Republican family, I lost interest in going to church in my teens. But it wasn’t until I attended the University of Wisconsin-Madison (class of 1963) that my eyes were truly opened. I’m constantly reminded how proud I am of Madison — starting with the Vietnam War protests in the 1960s, then FFRF, The Onion, occupying the Capitol, etc.

My wife Mary (also a Chicagoan reared Catholic, all the way through to Loyola University) and I moved permanently to France in 1972. It wasn’t just the food that won us over, but the progressive social system and the Cartesian doubt the French were so free to express. We raised three children, none baptized. Only about 15% of French attend religious services regularly. The percentage of Catholic attendance is even lower.

I earned a Ph.D. in literature from the Sorbonne in 1980, and Mary and I have enjoyed teaching careers until our recent retirements.

Here’s wishing you all the best for your continuing good work to keep church and state separate.

John Long
France

Please help stop ‘IGWT’ (and my hand cramps)

I was so pleased to learn FFRF and Michael Newdow have filed a lawsuit against the U.S. Treasury to remove “In God We Trust” from our currency. This is something we must succeed at this time to uphold the First Amendment directive that our government cannot and should not endorse religion over nonreligion.

Having this on our currency and as the country’s official motto is not only blatantly unconstitutional, but is one of the most divisive actions ever taken by our federal government. (I’m also getting a hand cramp from having to blacken that out on my paper money!)

Please accept a donation for your legal fund to assist in this effort. Please let me know if there is anything our FFRF Metropolitan Chicago Chapter can do to help.

Tom Cara
President, FFRFMCC
Illinois

Sharing some wealth and Freethought Today

I’ve enclosed three checks: 1) Life Membership for Laurie Webre, \$1,000; 2) Life Membership for Hal Webre, \$1,000; 3) extra Freethought Today subscription. \$20. Laurie and I are pleased this year to be able to upgrade our memberships to Life status.

The extra subscription gives us an extra Freethought Today that we share or give away to friends or those who ask about FFRF. Keep up the good work.

Laurie and Hal Webre
Florida

Member embarks on worthwhile crusade

I expect to use my 2012 tax refund for one life membership — my own. Last year I added, by paying their first year’s dues, two new regular members. I am adding two more regular members this year, when I pay for my Life Membership. I can only afford one Life Membership, having just started a practice last May 1.

But I am determined to find two fellow atheists every year and introduce them to FFRF by paying their first year’s dues. It’s my own little membership crusade. I hope to see many of them, with my encouragement, become Life Members as well.

I have come to the conclusion that one can no more compartmentalize the irrationality of superstitious belief in one’s mind than one could compartmentalize a malignancy to one’s lungs.

The inescapable, unavoidable metastasis of irrationality to other aspects of one’s thinking — if one is truly able to swallow the bunkum of religion — affects one’s choices in politics, economics, relationships, health care choices, etc.

The premature death of our species is writ large in the foolishness of those who think salvation from a ghost is coming, and that a bad end, if obtained, is part of the plan of a deity who “loves” us.

As to the New Testament, I agree, it is the most widely sold, unread book in the world. My Christian friends are often surprised, both by my knowledge of the utter insanity of this cruel text and by the prevalence of writings by Paul — that miserable, misanthropic, misogynistic masochist who, like Jesus and God, is also likely merely mythical.

“I am mad as hell and I’m not going to take it any more,” as Paddy Chayefsky wrote in the movie “Network.” I refuse to let inanity go unanswered.

Thank you so much, Annie Laurie, Dan, all the staffers and fellow members and supporters of FFRF. I’m so glad I found you.

John Steinberg, M.D.
Maryland

What ‘childish things’ did Paul put away?

Re “Psalm 23:4 piques most online interest” [Jan/Feb13], I wish Christians would carefully analyze 1 Corinthians 13:11, their fifth-favorite biblical passage, in which St. Paul wrote, “When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.”

Reasonably, putting away childish things should include recognizing as ridiculous the notion that a snake spoke to a woman in her language (Genesis 3:1-6), or that a donkey spoke to a man in his language (Numbers 22:28-30).

The bible is replete with ridiculous stories that only innocent little children could be led to believe. Yet, although St. Paul never abandoned belief in such nonsense, he brags that as a man, he “put away childish things.”

If Paul were alive today, I’d like to ask him what childish things he put away.

David Quintero
California



Loom and doom

Ron Fredrickson, California, says his friend in Illinois noted this scene in Northbrook. Word play is certainly more fulfilling than word pray.

Missouri listeners love Freethought Radio

We’re now into our sixth month of airing Freethought Radio, and the response from our listeners continues to be overwhelmingly thumbs-up. Your show is rapidly becoming one of KOPN’s most popular additions. On March 3, our community celebrated KOPN’s 40th anniversary. Our station is the fifth-oldest community radio station in the U.S. and was the first to serve a population of under 100,000.

I’ve also recently inaugurated my own show, “The Skeptical Eye,” a program that looks at both science and pseudo-science.

Thanks for the great work, and for also joining our KOPN family at this incredible moment in our history. Our station manager, David Owens, also sends greetings.

John Betz
Board President, KOPN
Columbia, Mo.

Attorney Seidel’s help was indispensable

I am writing to acknowledge the outstanding effort and performance of Andrew Seidel, who recently assisted me with a complaint against Saint Johns River State College and its practice of handing out materials of a religious nature (the New Testament section of the bible) at our nursing pinning/graduation ceremonies.

While I happen to be a practicing Christian, Mr. Seidel appreciated my concerns regarding the separation of church and state, and he effectively and persuasively argued for the termination of the practice. He always took my calls or promptly responded to emails, and when I met personally with school administrators (as a current student, there was some level of concern regarding possible retribution), he coached me through those conversations and helped me to confidently pursue and bring the matter to a satisfactory conclusion.

He also wrote an articulate and convincing letter on my and FFRF’s behalf and called the college. Mr. Seidel is an asset to his profession and, I’ll presume, to your organization as well.

Maggie Arnold
Florida

A delusion, religion and a cult walk into a joke

Q: What’s the difference between a delusion, a cult and a religion?

A: The number of people involved.

John Fox
California

What lands a person on freethought calendar?

I enjoy looking over the freethought calendar every month. I cut that part out of the paper and keep it. That way when I am asked, “Name me one atheist who has ever amounted to anything,” I can hand them a book of names of famous people.

How does one qualify to have their name placed on the calendar? Does a person have to be an atheist or just someone who had ideas that are supported by and important to freethinkers?

I ask because as I look at the names every month, I notice names of people who I know are atheists. But other names are of people who are obviously not atheists.

Ronald Gardner
California

Editor’s note: Full documentation on the views of illustrious figures included in the monthly freethought calendar may be found at ffrf.org/news/day, which includes a short biography, freethought credentials and a quote. All freethinkers, atheist or not, are welcome in Freethought of the Day. Occasionally, when we have no freethinker’s birthday to feature, a believer’s relevant quote is featured. Sign up today to get this service delivered daily to your inbox.

Dad’s quote punctured bubble of faith

Re the Clergy Project panel article [March13] on the struggle of faith-free “pulpiters,” I promptly thought of a quote my father had pasted on the cover page of Joseph McCabe’s *A Rationalist Encyclopedia*:

“After my talk to a group of ministers in an Eastern city, one of them said to me, ‘When you said you had difficulty in reconciling some of the things we say and do with the teachings of Jesus, were you implying that some of us do not believe in God?’ Being only a layman I hesitated but did reply, ‘I had not meant to put it just that way, but since you ask it, yes, that is what I meant.’ I braced myself against denunciation for presuming to criticize a man of God. The shock was greater than I anticipated — and different! Looking around the circle of earnest men in the room, my questioner challenged, ‘Brother, you don’t know the half of it. At least a third of us do not



Interstate 25

“Praise gets stale when it needs to be imported,” writes Tom Walters, Colorado, about this big rig rolling near Longmont. “I’ve been told that anti-abortion messages of that size with pictures of aborted fetuses have also been seen on trucks along I-25. I guess they give Focus on the Family something to cheer about when they hit Colorado Springs.”

believe in God!’ And out of the utter silence that followed, not a man present lifted his voice in denial.”

It was attributed to Alfred P. Haake, a noted Ph.D. economist (source: *What’s Wrong with Religion*, by Karl B. Justus, a Protestant chaplain in the Pacific theater in World War II).

In my dad’s hand was written this quote: “He who feels punctured must have been a bubble.”

Right on, Bill Maher!

Stay as you are and keep super strong.

David Alspaugh
Wisconsin

Student activists appreciate support

My brother and I would like to thank FFRF for the very generous scholarship you offered us. We feel lucky not only to live in a place where religion is kept out of the public setting, but also where people are willing to fight to keep it that way.

It is an honor to receive your student activist scholarship, and we appreciate the support of the FFRF in protecting the separation of church and state in the future.

Mayan and Balen Essak
Wisconsin

Brainwashing children to hate ‘the browns’

You are all doing such great work. I’m doing all I can financially and in other ways to support you.

Historically, we always find poetry in the front lines alongside the brave enemies of repression. I was inspired after watching a TV special on religious brainwashing of children. I related it to my own experience as a child, remembering a time I was taken to church after we’d seen some news on the Middle East.

I asked a lady at church, otherwise very sweet and charming, about what I’d seen on the news. Her demeanor changed to one of vile disdain. “The browns” is what she called them, and her son piped right up as well with slurs about browns and gays. The adults looked at him with such pride and he smiled back, basking in their pleasure.

To Browns

You watch me proud as I coil cold, violent, bold—
To browns and all stepped forward, back, lain, or jumping—
My talons grow, my hatred flows—
To these I cannot possibly know.

They are breeding hate in their chil-

dren to a level they should not hope to overcome in adulthood.

Andrew Keahiolalo
Florida

Can we accommodate religion at times?

I learned something from the Jan/Feb13 issue, namely, the term “accommodationist.” From the context I take it to mean a freethinker who will generally tolerate any religious practice that does not too violently offend the principle of separation of church and state. Distributing bibles in public schools is clearly unacceptable.

On the other hand, such phenomena as the “National Christmas Tree” or the decoration of the White House in Christmas-y fashion, strike me as harmless and even rather attractive (though both are on federal property).

This brings me to my question: In freethought circles, is “accommodationist” understood to be a pejorative? Does it imply someone who is too willing to accept religious displays that a stricter interpreter might find offensive?

In general I support the policies of FFRF. However, there is the risk of falling into the same trap as religion and drawing one’s lines too narrowly.

David M. Shea
Maryland

Editor’s note: The word makes me see red and Neville Chamberlain with an umbrella. (Kidding, sort of.) People no doubt line up at different points along the continuum, but one thing tends to be true: Give the persecuted (in their own minds) theocrats an inch, and they’ll take a mile. Most secularists are merely asking for a level playing field.

Executive editor’s note: FFRF has never sued over an x-mas tree. If they put a cross on it, that would be different. “Accommodation” has legal import, and FFRF examines each complaint on a case-by-case basis. The vast majority of our legal letters deal with proselytizing by public schools and government bodies. We have a record 12 ongoing lawsuits all of substance. See ffrf.org/legal/challenges/ongoing-lawsuits.

Popeless to smokeless: downright hapless

On March 13, the world was popeless. Was the very survival of our planet hopeless? Then, to the rescue, the cardinals conclave! It suddenly seemed, the world would be saved! They made a decision and then they white-smoked us! And then, Pope Francis, came out and spoke to us.

Those in the Vatican, mostly, had stayed. They genuflected and prayed and prayed. The Earth, now secure, is

no longer popeless, and, the conclave stove is once again smokeless.

Richard W. Fletcher
Texas

Glad FFRF challenging mountaintop Jesus

Two weeks ago, we were skiing at Big Mountain outside Whitefish, Mont. You couldn’t imagine my surprise when I started off on the first run of the day and was met by a big frickin’ Jesus statue. I couldn’t believe my eyes. So the next time down, I stopped and took a good look. There was also a sign there, and I think it said it was placed by the Knights of Columbus (who else?) and dedicated to veterans (apparently they didn’t ask me!).

I wondered at the time if FFRF knew about this and couldn’t remember seeing anything about it in Freethought Today. But then there have been so many violations it’s easy to lose track. Then my latest edition arrived and you (still) couldn’t imagine my surprise upon seeing the article that not only do you know about this but are fighting to have it removed. Bravo! This monstrosity has no place or business being there. I don’t need Jesus looking over me while skiing or any other time.

J.E. Hill
Washington

Reader weighs in on firmly packed pound

Thank you for publishing Al “The Pie Man” Schneider’s letter [March13] pointing out that a pound of brown sugar is the same regardless of whether it is firmly packed. It demonstrates perhaps the best trait shared by most freethinkers: the ability to look with fresh eyes at routinely accepted and repeated “truths” or instructions.

Yes, it makes a difference if a volume measure (such as a cup) is packed or loose, but a weight measure (in this case, a pound) is indeed identical whether it is compressed or fluffy. It’s akin to people who get red-faced insisting a ton of lead weighs more than a ton of feathers.

We need more people in this world who see with fresh eyes and scan everything they are told, even little details (where god is supposed to be), with a “Really?”

Joan Reisman-Brill
New York

Evangelicals’ target: knitting community

Unbelievable: I received a promotional email from Vogue Knitting magazine in which they invite me to donate to World Vision, an *evangelical* aid organization (that partners with mind-control bible cults like Xenos Christian Fellowship).

Can’t I be involved with a freaking knitting magazine without being solicited by evangelicals? Geesh. It’s everywhere!

Kathy Bonham
Ohio

Religious rigidity breeds intolerance

Social psychology holds to be a human universal, the tendency to reject anything that challenges the validity of your beliefs, and instead to protect and defend what you believe even

when confronted with evidence that it is wrong. The result is cognitive rigidity and a deep need to deny that one holds erroneous beliefs or has done something stupid or wrong.

This is true of all beliefs but it seems particularly pertinent to religious beliefs. Most religious adherents will not even listen to anything that challenges their beliefs and will demonize any who try to offer conflicting ideas.

This is a result of cultural indoctrination or as some call it, brainwashing. We, in the U.S. are doing it, and it is working its way into our political landscape in a dangerous way. The Muslim world, through the aggressive support of the Saudis, is doing an even better job of it than we are. The result is an ever increasing populace ready to do anything to further its own brand of religious intolerance.

Dale Oliver
Texas

Study: Religion helps ‘rationalize’ crime

As per the March 10 New York Daily News, a study in the academic journal Theoretical Criminology suggests that far from causing offenders to repent of their sins, religious instruction might actually encourage crime.

The author surveyed 48 hardcore offenders in the Atlanta area to determine what effect religion may have on their behavior. They learned that the criminals “seemed to go out of their way to reconcile their belief in God with their serious predatory offending. They frequently employed elaborate and creative rationalizations in the process and actively exploit religious doctrine to justify their crimes.”

As the authors noted, many of those surveyed used their understanding of faith to justify their own criminal behavior. Some quotes from the God-fearing deviants, including murderers:

- “God has to forgive everyone, even if they don’t believe in him.”
- “Jesus knows I ain’t have no choice, you know? He know I have a decent heart. He know I’m stuck in the hood and just doing what I gotta do to survive.”
- “Like if I go rob a dope dealer or molester or something, then it don’t count against me because It’s like I’m giving punishment to them for Jesus. That’s God’s will. Oh, you molested some kid? Well now, I’m sending Cool over to get your ass.”

The authors conclude “there is reason to believe that these rationalizations and justifications may play a criminogenic role in their decision making.”

I guess most Americans would say, well, at least these young men aren’t atheists. Then they might really be dangerous!

Dennis Middlebrooks
New York

Religious oaths seem clearly unconstitutional

Thanks to David Hansell from Wisconsin for his March letter to the editor pointing out the obvious hypocrisy of the swearing-in ceremony in which the president swears to uphold the constitution (including separating church and state) while keeping his hand on the bible and saying “so help me God.”

After reading the letter, I couldn’t stop wondering why this public oath is supposedly constitutional. Is the very

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Letterbox

Continued from previous page
act of keeping the hand on the bible during the oath not clearly violating the Establishment Clause? The bible, as a Christian symbol, sends an unquestioned message. The phrase “so help me God” only reinforces the religious context.

How come we can stop prayers at football games, remove bible-pushing from public schools, etc., but we allow the highest of all elected officials to exercise religious rituals during one of the most public events paid by our tax dollars? Are there no grounds for legal actions prohibiting the use of religious symbols and phrases during public oath ceremonies?

Lukas Steinke
South Carolina

Editor’s note: FFRF very publicly contacted President Barack Obama after the election, asking him to follow the oath or affirmation in the Constitution, which has no reference to a bible or “so help me God.” FFRF was party in 2008 to a federal lawsuit brought by Michael Newdow to enforce to secular oath and to stop inaugural prayer. The suit was thrown out. FFRF has contacted every president-elect since its formation in 1976, reminding them of the secular oath/affirmation.

Members may sign up to receive news releases and Action Alerts via their online Membership Profile or by emailing info@ffrf.org (asking to receive such alerts). Freedom depends on (activist) freethinkers!

What do you say to a muddled thinker?

A recent Huffington Post article [by physicist Max Tegmark, “Religion, Science and the Attack of the Angry Atheists”] resulted in an interesting dialogue between two commentators, the religious one ending the banter with this: “If you believe god doesn’t exist without proof, that’s faith as well.”

FFRF is my go-to for responses to such blather; any suggestions for a response to that one?

Mark Kelley
California

Editor’s note: Andrew Seidel, FFRF’s go-to “skeptician,” says, “This looks like a job for Bertrand Russell’s celestial teapot. It is impossible to prove a negative, but that does not mean the conclusion that something does not exist rests on no evidence. Nobody can disprove that a teapot orbits Earth, controls the tides and created each species. But there is no evidence to suggest such teapot exists. Moreover, we have mountains of scientific evidence to show that the moon’s gravitational pull controls the tides and that evolution is responsible for speciation. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that the teapot idea is ridiculous. It does not require a leap of faith, only an application of logic.

“The same applies to the idea of god. There is no evidence to suggest a god exists, and science provides excellent answers based on evidence to many of our questions. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that no god exists without any use of faith.”

‘You’ve never heard the word atheist?’

Last evening I received a call from a pollster concerning opinions on same-

sex marriage in Illinois, which is close to passing such a law. The young man asked all the usual questions: educational level, sex, years living in Illinois, age, etc. Of course, I told him that I didn’t feel it was anyone’s business except for the married couple.

Then, amazingly, he asked me my religion, and I said atheist. He paused a second. “Never heard of that,” he said.

I said, “Oh come on, with all the information out there on the Internet? Man, you must be teasing me. You sound like a young man. Pollsters are fairly intelligent people, probably above average, and you’re telling me you’ve never heard the word atheist?”

“No sir, I haven’t.”

I couldn’t believe my ears. We are in for a long haul.

Joseph Cunningham
Illinois

Hard to see how God’s not a fraud

I have been thinking a lot about the Newtown, Conn., killings and need a little help. It’s been reported that many people have “turned to God” in the aftermath of the tragedy in an attempt to understand it and to offer well-intentioned prayers of support for the victims and their families.

However, the “God” of Christianity, Judaism and Islam (take your pick) is supposed to be omniscient, which means that he/she is the possessor of infinite knowledge and wisdom. Therefore, I would have to assume that “God” was fully aware of the tragic event that took place on Dec. 14 before it happened.

I can think of only four possible reasons why this horrible event did, in fact, happen:

- “God” knew what was about to happen but was powerless to prevent it.
- “God” knew what was about to happen and could have prevented it but chose not to.
- “God” not only knew what was about to happen but actually caused it to happen (despite the fact that 28 people lost their lives, Pat Robertson can give you many reasons why this might be so).
- There is no “God,” and we can attribute the tragedy to the inconceivable actions of a mentally ill person who had access to weapons of mass destruction.

I have trouble understanding how any rational person can believe in options 1, 2 or 3. Obviously, prayers to an impotent and powerless “God” (option 1) could never be answered, and who could possibly worship the “God” of options 2 or 3?

What am I missing here? And please, do not resort to the “ye of little faith” or “works in mysterious ways” copouts, which only allow one to comfortably avoid using the intelligence with which they were born.

I choose option 4, with the hope that we (society) can work tirelessly, by whatever pragmatic and humane means necessary, to prevent such tragedies in the future.

Howard J. Horton Jr.
North Carolina

FFRF co-sponsors UW-Madison freethought event

Atheists, Humanists and Agnostics @ UW-Madison organized and hosted Freethought Festival 2 on the University of Wisconsin campus March 8-10. Co-sponsors were the Freedom From Religion Foundation, Secular Student Alliance and Center for Inquiry.



FFRF Co-President Dan Barker spoke at the festival and at a rainy rally at the State Capitol. He’s rousing the crowd with “This is what an atheist looks like!”



Freethought on the move
The Atheist Pride Parade, part of Freethought Festival 2 at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, wends its way down State Street on March 9 toward the Atheist Pride Rally at the State Capitol.



FFRF Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel (right) visited with attendees after his presentation “The Greatest Story Ever Sold: America’s Judeo-Christian Heritage.”



Staff Attorney Elizabeth Cavell (left) visits with festival browsers at FFRF’s informational table.



Ann Arbor, Mich.

“Did Jesus Rise From the Dead?” was the title of Dan Barker’s presentation March 11 at the University of Michigan. It was organized by the Secular Student Alliance chapter. From left, back, are Jon, Lucas, Destin, Dan Barker, Alex, Niki, Mary, (front) Forrest, Britney, Monica Harmsen (chapter president), Rachel and Chris.

Dan goes to college



Happy 87th, Joe!

FFRF Officer Joseph Cunningham, Illinois, holding his treasured “Unsaved” mug, turned 87 years young on April 8. He planned to celebrate with a visit from his children, who live on the West Coast and arrived in time “to see the millions of blooming daffodils I have been planting along Highway 4’s steep banks so they will show up better. I planted a few hundred thousand over the past 25 years, but now with the multiplying effect, there are millions. This the best ‘life after death’ thing I could think of.” Freethought Today sends birthday wishes to Joe and best wishes to his wife, Norma, who is 95 and in a nursing home. Both Joe and Norma have been longtime officers and are retired teachers.



New Orleans

FFRF Co-President Dan Barker spoke Feb. 22 on “Morality: What’s God Got To Do With It?” at the University of New Orleans. The event was sponsored by the New Orleans Secular Humanist Association (NOSHA). Freethinkers gathered afterward for dinner at the home of NOSHA President Emeritus Harry Greenberger (standing at left). Standing next to him is William Gatreaux. Charlotte Klasson (seated, middle) is current NOSHA president. Connie Gordon (with glasses, left of Charlotte) is NOSHA treasurer. Jim Dugan (glasses, behind and to Dan’s left) is vice president. Chad Matise is next to Jim. Dave Schultz (with cup) is on Dan’s right.

The answer is ‘not bloody likely’

FFRF Co-President Dan Barker gave a presentation titled “Did Jesus Really Rise From the Dead?” Feb. 21 at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge. The event was organized by Atheists, Humanists and Agnostics at LSU. From left, front, are Chad Thibodeaux (AHA president), Dan Barker, Athena Lietzau, (standing) Ellen Farrar, Dennis Kendelbacher, Kyle Aycock, Victoria Thompson, Taylor Simon (vice president) and Jack Holloway (treasurer).



University of Southern Mississippi

FFRF Co-President Dan Barker talked about “Losing Faith in Faith” (his personal story of moving from preacher to atheist) Feb. 23 at the University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg. The event was sponsored by the Secular Student Alliance at USM. The crowd was pleased to hear from Dan that “Hattiesburg” anagrams to “Atheistburg.” From left are Caleb Dykes, Joshua Smith, Scott Jones, Nathan McNair, Laura Yurka, Chaz Burrows, Emma Strong, Dan Barker, Matthew Lance and Melanie Green.

Central Michigan University

FFRF Co-President Dan Barker spoke March 10 in Mount Pleasant, Mich., about his background and the Foundation’s work. The event was organized by the Dogma-Free Society at CMU. Society President Cory Kinne is at Dan’s right.



FFRF on the road

FFRF Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor with outgoing Grand Valley Secular Alliance student director Ellen Lundgren, at a March 14 speech before the student club on the campus of the Grand Valley State University, Allendale, Michigan. For Women’s History Month, Annie Laurie was asked to talk about “The harm of religion to women.” Ellen is graduating this spring with a degree in graphic design, and will be working with the Secular Student Alliance this summer.



Mobile, Alabama

FFRF Co-President Dan Barker debated Catholic theologian Robert Fastiggi (bottom, right) Feb. 24 on the question “Is Religion A Positive Force For Society?” The Secular Student Alliance at the University of South Alabama organized the event.



Shelley Segal’s signature freethought song is “I Don’t Believe in Fairies.”

The Freedom From Religion Foundation will host its 36th annual national convention on the last weekend in September at the Concourse Hotel, 1 West Dayton St., in downtown Madison, Wis.

Jill Sobule and **Julia Sweeney** will team up for a delightful set that mixes witty songwriting with witty repartee and social commentary. Author, playwright, actress and comedian Sweeney (“Letting Go of God”) intersperses comedic improv and stories in between songs by Sobule, who wrote the title song for Sweeney’s DVD, “Letting Go of God.”

“Saturday Night Live” alum Sweeney has a new book, *If It’s Not One Thing, It’s Your Mother*, on parenting and being parented.

Sobule broke new ground in 1995 when her recording “I Kissed a Girl” was the first Top 40 hit to deal with overtly gay themes. Known for fanciful storytelling and satire, she’s releasing a new album with the string quartet Ethel. She also writes commentary on Huffington Post.

Also entertaining will be Australia’s freethinking and talented young songstress and singer **Shelley Segal**, who accompanies herself on guitar. Segal sang at the Reason Rally and has released a freethought CD, “An Atheist Album.” Her signature freethought song, “I Don’t Believe in Fairies,” makes a cameo on FFRF’s new musical CD “Adrift on a Star,” featuring Dan Barker and friends. **FFRF Co-President Dan Barker** will also entertain at the piano and

‘Jill & Julia Show’ to open event

36th national FFRF confab
Sept. 27-29 in Madison



Julia Sweeney (left) and Jill Sobule will enlighten and entertain FFRF convention attendees.

team up with Shelley for a few songs.

Honored with the first Richard and Beverly Hermesen Student Activist Award of \$5,000 will be 19-year-old **Zack Kopplin**, a Louisiana student activist who’s made national news in his work to repeal a stealth creationism law in his home state. His repeal effort has been endorsed by 43 Nobel laureates, among others. Zack persuaded the New Orleans City Council to vote unanimously to support repeal of the Louisiana Science Education Act of 2008. He appeared in March on “The Bill Moyers Show.” He’s a sophomore history major at Rice University.

Receiving a Freethought Heroine Award will be mystery writer **Sara Paretsky**, an ardent supporter of separation of state and church and women’s

reproductive rights and creator of the famous V.I. Warshawski detective series, which revolutionized the mystery world.

Paretsky took ill just before FFRF’s 2012 Portland conference and will be accepting her award a year late. Her memoir, *Writing in an Age of Silence*, chronicles her journey from Kansas farm-girl to New York Times bestseller, and includes social commentary.

Jemila Bey worked for a decade as producer and editor at National Public Radio on such shows as “Morning Edition,” “All Things Considered” and “Talk of the Nation.” She hosts the weekly radio show, “The Sex, Politics and Religion Hour: SPAR with Jamila,” airing on AM 1390 in Washington, D.C., and AM 1430 in New York City.

A stand-up comedienne, Bey says she enjoys the stage because it’s a cheaper hobby than scrapbooking. She’s currently working on a book that critically examines the role religion plays in the lives of African-American women. She frequently writes and lectures on state/church and religious issues.

The convention will celebrate the 65th anniversary of the landmark *Mc-*

Collum v. Board of Education decision by the U.S. Supreme Court by airing the Peabody Award-winning documentary

“The Lord Is Not on Trial Here Today,” directed by **Jay Rosenstein**, and with an appearance

from Lifetime Member **Jim McCollum**. Jim was previously named an FFRF “Champion of the First Amendment.”

Rooms may be booked now at the Concourse for the convention rate of \$149 plus tax single, double, triple and quadruple. Phone 800-356-8293 toll-free or 608-257-6000 locally, or register online indicating you are with the Freedom From Religion Foundation room block. The registration number to verify the room block is **211725**.

The event will include an afternoon social reception with plentiful hors d’oeuvres on Friday, early registration and FFRF staff workshop presentations (attorneys and media). The convention formally opens at 7 p.m. Friday (concluding with a complimentary cake reception) and continues through Saturday night.

Two optional group meals are offered, the Saturday Non-Prayer Breakfast and the banquet dinner. Friday dinner and Saturday lunch are on your own. The membership and Board of Director meetings take place Sunday morning (just to be sacrilegious), adjourning by noon.

Plan ahead and book now to avoid disappointment! Register online: ffrf.org/outreach/convention

Menu

The Saturday Non-Prayer Breakfast is the plated Classic Breakfast: scrambled eggs with roasted breakfast potatoes, bacon, seasonal fruit cup, juice, coffee and tea and chef’s pastry basket. Vegetarian option is broiled tomato instead of bacon. Vegan and gluten-free will receive chef’s choice version. The cost is \$20, including 20% gratuity and 5.5% sales tax.

The Saturday Banquet Dinner will be a choice of traditional breast of turkey, salmon or seasonal ravioli. The turkey is accompanied by andouille corn bread stuffing, whipped potatoes, cranberry relish and smoked apple-giblet gravy.

The vegetarian ravioli is filled with sautéed squash. The atlantic salmon (farmed) includes roasted red potatoes with asiago, and lemon-creamed spinach.

Entrées include fresh bakery breads, coffee and hot and iced tea, garden greens and chocolate roulade cake. Saturday dinner is \$35, including gratuity and tax.

Freedom From Religion Foundation
36th Annual National Convention
Sept. 27–29, 2013

Concourse Hotel
1 W. Dayton St.
Madison, Wisconsin



No. registering

- _____ FFRF Member registration(s) @ \$65 per person \$ _____
- _____ Non-member spouse or companion accompanying member @ \$70 .. \$ _____
- _____ Non-member registration(s) @ \$110 \$ _____
(or join for \$40, save \$5!)
- _____ Student registration(s) @ \$25 \$ _____
- _____ Saturday Non-Prayer Breakfast @ \$20* per person \$ _____
_____ Classic _____ Classic Vegetarian _____ Vegan/gluten-free
- _____ Saturday Night Dinner @ \$45* per person \$ _____
_____ Chicken _____ Salmon _____ Vegetarian _____ Vegan

If gluten-free, please specify.

* Meal prices include 20% gratuity and 5.5% sales tax

Total enclosed \$ _____

Make checks payable to “FFRF” or register online: ffrf.org/outreach/convention

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

Name(s)

Please include names of all registrants for nametags

Address

City/State/Zip

Phone/e-mail (in case we have a question about your registration)