

NYC ATHEISTS INC.



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AN AFFILIATE OF AMERICAN ATHEISTS

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KENNETH BRONSTEIN

I have been deeply troubled by the current Republican primary campaign. All of the leading Republican candidates wave the religious banner and are saying that they would use a pro-life litmus test for all their future appointees. To top it off, Evangelical Christian leaders have voted to support a candidate they judged "the most religious"--the devout Catholic, Rich Santorum. Since when was "most religious" one of the qualities we have sought in a president?

We've obviously come a long way from the intentions of our Founding Fathers. America's historic journey from being a new experiment in democracy after we cut the umbilical cord with England to today's muddled, co-opted, diluted democracy, has been a path scattered with the sticks and stones of any uncharted road. But let's acknowledge that it began with great hopes and expectations, and that in 1776, we were the new hope of the worldwide revolutionary movement toward enfranchising every man and eliminating the strongholds of monarchies, aristocracies and czardoms that claimed to have been put in place by god.

Major Tyrannies: King and Church

There was a time when the Christianity ruled Europe and people were forced to comply with government-enforced religion. That time was known as the Dark Ages. Religious sects fought with one another, each claiming to be god's true word. Tyranny ruled, often hand in hand with a state church, as in England, or with the more pervasive, murderous, witch-burning Vatican.

People who wanted to escape tyranny deluged our American shores before and after our revolution. They were seeking to escape the two biggest kinds of tyranny in Europe: the monarchies and the state churches. Some of our Founding Fathers had lived in Europe and knew all too well about Christian cruelty, oppression of the people and suppression of freedoms. So when our

PRESIDENT'S "SERMON"

GOD'S MAFIA

RELIGION, GOVERNMENT, MILITARY, RIGHT WING POLITICS, CAPITALISM

Founding Fathers hammered out a constitution for a new, experimental, democratic and free American government, our forward-looking Founders were determined to eliminate both kinds of tyrannies. The United States, they decided, would never, ever, have a monarch or a state church.



Rejected: "King" George Washington

That Constitution has become the basis and foundation of our America. We have never had a monarchy ruling on our shores. (Although it was said that our first president, George Washington, was at first offered a kingship. He declined, proving he was a lot smarter than his advocacy of wooden teeth would indicate.) The U.S. Constitution does not mention god anywhere, and the First Amendment to the Bill of Rights clearly states that church and state are to be separate.

We're Not a Christian Nation: Proof

Besides the Constitution, there is another historical document that we can rely on to prove that the United States was established as a non-Christian state: The 1796 Treaty with Tripoli, which states unequivocally that "As the government of the United States was not in any sense founded on the Christian religion..."



Map of Tripoli

This treaty, written during the presidency of George Washington and signed during the presidency of John Adams, got unanimous ratification from the U.S. Senate on June 7, 1797, and became effective as the law of the land on June 10, 1797. So there it is, in black and white

in our historical documents, and no matter how much Newt Gingrich or Rick Perry may insist that the U.S. is a “Christian nation,” they are--technically, historically and legally--utterly wrong.

Religion Sneaking Into Government

Even though religion has, for all intents and purposes, failed in its objective to establish a state religion in America, it has never ceased trying to infiltrate all levels of our government and has indeed succeeded in many subtle--and not so subtle--ways.

For example, religion has successfully planted its “Chaplain agents” in all levels of our government, the military and even in the nonmilitary uniformed services such as the police department, the fire department and more recently, even the sanitation departments of cities. Some critics of this practice have suggested that the Chaplains are placed there to remind workers of the universal presence of religion rather than, as religionists insist, to minister to the religious needs of our uniformed workers.

Religious invocations have become common at government events, and we are accustomed to hearing politicians, including our president, end their speeches with “god bless America.” In our courthouses, religion has cornered the swearing-in and oath rituals, and courthouse walls are covered at every turn with the “in god we trust” type of signage. More recently, religion has been offering their churches as polling places--a formidable turn of events if you consider that the subliminal message is: “*god is watching you vote.*”

1930s Depression Shakes Up Wealthy

But even more egregious inroads by religion into our government occurred in the vulnerable 1930s at the time of the Great Depression, when, as stocks fell, Big Business lost its benevolent image, unemployment became epidemic and even middle-class Americans waited in soup-kitchen lines. There was fear in wealthy circles that capitalism would be overthrown in America. It was only two decades past the overthrow of the Czar in Russia, and the possibility of revolution by the impoverished and downtrodden still hung in the air.



A recent article in the *New York Times*, titled “*For God So Loved the 1 Percent...*” by Princeton historian Kevin Kruse highlights this important period of American history, the Great Depression: “Corporate leaders worked frantically to try to restore their public image and to simultaneously roll back what they called ‘the creeping socialism’ of the welfare state”—the reforms put

in place by Democratic President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

To counteract this so-called “creeping socialism,” corporate leaders founded the “American Liberty League,” financed by corporations like DuPont and General Motors. Writes Kruse: “Realizing that they needed to rely on others, these businessmen took a new tack: using generous financing to enlist sympathetic clergymen as their champions. After all, according to one tycoon, polls showed that, ‘of all the groups in America, ministers had more to do with molding public opinion’ than any other.”

god Makes You Rich or Poor

Leading the way, and championing this new union of religion and free enterprise, was the Rev. James W. Fifield, pastor of the elite First Congregational Church of Los Angeles. “The blessings of capitalism come from god,” Rev. Fifield preached.



Rev. James W. Fifield

Throughout the 1930s and 40s, Rev. Fifield and his allies advanced a new blend of conservative religion, economics and politics. Eventually, Fifield distilled his ideology into a simple but powerful phrase—“Freedom under god.”

With financial support from corporate patrons and business lobbies like the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Rev. Fifield’s gospel of godly capitalism soon spread across the country through personal lectures, weekly radio broadcasts and a monthly magazine. The “Freedom under god” propaganda campaign bought full-page newspaper ads and a national radio program “trumpeting the connection between faith and free enterprise.”



In 1951, the “Freedom under god” campaign culminated in a huge 4th of July celebration with former Republican President Herbert Hoover and General Douglas MacArthur headlining the conservative all-stars. In 1953, President Dwight Eisenhower presided over the first presidential prayer breakfast on a “government under God” theme. In 1954, at the height of the Cold War, as this “under-god” theme continued to sweep the nation, Congress formally added the phrase “under god” to the Pledge of Allegiance.

And so, almost unobtrusively, it became established:

god's Mafia, consisting of Religion, the Military (represented by Generals Douglas MacArthur and Eisenhower), Right Wing Politics and capitalism, working hand in glove, scratching each other's backs.

Religion Paid Off

Though the religious Mafia may have started with a few capitalists using what Kruse calls "generous financing to enlist sympathetic clergymen as their champions"--or what I call the initial payoff-- it moved on to use paid advertising on radio and in newspapers and magazines, interjected itself into right-wing politics and finally infiltrated our government, as evidenced by the formal recognition of the "under god" theme in our Pledge of Allegiance.

All of this was financed by the 1% of the richest corporate heads in the nation. Think of how many hungry people that money could have fed! Instead, it

was used to prolong the tyranny of richest 1% of our country. The hungry were fed religious propaganda that propped up the ruling class of our country.

For me, the worst crime of god's Mafia is the flouting of the American Constitution and the use of religion to prop up capitalism.

If you ever wonder why Atheists are so reviled by the bourgeoisie of this country, remember that our secular philosophy threatens to topple the religious pillars that buttress the economy, the military, right wing politics and the corporate world in our nation.

Atheism's truths, so ordinary to us, are revolutionary to the coalition of religion and capitalism in America. We symbolize a Brave New World of the future and our opponents fear that it may not have any use for god's Mafia. □



White House



Senate & House

REASON RALLY - MARCH 24, 2012 (SATURDAY) WASHINGTON D.C. – NATIONAL MALL Reason Rally

The Reason Rally is sponsored by many of the country's largest and most influential secular organizations. It will be free to attend and will take place in Washington, D.C. on March 24, 2012 from 10:00 AM – 4:00 PM at the National Mall.

NYC Atheists will set up transportation at special rates.

AMERICAN ATHEISTS CONVENTION, MARCH 25-26, 2012 WWW.ATHEISTS.ORG

The Annual Convention of American Atheists will be held March 25th and 26th, 2012 (following the Reason Rally) at the Bethesda North Marriott and Convention Center in Bethesda, MD.

This year's theme: "Come out! Come out! Wherever you Are!" will feature Richard Dawkins and P.Z. Myers.

Purchase convention tickets: WWW.ATHEISTS.ORG

LOBBY DAY FOR REASON (FRIDAY) March 23, 2012 Hyatt Regency Washington - 400 New Jersey Avenue - NW Washington, DC Lobby Day for Reason | Secular Coalition for America

The Secular Coalition for America will host the Lobby Day for Reason, an event to allow atheists, agnostics, humanists, and secular Americans to directly lobby their members of Congress on the issues that matter to us. 8:30 AM - 4:30 PM (approx.)

Supreme Court Decision on Church Employees Misses the Mark



By Ron Widelec

The Supreme Court recently ruled in the case of Hosanna-Tabor Church v. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. The court held that religious institutions have the right to dismiss any employee for any reason, as long as that employee serves some ministerial function. The employee in question in this case was a teacher at a religious school. She was trained in some theology and served some ministerial purpose at the school. Her title was known as a "called teacher," meaning that she was called into service by a higher power.

The High Court is absolutely right in saying that the First Amendment protects the right of a religious institution to determine who they want to employ to disseminate their message. That certainly includes priests, pastors, rabbis and other clergy, but can easily be extended to include teachers in a religious setting. A religious organization cannot practice its religion freely if the government steps into the process of determining who can and cannot spread the 'word.' On this issue, the separation of Church and State could not be more clear.

Excuse to Fire Disabled?

That being said, the Supreme Court wrongly applied this

principle in the case above. Although the employee in question here was a "called teacher" involved in some religious activities, she was not fired because of her inability to do her job, nor any theological problem in her teaching. She was fired because she developed a disability and needed some time off. When she was ready to return to work, she found out that she had been (illegally) replaced. When she complained about this, she was officially terminated. This is a clear example of a situation that is not covered by the Separation of Church and State.

Allows Unfair Treatment

There are limits to what a religious institution can do under the First Amendment. Freedom of religion does not give religious organization the protection to trample on the rights of others. Correction: It didn't, until now. This court decision opens the door for any kind of unfair treatment of employees by religious institutions that would otherwise be illegal.

It is one thing to allow church groups to pick their own ministers but it is quite another to allow church groups to hide behind this protection in order to discriminate against a disabled individual. □



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Editor's Q and A

Is Religion Destroying Our Democracy?



Jane Everhart

Dear Editor,

You were obviously tee'd off by the news that a huge conclave of Evangelical religious leaders gathered in Texas in January to decide which Republican candidate they will back in the presidential campaign. Surely you knew that this kind of unity to promote the evangelical agenda has been going on for a long time. In fact, the evangelical fundamentalists were said to be largely responsible for the election of George W. Bush, the worst president we have ever had.

--Fred from Flatbush

Dear Fred,

You are referring to the January 7 article in the *New York Times* headlined "*Evangelicals Step Up Efforts to Unite on an Alternative to Romney*," and its message did indeed arouse my ire.

That powwow of Evangelists in Texas in January was attended by such Christian right-wing leaders as the heads of the conservative "Focus on the Family" group and "The American Family Association," both ultra-right-wing religious fronts. These evangelicals announced that they were going to support Rick Santorum for president on the Republican ticket because, they say, he is the most religious candidate.

I have been aware, on some level, that this kind of religious get-together by evangelical Christians, with the purpose of imposing their will on American voters, has been going on for decades, but it has only recently become a personal family thing for me. My daughter Brook, who lives in Colorado, became a born-again Christian a few years ago and joined an Evangelical church, the Assemblies of God. Surprisingly, she *left* the church during the last presidential election because, she says, of its strong-armed coercion of members to vote Republican.

To quote my daughter precisely (from a taped interview last March for this newsletter), she said:

"During the Obama campaign, the fundamentalists came down hard. We must vote Republican! The pastor made it clear that we should vote Republican. And I felt so

much the opposite! If Jesus walked on this earth today, He would not be a Republican. Republicans are basically out for themselves. Democrats are the opposite. And Jesus was very community oriented. So it really ticked me off that we were told to vote Republican. I felt like writing to somebody, somewhere: Why can't a Christian be a Democrat?"

Religion Controls Red States

Well, Reader, of course a Christian can legally be a Democrat but obviously a Democrat would be a pariah in this Colorado church. Multiply that kind of pastoral coercion many times over in churches all over the country--in Mississippi and Missouri and Georgia and Alabama--and you can see how religion controls the "red states" on TV's voters map. Apparently the pastors of these churches are very good at convincing their parishioners to vote against their own best interests.

And there's the rub: Blue-collar voters in the red states are indeed voting against their own best interests. Recently, Michael Kinsley, a columnist for *Bloomberg View*, did a page-one review in *The New York Times Book Review* of a new book titled, "*Pity the Billionaire: The Hard-Times Swindle and Unlikely Comeback of the Right*," by Thomas Frank. In his review, Kinsley writes:

"...working people continue to be duped into supporting measures manifestly against their own self interest. Author Thomas Frank has attributed this to a clever bait-and-switch by conservatives, who appeal to middle-and lower-class voters on the basis of social issues like abortion and gays in the military, and values like patriotism and religion. And then they govern on the agenda of traditional Republican groups like businessmen and bankers."

A Perversion of Democracy

What I am asking is: If religion can coerce people to vote against their own best interests, isn't that a perversion of democracy? I have always understood that our forefathers' idea of democracy was one person, one vote. They apparently didn't conceive of the possibility that an ultra-right religious sect could deliver flocks of votes for their selected candidate.

I call that politics by persuasion. It may give the appearance of democracy but it is actually religious pressure on the voter to go through the motions of democratic selection of a representative. And don't underestimate the power of the pressure put on the religious voter to vote "the way god wants you to vote." (How do you know what god wants? The pastors will tell you!)

And so our citizens are led like sheep to the slaughter--sometimes literally to the slaughter if you consider religious sects like Jim Jones' group in Guyana or Heaven's Gate, both of which persuaded their followers to kill themselves. Reader, if you can get people to kill themselves for religion, getting people to simply vote for religion is a piece of cake.

Use & Abuse of Electoral Process

The weapons that religion uses for its political coercion are other-worldly: If you don't vote for the selected candidate, you will be punished for eternity, lose favor with god, suffer disaffection from your religious community or, worst case scenario, hellfire and brimstone. Wouldn't you vote for a George W. Bush if you believed it could save you an eternity of misery in the afterlife?

"Brainwashing" is too facile a term for the thought manipulation that the religionists do to get their followers to vote against their own best interests. The thought-conditioning that religionists engage in starts with the elementary schools (which is why they want to control local school boards), and it imbues the populace with the idea that it is *not* okay to criticize religion, that the religionists have a right to practice thought control under the guise of Christian philosophy and that it's their "freedom" to do so under the U.S. Constitution, which says "Congress shall make no law respecting an

establishment of religion or *prohibiting the free exercise thereof.*"

This guaranteed "free exercise" of religion makes it the only arena where you can do crazy things like handle poisonous rattlesnakes, speak in tongues or communicate with invisible beings and they do not find it necessary to put you in a strait jacket or cart you off to psychiatry.

I contend that religious leaders have learned how to use and abuse the American electoral process to aim toward their ultimate goal: control of our government. They do it through manipulating our democracy in ways that would make Tammany Hall politicos blush, and they do it without doling out bribes or strong-arming. When god is the poll watcher, Evangelical parishioners will vote for the "right" guy.

Theocracy by Any Other Name

Who needs a blatant theocracy when every senator and representative in our Congress knuckles under to religion? Who needs an undisguised theocracy when the president himself bows to religious concepts? When our entire House of Representatives overwhelmingly votes that "In god We Trust" is our national motto? When certain leaders claim unequivocally that the U.S. is a "Christian nation?"

Reader, I've got news for you: Theocracy is already here. It has infiltrated our government, using modern, Madison Avenue thought-control techniques and the electoral process. It has manipulated our democratic practices. It has used our electoral processes for its own purposes. It doesn't call itself a theocracy. It calls itself "old-fashioned conservatism with religious values." And in January, these conservative religionists were in Texas, picking the next American president. Can you blame me for seeming, as you put it, "tee'd off?" □

NYC ATHEISTS MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

NYC Atheists is a 501-C3 tax -free educational association. Contributions and dues are 100% deductible.

First Name: _____

Last Name: _____

Street Address: _____

Apt No.: _____

City _____

State _____ **Zip** _____

Email: _____ @ _____

Phone: (_____) ____ - ____

Basic __ \$ 25, **Basic Plus** __ \$ 50, **Friend** __ \$ 100, **Sustainer** __ \$ 250
Patron __ \$ 500, **Benefactor** __ \$ 1,000, **Life** __ \$ 5,000

PAYMENT OPTIONS:

NYC ATHEISTS WEBSITE
www.nyc-atheists.org

CHECK PAYABLE TO: NYC ATHEISTS INC
SEND : NYC ATHEISTS INC. (Membership)
P.O. Box 6060 - NY, NY 10150-6060

UPCOMING FEBUARY EVENTS

CALL: 212-330-6794 FOR LAST MINUTE CHANGES

FEB. 8, 2012 (WED.) **7:00 PM**
NYC ATHEISTS LIVING W/ATHEISM GROUP

GROUP LEADER: JOHN WAGNER



SUBJECT: LOVE! (It's Valentine's Month)

Do Atheists make better lovers? Does giving up god boost your sex life? All religions provide rules for sex—but why? What is their interest in our sex lives? Why does religion want to control and regulate our sexuality?

LOCATION: Moonstruck Diner - 449 Third Ave. / 31st -2nd Floor

COST: Free to members (can join at meeting if desired), but participants are expected to purchase a drink or food to compensate Moonstruck for use of their space.

FEB. 12, 2012 (SUN.) **12:00 NOON**
NYC ATHEISTS BRUNCH / SPEAKER

SPEAKER: Prof. MICHAEL RAMPINO



SUBJECT: MASS EXTINCTIONS

Professor Rampino, a member of New York University's department of biology, researches the causes of mass extinctions and its impact on the evolution of life. In the last 500 million years we have had five mass extinctions, the last being the Cretaceous-Tertiary. If this event had not occurred, humans probably would not have developed.

LOCATION: The Press Box Restaurant
932 Second Avenue (bet. 49th & 50th Sts.) -2nd Floor

COST: BRUNCH is \$20, which includes a selection of Buffet Entrees, salad, one soft drink, coffee, tax and tip.

FEB. 17, 2012 (FRI.) **6:30PM**
NYC ATHEISTS BOOK AND FILM CLUB

GROUP LEADER: DAVID ORENSTEIN



BOOK: Victor Strenger's "The New Atheism: Taking a Stand for Reason and Science."
Chapters 1, 3, and 10.

LOCATION: Stone Creek -140 East 27th St. (3rd/Lex)

COST: Free, but participants are expected to purchase a drink or food to compensate Stone Creek for their space.

FEB 21, 2012 (TUE.) **7:00PM**
NYC ATHEISTS MEETUP
GROUP LEADER: MICHAEL DORIAN



SUBJECT: Is Government Helping Us Slide Into Deeper Religiosity?

Three new Congressional bills show government taking the side of religion. How can we get our legislators to enforce separation of church and state?

LOCATION: Stone Creek -140 East 27th St. (3rd/Lex)

COST: Free, but participants are expected to purchase a drink or food to compensate Stone Creek for their space.

FEB 23, 2012 (THUR.) **6:30 PM**
NYC ATHEISTS MONTHLY MEETING

SPEAKER: ROY SABLOSKY



SUBJECT: "THE MYTH OF CHRISTIAN CHARITY"

If you look at them carefully, it turns out that the widely-cited statistics on religious charitable giving are wrongly constructed and wrongly interpreted. This lecture will deflate the modern sociological myth of "Christian charity" and describe its three causes: sloppy methodology, misleading terminology and selective amnesia. Despite recent claims, there is no scientific reason to suppose that religion fosters generosity.

LOCATION: SLC Conference Center—352 Seventh Ave./16th Floor - (29/30th St.)

COST: We ask for a donation of \$5 to help cover the cost of room rental.

UPCOMING EVENTS AND MEETINGS
CALL: 212-330-6794 FOR LAST MINUTE CHANGES

FEBUARY 2012

Feb,	8*	Wed.	7:00 PM	NYCA Living With Atheism Group
Feb.	12**	Sun.	12:00 PM	NYCA Brunch / Speaker
Feb.	17***	Fri.	6:30 PM	NYCA Book & Film Club
Feb	21***	Tue.	7:00 PM	NYCA Meet-Up
Feb.	23****	Thur.	6:30 PM	NYCA Monthly Meeting

MARCH 2012

Mar.	7*	Wed.	7:00 PM	NYCA Living With Atheism Group
Mar.	11**	Sun.	12:00 PM	NYCA Brunch / Speaker
Mar.	16***	Fri.	6:30 PM	NYCA Book & Film Club
Mar.	20***	Tue.	7:00 PM	NYCA Meet-Up
Mar.	23*****	Fri.	8:30AM – 4 PM	Secular Coalition Lobby Day
Mar.	24*****	Sat.	10AM – 4 PM	REASON RALLY
Mar,	25-26*****	Sun. – Mon.		American Atheists Convention
Mar.	29****	Thur.	6:30 PM	NYCA Monthly Meeting

* Moonstruck Diner – 449 Third Ave. (31st) – 2nd Floor

** Press Box Restaurant & Pub – 932 Second Ave. (49/50th St.) – 2nd Floor

*** Stone Creek Bar and Lounge – 140 East 27th St. (3rd/Lex)

**** SLC Conference Center–352 Seventh Ave./16th Floor-(29/30th St.)

***** Hyatt Regency Washington on Capitol Hill - 400 New Jersey Avenue NW Washington, DC

***** National Mall – Washington, D.C.

***** Bethesda North Marriott and Convention Center in Bethesda, MD.

NYCA CABLE SHOWS

Wednesdays:	5:30 PM	Atheism in History	(Manhattan Cable # 57)
	6:30 PM	This Week in Atheism	(Manhattan Cable # 57)
Thursdays:	7:00 PM	NYC Atheists	(Manhattan Cable # 67)
	7:30 PM	Atheists Book Club	(Manhattan Cable #67)

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