
PANViews



***Newsletter of PA Nonbelievers, Inc., affiliated with American Atheists,
Atheist Alliance International and the Council for Secular Humanism.***

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President's Report

Josh CruverKibi

Existential Freedom and the Dread of Personal Responsibility

Everyone experiences perceptions of the unknown. There are small unknowns such as where did I lose my keys 5 years ago, what will I eat for dinner next Friday, and what will my impolite uncle say at our next family holiday party. And there are big unknowns, such as where did humans come from, are we alone in the universe, what will my career be as an adult, and what happens to my conscious when I die.

According to existential psychology there are four primary existential unknown concerns that all religious and non-religious people dread and deal with throughout their lives. Death (mortality), freedom (personal responsibility), meaninglessness (purpose), and isolation (aloneness). These are emotionally important ideas that all conscious humans contemplate throughout our lives but may never know for certain. According to existential psychology, existential concerns are driven inevitably from living and being aware of being alive. What we learn and are taught from our environment, our lived experiences, and our biological cognitive capacity determines the level of awareness and dread we may feel for these existential unknowns.

Existential concerns are inevitable, not absolute, and change over time. The existential concerns at 5 years old will potentially change at 10, 20, 50, 70, etc... For example, a 5-year-olds concept of a god and existential answers for feelings of isolation presented to them in Sunday school will invariably be different after 70 years of lived experience. Also, a 5-year-old may want to be a firefighter at 5 years old but later concludes at 20 years old that they want to be monetarily stable and not do dangerous jobs. The healthiest way to deal with existential concerns would be to deal with and accept change and progression over one's lifetime. Employing effective critical thinking skills and increasing one's self-awareness for abilities, experiences, and biases is the most ideal way of dealing with existential concerns particular to one's lived life.

Unfortunately, many of us are taught that our existential concerns are easy, can be absolute answers, and even potentially answered for us by someone else. An example of existential absolute framing could be god did everything, get a job, get married, have children, retire, and heaven in the end. This is cognitive shortcutting for existential concerns. Taking existential shortcuts can be appealing because people will believe and perceive that they do not have to deal with their existential concerns for periods of time. Taking personal responsibility for all of one's decisions and perceptions of the unknown can be scary, intimidating, and dreadful. However, existential crises still occur with shortcutting as deeper questions build over time without dealing with them.

Religions sell the idea to their believers that there are absolute answers for existential unknowns. The christian religion will tell their believers that humans are created by the god, we are not alone because there is an omniscient and omnipresent god, the god has a plan and purpose for us even if we do not understand (like a 2-year-old getting cancer), and that our conscious exists forever, even after our deaths. However, there is a catch. Christianity, like many religions, teaches that the individual must abdicate personal responsibility and personal freedom to the authority of gods, priests, and kings. The abdication of personal responsibility (submission to authority) is promoted as the highest form of morality.

People who are socialized to abdicate personal responsibility, struggle with small and especially large existential concerns (unknown outcomes), due to over relying on external authority and social rules, instead of learning how to personally deal with the existential unknowns and cognitively growing over their lifetime. The person will then increasingly dread and avoid their personal existential and emotional conflicts due to poorly developed critical thinking skills and self-awareness. Avoiding dealing with existential concerns for 10 to 50 years at a time is not helpful either. Critical thinking skills and self-awareness would have helped develop their sense of personal responsibility and personal morality as well.



Some examples of religious existential avoidance might be; god take the wheel (avoid taking personal responsibility), they are in a better place (avoid finality of death), god answers my prayers when I feel alone (avoid dealing with being alone and existing alone in one's mind), and the priest told me I am to get married and have children (avoid determining ones purpose/meaning). To exist independent of authority or absolutes creates existential dread for those that fear taking personal responsibility outside of this dependence on authority and social structure. This is a particular existential crisis that people experience leaving the religious structure but is potentially also experienced by anyone who has been in any social structure that restricts them from being able to develop and be themselves, separate from a social of physical structure.

For non-religious people, morality develops parallel with critical thinking, personal experience, neurobiological attachment to environmental interactions, and metacognitive awareness throughout one's life. The incorrect assertions that only religion can teach morality is more accurately stated - religion teaches children from a young formative age to abdicate their personal responsibility to authority figures, unseen gods, and rigid rules, which actually serves to cognitively, emotionally, and existentially stunt moral development and self-awareness. By taking existential responsibility throughout one's life to steadily face the inevitable unknowns and challenges of living life will build tolerance and balance to one's perception of existential dread. To take existential responsibility is to accept that you may not know what will happen but are willing to accept consequences, that are for you, morally acceptable or outside of your control.

For more reading on existential psychology and Existentialism:

Yalom, Irvin. (1980). *Existential Psychotherapy*. New York: Basic Books.

Fromm, Erich. (1941). *Escape from Freedom*. New York: Holt Paperbacks.

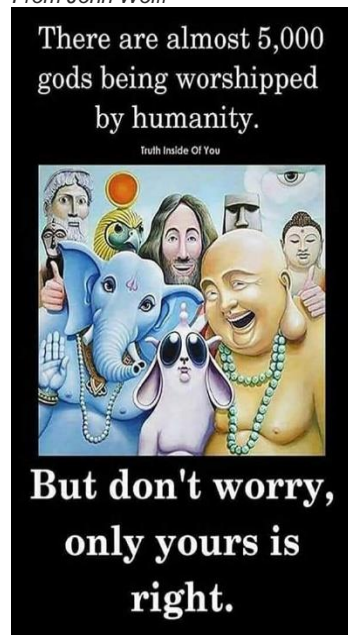
Existential philosophers; Soren Kierkegaard, Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Albert Camus, Friedrich Nietzsche

PA Nonbelievers will be having our annual meeting at the Harrisburg Unitarian Universalist Church, located at 1280 Clover Lane, Harrisburg, PA 17113 on Saturday March 4th, from 12 to 2 PM. This will be a potluck as well as a gathering to vote for new board members. We will provide cups, plates, and plasticware. If you are interested in providing a dish for the potluck, let the group know what you are planning on bringing, so others can plan for the food items that will be available. We will be posting the annual meeting on Meetup.com, Facebook, and PAN Views as well.

If you renewed or started your 2023 membership by February 24, 2023, you will be able to run as a board member and or vote for board members. If you are interested in joining the board, you can make yourself available to be voted onto the board at the annual meeting. Some current board member terms will be ending this year. If you are planning to run for a board position, be prepared to say a little about yourself and how you may contribute to the PA Non-believer mission.

Atheist News in Pennsylvania– The Nation – The World!

From John Wolff



School Funding Reform = School Choice

After 9 years of litigation, Pennsylvania Commonwealth Court Judge Renée Cohn Jubelirer ruled that the Commonwealth’s school funding is unconstitutional, because it does not provide all students with the opportunity for a good education. The judge did not make any recommendation about how the situation could be improved, saying that was up to the legislature.

Advocates of school choice – charter schools and private religious schools – were jubilant. Writing in pennlive.com, Matthew J. Brouillette, president and CEO of Commonwealth Partners Chamber of Entrepreneurs and Treasurer of Commonwealth Children’s Choice Fund notes that Judge Jubelirer wrote in her decision that “Nothing in the foregoing opinion ... require[s] reform to be entirely financial ... The options for reform are virtually limitless.” Brouillette explains that Governor Josh Shapiro supported school choice during his election campaign, and adds that this decision should allow “education dollars to follow the child.”

CBSnews.com reports that Republican Rep. Craig Williams is pushing for “lifeline scholarships,” which would allow parents to use state money to send their children to private schools. Some Democrats are not absolutely opposed to private or charter schools, but are concerned over the lack of oversight for those schools.

Given the disarray of the PA House thus far this year, no one is really sure what the next steps will be. However, Oklahoma is an example of what might happen. According to edweek.org, a new charter school has applied for approval. What’s different is that it’s St. Isidore of Seville Catholic Virtual School, and its application states the following: “To the extent permissible under the Oklahoma Charter Schools Act,” the application says, the school’s purposes, activities, programs, and affairs will operate “in harmony with faith and morals, including sexual morality, as taught and understood by the Magisterium of the Catholic

Church based on Holy Scripture and Sacred Tradition.” If the application is approved, it could receive up to \$2.5 million in state money for 500 students.

What’s odd is that Oklahoma law actually requires charter schools to be nonsectarian, and that no charter school can be affiliated with a nonpublic sectarian school or religious institution. What the backers of St. Isidore are counting on are some recent Supreme Court decisions that allow religious schools in some school choice programs. “If you are going to offer an educational program generally, you can’t discriminate against some participants because they happen to be religious,” said Brett Farley, the executive director of the Catholic Conference of Oklahoma, the public policy arm of the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City and Diocese of Tulsa. Religious charter school proponents in Pennsylvania are surely aware of this trend.

Empathy? Who Needs That?

The West Shore School District has a social-emotional learning curriculum for grammar school students. Its stated goal is "help our children learn the value of empathy, service and connection," according to the York *Dispatch*, yorkdispatch.com. The curriculum was designed by the organization Character Strong, and it strives to teach children to be kind, strong and well.

Nobody could object to that, right? Ha. Some of the district’s parents have filed suit, claiming that a curriculum stressing kindness and empathy conflicts with their religion, and therefore their children should not be required to participate. The district had turned down their previous requests for a religious exemption.



The four parents who have filed suit were helped by the American First Legal Foundation, a political nonprofit founded by Stephen Miller, former adviser to Donald Trump and Moms for Liberty. The Moms for Liberty’s webpage, momsforliberty.org, starts out with this: *Are you tired of feeling like you are alone in your concerns for the future of your children? Do you try to speak to community leaders about your concerns and your voice goes unheard? There is power in numbers and the purpose of our organization is to fight for the survival of America by unifying, educating and empowering parents.* A map on the webpage indicates lots of chapters in Pennsylvania.

One West Shore parent, Kristie Alwine, is quite clear about what she sees as a conflict. In an email, she said that not everyone requires her children’s empathy and respect. Alwine was also concerned about part of the program called a “circle lesson.” Apparently whatever is said in the circle, stays in the circle; Alwine wants her children to be able to tell her anything that happens in class. She also wanted the district to verify that children will not be taught one race is more privileged than another. Alwine also expressed concern that her children would be taught to empathize with transgender individuals, and wants to ensure there would be no pro-choice information. Another parent protested that parents should not have to prove religious reasons for objecting to the curriculum.

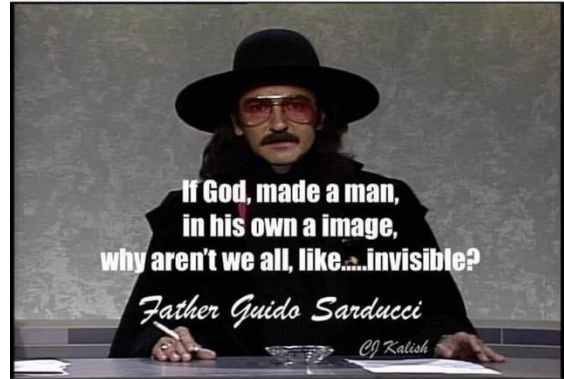
Funny, aren’t Christians always bragging about Christian charity?

Vatican Economy

Colleen Dzwonczyk

The smallest country in the world, Vatican City, is the home to one of the largest and wealthiest organizations in the world, the Roman Catholic Church. This country is like no other with over five million tourists a year, and only eight hundred permanent residents. Not surprisingly the Vatican's economy is comprised of secrets, conspiracies, and scandals.

God Is Still Laughing



First it is important to define some important concepts. The Holy See is the governing body of Vatican City. This is the entity that a company would enter a contract with. Vatican City is the physical territory in which the Holy See resides. There are three main sources of revenue for Vatican City. First is Peter's Pence, which is an 8th-century term for donations received from Catholics all over the world. Second is the revenue received from museum admissions, tours, stamps, coins, and publications. Third is investments in companies, artifacts, and real estate.

The Catholic Church is estimated to be worth about 30 billion in USD. However, in recent years there has been a deficit estimated to be approximately 30 million. The Vatican economy is rather volatile due to its mass investments in artifacts, gold and its dependence on tourism. During the Covid 19 pandemic decrease in tourism it is estimated that that the Vatican lost 100 million.

The Vatican Bank

The most controversial part of the economy of Vatican City is the Vatican Bank, also known as the Institute for the Works of Religion. The Vatican Bank is a private bank started by Pope Pius XII in 1942. The Bank has been the center of numerous scandals, accusations of mismanagement, fraud, and money laundering. These scandals go back to WWII, when the Vatican Bank was the perfect place to hide millions in war time loot for the Germans. Also, the bank invested in Italian insurance companies that refused to pay on policies for murdered Jews who could not provide death certificates to collect from policies. But because the Vatican was not a direct insurer, it was never required to pay restitution after the war.

The Vatican Bank has reportedly been involved in money laundering for the mafia and other Italian elite, smuggling gold into Poland to help overthrow the communist regime, and using 5 million to cover up the decadent life style of a group of Philadelphia monks who squandered 20 million to buy cars, stereos, and other luxuries.

The Vatican Bank is essentially an offshore bank in the middle of a foreign company. So, someone in Italy who has a lot of money just needs to find a cleric or priest to literally walk their money across the street and deposit it in a Vatican Bank account. Once the money is deposited it can't be taxed, can't be followed by Italian authorities, cannot be followed for a drug investigation. This makes the Vatican Bank one of the top banks in the world for money laundering.

Pope Francis has promised reform and has brought in some outsiders to help. They have closed hundreds of questionable accounts and they are abiding by rules set by Europeans for financial transparency. In 2021 a Vatican court convicted a senior bank official and his attorney of money laundering and embezzlement. The defendants — Angelo Caloia, the president of the Vatican bank for two decades, and his onetime lawyer Gabriele Liuzzo — had been accused of embezzling millions of euros through shady real estate deals between 2002 and 2007. The case involved the sale of 29 buildings, mostly in Milan and Rome. Prosecutors said the defendants had sold the buildings at a price much lower than the market value, receiving the difference in cash.

Reform is in the works as long as the next pope doesn't upend it.

If you would like to delve into this subject deeper, I recommend the book by Gerald Posner, *God's Bankers*.

Sources listed at the end of PANViews

Hypocrisy, Thy Name is the Religion

The Catholic Church in Maryland is fighting a bill that would allow for retroactive law suits in child abuse cases. No surprise there – a similar fight is going on in Pennsylvania. One small thing, though. In 1991 the Catholic Church took the exact opposite position.

Back then the issue was asbestos. The Baltimore *Sun*, baltimoresun.com, reports the church wanted to be able to sue builders retroactively, because, it then said, the cost to fix the asbestos problems in its properties would be “daunting.”

The church's side prevailed in those days, and the Maryland legislature approved a “lookback window” to file suits, which could go back decades. Today the legislature is considering the Child Victims Act, which would also open a lookback window for sex abuse claims. The proposed bill has failed to pass several times over the last few years. A large part of the reason is the opposition of the church, which claims a lookback window would be unconstitutional.

Kathleen Hoke, an attorney working to have the lookback provision approved, found a letter supporting that kind of provision in asbestos cases from the church, written in 1990. The letter should help convince legislators that the law in sex abuse cases would be constitutional, since they passed a similar law before, Hoke points out. She notes, “When they were injured because they had buildings with asbestos in them, they thought it was constitutional and fair and good public policy to allow to sue people who put asbestos in them. Now that it's their finances on the line, they don't think it's constitutional.”

The church says it would agree to remove statute of limitations for new child abuse lawsuits, but not retroactively. No church spokesperson has explained why it changed its mind.

God Is Still Laughing

really just spent two minutes like "why would you shame someone with tuna?"



Tuna shaming is the worst kind of shaming.

Another Holiday

Christian holidays have long been recognized as public holidays in the United States. In the last few years, Judaism and Islam have pushed to have their special days recognized, too. Pennsylvania state senators Greg Rothman and Nikil Saval have introduced legislation to make Diwali, a day of Hindu celebration an official Pennsylvania holiday, per abc27.com. They note nearly 200,000 south Asians live in Pennsylvania, and many of them celebrate Diwali. The bill would not require school or government closings.

The academic calendars for Bensalem Township, Central Bucks, Central York, Coudersport Area, Council Rock, Downingtown Area, Ferndale Area, Great Valley, Greenville Area, Lower Moreland Township, New Hope-Solebury, North Penn, Owen J. Roberts, Pennsbury, Punxsutawney Area, Spring-Ford Area, Unionville-Chadds Ford, Upper Darby, Upper Dublin, Upper Merion Area, and West Chester Area school districts showed a holiday for students on October 24, Diwali day in 2022. Diwali will be celebrated on November 12 in 2023.

Rajan Zed, a Hindu leader, was quoted as saying “it was simply not fair with Hindu pupils of most of the schools in Pennsylvania, as they had to be at school on their most popular festival while schools were closed around commemoration of other religious days.”

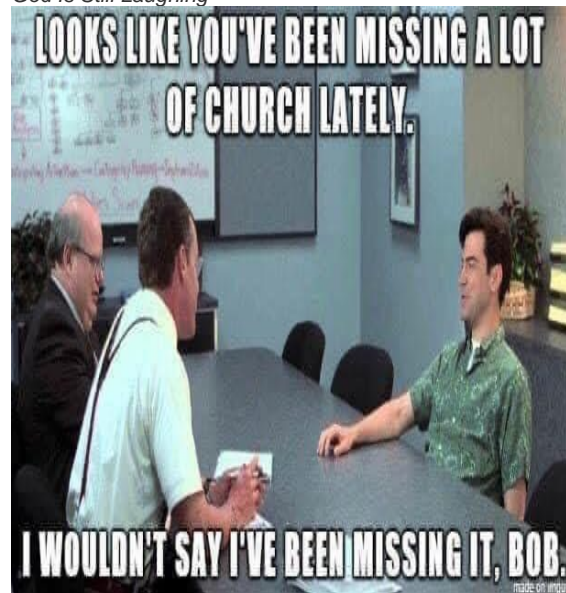
According to ny1.com, Diwali is a festival of lights celebrating the triumph of light over darkness and good over evil. Although it is usually thought of as a Hindu holiday, other religions participate in it. The Hindu American Foundation, hinduamerican.org, explains that for Hindus, it honors the return of Prince Rama of Ayodhya, his wife, Sita, and brother, Lakshman, from a 14-year-long exile and a battle against King Ravana that Prince Rama won. Another religion, Jainism, believes it is the day when Lord Mahavira, the last of the Jain Tirthankaras, achieved nirvana. Sikhs celebrate the freeing of Guru Hargobind, the sixth guru, from Emperor Jahangir. Buddhists commemorate it as Ashok Vijayadashami, the day the great Emperor Ashoka embraced Buddhism as his faith.

Who Are These Guys?

PANViews reported last month about the “He Gets Us” media campaign, a bunch of slickly made commercials that appear to be selling Jesus like a car. Exactly what the goal of these ads, and who sponsored them, was unclear. A “He Gets Me” ad during the Super Bowl raised interest in these questions.

Rachel K. Laser, President and CEO of Americans United for the Separation of Church and State, sent an email to members with some answers. The Servant Foundation, also known as The Signatry, sponsored the ads. Laser says that the organization intends to spend “about a billion dollars” in the next 3 years to solve the problem, “How did the world’s greatest love story in Jesus become known as a hate group?”

God Is Still Laughing



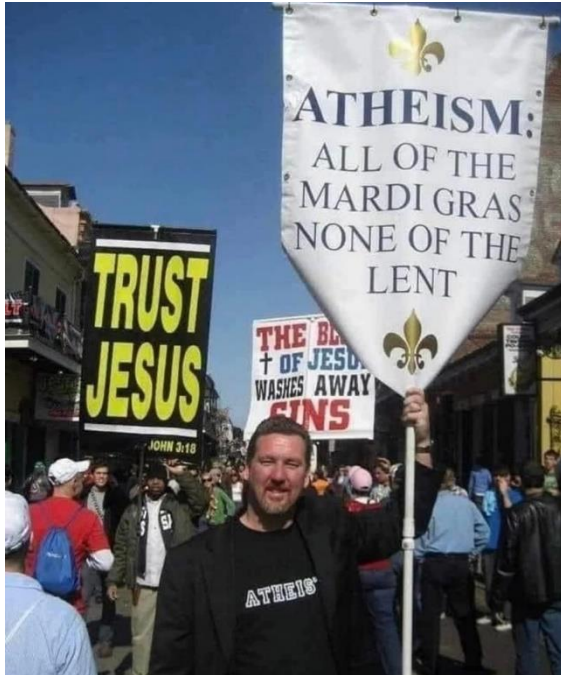
As Laser notes, The Servant Foundation has to share some of the blame for that. It is a financial supporter – to the tune of \$50 million from 2018 – 2020 – of the Alliance Defending Freedom, which is well-known for filing lawsuits maintaining that Christians have the right to discriminate, frequently against the LBGTQ community.

The Servant Foundation contributes to lots of other worthy causes. Laser lists the following:

- Nearly \$8 million to Answers in Genesis, the ministry behind the Creation Museum and Ark Encounter.
- Over \$1 million was to the anti-LBGTQ Campus Crusade for Christ.
- \$374,800 went to Al Hayat Ministries, an organization that seeks to “respectfully yet fearlessly unveil the deception of Islam.” It also sponsors an Arabic-language Christian satellite TV station which aims to convert Muslims to Christianity.

In addition, Laser names Museum of the Bible backers and Hobby Lobby owners the Green family (remember them? The Supreme Court ruled in their favor that corporations could claim a religious exemption to exclude birth control from their health care plans) as contributors to the Super Bowl ad.

Many people have wondered how many people could be fed, or housed, or provided health care, with the money “He Gets Me” spends trying to market Jesus.



God Can't Do Everything

Asbury College, a small Christian school in Wilmore, KY, is the site of an apparently religious revival over the last few weeks.

Foxnews.com reports that the revival began when students refused to leave the chapel after a service. Worshippers, mostly college and high school age, have traveled to Asbury to participate. Many of them arrive with little money and no place to stay.

The college didn't necessarily want to discourage the enthusiastic revivalists, but Wilmore, KY, pop. 6,000, was not prepared for an onslaught of enthusiastic believers.

According to WKYT.com, the school is working with city and county officials to handle traffic and parking problems. The college is now bringing the revival to a close without dampening the enthusiasm of the participants.

This is not the first time Asbury has been revived. In 1970, there was a similar spontaneous outbreak of praying and singing, which lasted for 144 hours.

Participants in this year's revival claim that there have been several miraculous events attributable to all the prayer and enthusiasm. In an interview on Fox News, one student listed various wondrous things, including, she said, "limbs were regrown!" The Fox News interviewer was startled enough to blurt, "What?!?" but the student just rambled on.

A quick check of the internet shows there are no general claims of amputated limbs regenerating at Asbury. What's interesting, though, is that this is apparently a sore subject among evangelicals. Various websites try to address the question. Some maintain it is a trick question, along the lines of "Can God make a rock he can't lift?" Unsurprisingly, there is no real explanation. Generally, responses fall along the lines of, God will heal everybody in heaven, and who are we to tell God what to do? Not exactly satisfactory.

What's Deconstructionism?

"Deconstructionism" is hot buzzword in Christian circles. According to Wikipedia, as of February 2022 there were 293,026 posts on Instagram utilizing the hashtag #deconstruction. As with a lot of buzzwords, there's disagreement about what it means. However, it points to a heartening trend.

According to christianitytoday.com, deconstructing can mean losing one's faith completely. This article lumps becoming an agnostic, an atheist, or a spiritual-but-not-religious "none" as the same thing, which is of course not really accurate.

But it can also mean remaining a Christian, even a church-going Christian, but avoiding the "cultural-political baggage associated with the label 'evangelicalism'."

The subject is addressed in more depth by a Christian blogger, Carey Nieuwhof, careynieuwhof.com, who references a book by Brian Zahnd, *When Everything Catches Fire*. Brand points out that people are losing their faith in all types of large institutions. It used to be, he says, that everyone lived in one simple world, with one simple religious system. Global communications, travel, immigration, allow people to hear about different beliefs and cultures. He also acknowledges that some of the concern about the trend isn't so much the numbers but the who; people who are prominent in Christian circles appear to be deconstructing. The examples given here and on other parts of the internet include DC Talk's Kevin Max, Hawk Nelson's John Steingard and former pastor and best-selling author, Joshua Harris, who all may be well-known among Christians but are not exactly household names outside of that world.

Many young people are curious and questioning about faith, but unfortunately, he says, religions can be rigid and uncompromising about their rules and doctrine. Brand also points out that the most common complaint he hears about religion from people who are deconstructing is its "hyper-political partisanship." Perhaps the trend will become worrisome enough that churches will stop inserting themselves into politics.

Theists Say the Craziest Things!



Another Step in the Battle for Science

The Center for Inquiry has been fighting homeopathic products for years. In particular, it has been trying to stop major drugstore chains from displaying those items in close proximity to real medicine.

According to reporting at usatoday.com and centerforinquiry.com, CFI has filed lawsuits under the consumer protection laws of the District of Columbia against both Walgreen's and CVS to stop the practice.

CFI Legal Director Nick Little presented oral arguments in the case before the DC Court of Appeals. Afterwards he commented, "Both Walmart and CVS spent much of their briefing accusing CFI of being obsessed with homeopathy. And they aren't totally wrong in that accusation of obsession."

We are very, very determined to ensure that this multi-billion dollar a year fraud on consumers is stopped. ... We will explore every avenue to protect them."

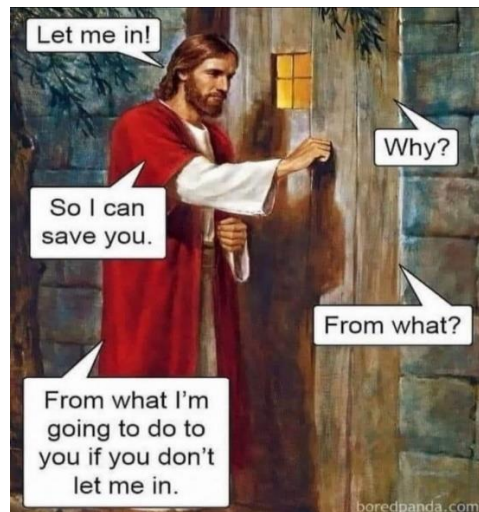
CFI argues that the placing homeopathic products alongside FDA-approved over the counter medications is misleading, and implies that homeopathic products are the equivalent to science-based products. USA Today's article notes there is little evidence in support of the efficacy of homeopathy, according to the National Institutes of Health. And while it is sometimes argued the products are harmless, the FDA points out that it cannot guarantee their safety.

Homeopathy posits a substance that causes symptoms can be used to treat the symptoms or resulting illnesses. USA Today gives this example: Onions make eyes water; therefore, the homeopathic treatment for watery eyes would be diluted red onion. Homeopaths further believe the more diluted a substance is, the more potent it is. Medical professionals worry some homeopathic products may contain toxins that aren't sufficiently diluted. And while they acknowledge there may be a placebo effect in using them, their placement in stores may cause consumers to think they are FDA-reviewed and approved, which they are not. The DC Court of Appeals denied a request for a rehearing from CVS and Walgreen's, so the case will go to trial.

More Jehovah's Witnesses Indictments

The level of sexual abuse, and the intensity of the cover-up with Jehovah's Witnesses, was first exposed several years ago. The Pennsylvania Attorney General's office has continued to investigate, and indictments keep on coming.

According to the Erie *Times-News*, goerie.com, a special grand jury has indicted 5 men. 4 have been detained, but as of the date of the article (February 22) a fifth, Normal Aviles of Lancaster County, was at large. These five indictments are in addition to four the grand jury made in October, 2022. With this latest batch, the victims' ages ranged between 5 and 15.



Aviles is charged with molesting three children, aged between 5 and 10 from 1998 through 2004 while he was a member of both the Spanish-speaking east and west Jehovah's Witnesses congregations in Lancaster County. Aviles was a church elder and was able to gain the trust of parents and children. Lancaster police originally investigated Aviles in 2010, but were unable to charge him.

One of the men in custody, Abimael Matos, was an elder at the Lancaster east congregation. His victim said that she, her mother and sisters moved into Matos' house in 2004 to save money to buy a home of their own. Matos began abusing the girl, who was half his age at the time, and told her he hoped to marry her. Church elders noticed his "interest" in the girl, and approved it, as long as he promised to marry her. They did require that the pair be chaperoned. The girl was also abused by Aviles.

It heartening the attorney general's office continues to pursue these predators – but depressing it still has to.

Southern Baptists Hang In There

Most institutions, including religious ones, have tossed in the towel and allow women to serve in positions of authority. The Catholic Church is an obvious exception. But the Southern Baptists are, too.

In fact, the SBC is so determined to maintain male superiority that it recently threw out its second largest congregation. According to apnews.com, California's Saddlebrook Church, founded by celebrity pastor and author Rick Warren, was voted out by the Executive Committee because it has a woman pastor. The trouble started in 2021 when Warren ordained three women pastors.

Saddlebrook has been hugely successful. But that didn't matter. Stacie Wood, the spouse of the current lead pastor, Andy Wood, was cited as being a "female teaching pastor functioning in the office of pastor" and that would never do.

The SBC Executive Committee removed five other congregations, 4 over women pastors and 1 over sexual abuse. When the Baptists updated their official statement of belief in 2000, this clause was added: "While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture."

Women pastors, and responding inadequately to sexual abuse claims, are not the only reason churches are kicked out. Churches have been removed for supporting racism, and having LGBTQ-friendly policies, as well.

The SBC has 13.7 million members. While that is significant, religionnews.com notes that it has lost 2 million members since 2006. Wonder how many of them were women?

"You can't just change the character's race"



Meanwhile...



Yes, This Really Happened

Three girls who attend a Philadelphia Catholic high school posted a video commemorating Black History Month. They went to a lot of trouble, too. Apparently they were proud of it, because they made sure people saw it.

How did the girls pay tribute to Black History? According to the Philadelphia Inquirer, inquirer.com, by performing in black face. One girl sprays another's face with dark paint, shouting "You're a Black girl. You know your roots." She then shouted, "It's February!" presumably a reminder for Black History month.

Another girl, laughing, recorded the performance on her cell phone. As at least one other teen looks on laughing and recording the incident on her cellphone, the girl with the spray paint says, "You're nothing but a slave. And after this you're doing my laundry." The girl in blackface then replies, "I'm Black and I'm proud!"

The girls attend St. Hubert Catholic School for Girls. The Archdiocese of Philadelphia, in a great example of missing the point, was quick to note that while one of the ringleaders was Catholic, the other was not, because that is obviously important. The girls were all suspended (and the public school attendee was quickly expelled.)

The video has been deleted, but there are many screenshots and recordings in circulation, including on local TV. The school and archdiocese issued statements decrying racism, calling it a mortal sin. A dozen or so people demonstrated outside the school the day after the video hit the news, holding signs reading "Hate Hurts" and "Confront White Supremacy."

The school and archdiocese responded to the outrage by canceling extracurricular activities, and switching instruction to online, due, they said, to threats made against the school. The school also sent a note to parents, asking them "to remind your daughters that they are representatives of their school at all times, including on evenings and weekends outside of school," which seems to miss the point. But the school also said they would be working with the Anti-Defamation League, while "seeking resources" from the Archbishop's Commission on Racial Healing, convened by Philadelphia Archbishop Nelson J. Pérez in January 2021 following the high-profile killings of Black people. Good luck.

Local21news.com



Fashion Faux Pas

Damar Hamlin’s appearance at the Super Bowl was a heart-warming moment for most fans. The Buffalo Bills player suffered a cardiac arrest during a game in early January. He had to be resuscitated before being taken away by ambulance. Hamlin’s made a remarkable recovery, and fans were happy to see him at the game.

Well, most fans. Some religious types were off-put by his \$3,150 Takashi Murakami "Travis Jesus" jacket. Here’s a sample of how twitter reacted to his outfit:

"This Jacket Worn by Damar Hamlin at the Super Bowl is a bit disturbing," wrote Twitter user @jciltv. "This might not be the best way to show gratitude to Jesus after what had happened to him on the field recently."

User @Liz_churchill8 said, "Is this how he thanks everyone that prayed for him?" User @niceblackdude said, "A mockery of Jesus Christ by Damar Hamlin at the #SuperBowl."

"Damar Hamlin spat in the faces of all those that prayed for him and sat outside his hospital holding prayers," @vet_tatted wrote. "Wearing a jacket that says 'eternal' w a zombie like Jesus crucified on the back. What a disgrace.

Football player Adrian Peterson didn’t like it, either. "You should be thanking God son! This is Blasphemy!!" And again, "We all fall short but c’mon man! I find this disrespectful!! #grateful #goddid."

Christians are just so sensitive.

Sources for Vatican Finances: <https://www.businessinsider.com/gods-bankers-financial-scandals-at-the-vatican-2015-2>

<https://www.npr.org/2015/01/30/382374060/from-laundering-to-profiteering-a-multitude-of-sins-at-the-vatican-bank>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/21/world/europe/vatican-bank-embezzlement.html>

<https://sites.lsa.umich.edu/mje/2022/05/24/the-finances-behind-vatican-city/>

<https://www.investopedia.com/articles/investing/030613/secret-finances-vatican-economy.asp#:~:text=The%20Vatican%20Bank,-The%20role%20of&text=5%EF%BB%BF%20Over%20the%20decades,%2C%20money%20laundering%2C%20and%20fraud>

FUN!



Education! (Advanced)

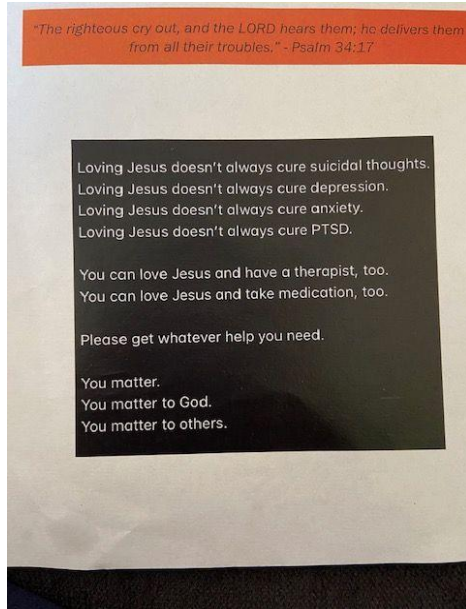
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| R | A | T | A | G | R | A | D | U | A | T | I | O | N |
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| H | G | M | S | T | A | T | I | S | T | I | C | S | I |
| S | E | O | I | S | A | I | G | H | C | D | M | N | T |
| C | R | S | B | A | C | D | I | T | G | B | B | O | N |
| I | T | A | S | N | Z | T | N | N | E | Z | R | I | C |
| M | C | B | G | A | R | C | I | A | T | E | A | T | L |
| E | N | N | A | Y | D | D | T | S | S | R | N | A | B |
| D | S | C | I | T | A | M | E | H | T | A | M | C | S |
| A | A | A | N | E | O | E | O | A | G | E | T | U | I |
| C | D | Y | R | O | T | S | I | H | E | I | R | D | G |
| A | A | H | O | R | A | C | E | M | A | N | N | E | O |
| T | A | S | S | E | A | Y | G | O | L | O | I | B | R |
| A | A | D | R | A | N | R | A | B | Y | R | N | E | H |

- SBAC
- SAT
- ACADEMICS
- STANDARDIZED
- EDUCATION
- NCLB
- READING
- STATISTICS
- HENRY BARNARD
- BIOLOGY
- HISTORY
- ESSA
- GRADUATION
- HORACE MANN
- MATHEMATICS

Play this puzzle online at : <https://thewordsearch.com/puzzle/927155/>

No solution was provided, so you are on your own.

Member Submissions



From one of our Florida correspondents, Cheryl Huber. The sentence on top reads "The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles." – Psalm 34:17

This was in a worship folder at a United Church of Christ. It surprised me, because the part at the bottom is a direct contradiction to the scripture verse at the top. So, Jesus isn't all-powerful? Or is it maybe saying every treatment available is part of God's plan? Or maybe it's a just a contradiction like most things in religion?

PAN News & Update

Meetings – PAN holds in-person and online meetings. Locations, times, and dates below.

Online meeting: Fourth Thursday of the month at 6:00 pm. We hope to split the meeting into an hour of chat and an hour of presentation or more structured discussion. Anyone with a book/movie review, discussion topic, or potential guest speaker should contact Dietrich

Dellinger @ guyinnagorillasuit@gmail.com

Chambersburg – Second Thursday of the month, 6:30 pm, Sakura Japanese Restaurant, 1071 Wayne Ave

Cumberland/Mechanicsburg - Third Wednesday of the month, 6:00 pm. Lovedraft Brewing, 165 Gateway Drive, Mechanicsburg (no children under 18)

Harrisburg– First Wednesday of the month, 6:30 pm, Zeroday Brewing Company Taproom, 923 North 3rd Street

Lancaster – **March Only: Fifth Wednesday**, March 29 6:00 pm, Centerville Diner, 100 S. Centerville Rd.

Lebanon - Second Wednesday of the month, 6:00 pm, Hoss's - 1235 E Main St., Annville

Reading – Third Thursdays at 7:15pm, 3rd & Spruce Draffthaus, 238 S 3rd Ave, Reading, PA 19611

York Meeting – First Sunday at noon. Prince St. Café is still closed, so we will meet at Mexitaly Brick Oven Brewhouse, 2440 East Market St.

Annual Meeting: Harrisburg Unitarian Universalist Church, located at 1280 Clover Lane, Harrisburg, PA 17113 on Saturday March 4th, from noon to 2:00 pm

How to Contribute to PAN

Giant Cards - We will have Giant grocery store cards available for purchase at PAN meetings. You pay face value for the card and use the face value at the store, but Giant lets PAN have 5% of that face value. If you shop at Giant, anyway, use the cards in lieu of cash and help PAN. What could be easier?

Pennies for PAN - Finally, we are happy to take money the old-fashioned way. You can give your tax-deductible contribution to a Board Member at one of our meetings or events, you can donate via PayPal on our website, www.panonbelievers.org, or you can mail a check to us at PA Nonbelievers, Inc. PO Box 702, York, PA 17405. Remember when you donate you can indicate what fund you want your donation to go to, you can find the list of our funds on the PAN website in the Donate section.

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