

# 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*

### **Balancing perceptions of Cognitive Dissonance with Confirmation Bias and Gaslighting**

Having thoughts and opinions that are not based on observable and replicable facts is difficult to maintain and separate from negative influences and biases over time. Non-religious or religious. There is the primary issue of having a thought, belief, or opinion that cannot be backed up with facts. However, the more difficult balance is that they are vulnerable to manipulation and bias from within and from one's social environment. Perceptions separate from facts must be balanced and regulated to the best of our abilities. However, our abilities to balance the accuracy of our perceptions is dependent on our metacognition, developmental, environmental, and sociological experiences, personal bias, and to some extent our neurobiological capacity. One of our most important tools of perception that we use to discern the subjective efficacy of our beliefs and thoughts without facts is cognitive dissonance. Lamentably, our perception of cognitive dissonance is also influenced by the accuracy of our perceptions and interpretations of the above variables as well as our metacognitive discipline, willingness to reduce our confirmation bias, and by the distraction of gaslighting in our environment.

Cognitive dissonance is the uncomfortable internal feeling one has when we experience or perceive contradictory attitudes, behaviors, perceptions, or cognitive logic from our own. The discomfort that one feels is typically more intense when it stems from a contradiction of one's self-concept (Baron, Byrne, & Branscombe, 2006). Cognitive dissonance theory was originally presented by Leon Festinger in 1957 to explain the compulsion of an individual to decrease one's uncomfortable feelings in this cognitive context. He found that people reduce their feelings of dissonance by changing their attitudes or behaviors to be more consistent, acquiring more information to support our attitudes or behaviors, or to trivialize our perceptions of inconsistency (Baron et al., 2006). The level of dissonance and the factors that influence dissonance can vary significantly within the context of culture, environment, social situation, and personal perceptions (Baron et al., 2006; Ford, 2009; Gorski, 2009; Wong, 2009).

Confirmation bias is the tendency to believe and find evidence that confirms previous beliefs, experiences, and perceptions, while abductively and intentionally ignoring contradictory information and perceptions. Everyone tends to jump to conclusions and or confirm what they have previously perceived or believe. This 'jumping to conclusions' is perceived by the mind as efficient in that it saves time and mental energy when confirming familiar perceptions (Kahneman, D., 2011). However, this reliance on 'fast thinking' to confirm previously perceived information can leave us vulnerable to previously learned false perceptions, heuristics, biases, and prejudices (Kahneman, D., 2011), as well as make us vulnerable to intentional manipulations such as the use of gaslighting (Luskin, B. J. 2022).

"Gaslighting involves the psychological manipulation of a person or group over an extended period of time, which causes victims to question the reliability of their own experience" (Luskin, B. J. 2022). The most important variable for discerning whether someone is trying to gaslight you or not, is intent. In particular, are they trying to gain power and control over you, make you submit to their

perceptions of reality, or trying to get you to buy their products or ideas for their gain and not your own. Gaslighting can be presented in many ways; through media, from friends, family, partners, social groups, and acquaintances, or by politicians, corporations, and government entities.

Gaslighting can be as innocuous as someone consistently telling you that you look nice weekly when you know you tend to run late and get yourself together within 10 minutes of waking up and getting out the door. It can also be as insidious as a media company repeatedly presenting intentional lies to exploit and gain your belief and or compliance, fully knowing you may believe, perceive, or know something else. Both will result in you potentially doubting your perception and or creating cognitive dissonance. But gaslighting is intentionally lying to gain power and control over you (Luskin, B. J. 2022). A person or entity often engages in gaslighting for self-serving reasons without consideration or concern for the potential cognitive, psychological, behavioral, or physical harm that could be caused to their target or group. A person or entity who engages in gaslighting may also be targeting and manipulating perceptual weaknesses, such as confirmation bias, to gain compliance and or belief in adjacent ideas that benefit the gas lighter. Can you think of any groups of people in our society who have been systematically targeted by gaslighting that has led to these groups of people demonstrating increased aberrant behaviors? Social media is a particularly effective confluence of confirmation bias and gaslighting, gaslighting, "by capturing attention, using repetition, psychovisualization, and compounded memory" (Luskin, B. J. 2022).

I now ask the reader, have I engaged in gaslighting by writing this? Well, the essential question would be, what was my intent? Have I lied to you to create doubt in your perceptions to gain control of you? Have I introduced ideas with the intent to create awareness for cognitive dissonance? Have I suggested that the reader create a balanced awareness for gaslighting and confirmation bias while working on their perceptions of cognitive dissonance?

Cognitive dissonance is a feeling of doubt that can motivate us to change our misperceptions, biases, and disfunctional behaviors. But we need to increase our metacognitive ability and awareness to know when our perception of cognitive dissonance may be a helpful tool for change, as well as defend against our perceptual weaknesses from within (confirmation bias) and attacks on our perception through intentionally misleading social manipulation (gaslighting).

Baron, R. A., Byrne, D., & Branscombe, N. R. (2006). *Social psychology (11th ed.)*. Boston: Pearson/Allyn & Bacon.

Ford, T. N. (2009). *We live to create dissonance: Is it possible to be a Christian and racist?* *Journal of Beliefs & Values: Studies in Religion & Education*, 30(2), 103-111. 10.1080/13617670903174975

Gorski, P. C. (2009). *Cognitive dissonance as a strategy in social justice teaching*. *Multicultural Education*, 17, 54-57. Retrieved from

<http://web.ebscohost.com.proxy1.ncu.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=6&hid=7&sid=3217cda6-19e5-4859-ac69-453fc812e384%40sessionmgr10>

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Luskin, B. J. (2022). *The Media Psychology of Gaslighting and Social Change*. *Psychology Today*.

Retrieved from <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-media-psychology-effect/202212/the-media-psychology-gaslighting-and-social-change>

Wong, A. H. C. (2009). *Cognitive dissonance: A comprehensive review amongst interdependent and independent cultures*. *Journal of Educational Thought*, 43(3), 245-257.

The PAN Board has chosen several tabling events for the upcoming 2023 spring, summer, and fall. Our first tabling event will be Dillsburg Pickle Fest on Saturday May 13<sup>th</sup>. Doug Ross will be heading up this tabling event, so if you are interested in volunteering for this event send him an email and or indicate that you are volunteering on meetup or Facebook. See below for the list of PA Nonbeliever tabling events for 2023. Let us know if you are interested in volunteering at any of these events.

PAN Tabling 2023			
Date	Day of the week	Venue	Location
5/13/2023	Saturday	Dillsburg Pickle Fest	Dillsburg
6/10/2023	Saturday	Old Annville Day	Annville
6/10/2023	Saturday	York Pride	York
6/15/2023	Thursday	Jubilee Day	Mechanicsburg
6/17/2023	Saturday	Lancaster Pride	Lancaster
7/29/2023	Saturday	Harrisburg Pride	Harrisburg
10/7/2023	Saturday	Pennsboro Pumpkin Fest	Enola
10/8/2023	Sunday	Pennsboro Pumpkin Fest	Enola

***Atheist News in Pennsylvania– The Nation – The World!***

**Special Rules for Religious Employees**

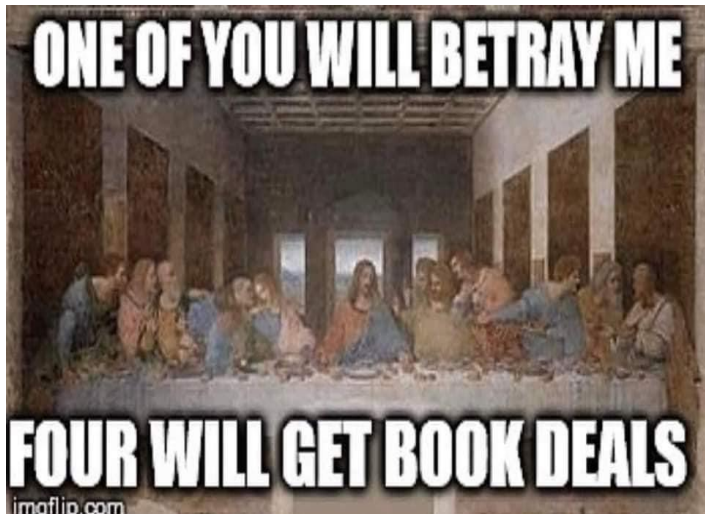
There’s been a lot of publicity about the Supreme Court case involving Gerald Goff, a rural Pennsylvania Christian mail carrier who refused to work on Sundays.

According the Associated Press, apnews.com, the Court seemed to generally agree that employers like the US Postal Service can’t arbitrarily refuse to accommodate religious practices when the accommodation will cause minor costs or inconvenience, this particular case was different.

When Goff was hired, the post office didn’t have Sunday deliveries, so there was no issue. However, the Postal Service entered into an agreement to deliver Amazon packages, including on Sundays. Goff told his supervisors that he could not work on Sundays because Sunday is for church and family. His post office tried to accommodate him by getting substitutes for his shifts, but other workers weren’t always available, which increased the workload on other employees. Finally, Goff quit, and sued for religious discrimination.

During argument, the justices tried to come up with a definition of when an employer has to accommodate a religious need. Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson said that it varied with the specific circumstances of each case: “the answer is: it depends.”

There have been other cases recently where the court has had to rule on religious workplace disputes. PAN members surely recall last year the court said a public high school coach should be allowed to pray on the field after games, and the court will rule this term on a case involving a Christian graphic artist who creates wedding websites, but doesn’t want to be forced to create them for gay couples (not that anyone’s asked.)



The article explains Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 requires employees' religious practices to be accommodated unless it would cause the employer "undue hardship." In 1977, the Supreme Court ruled in *Trans World Airlines v. Hardison* that employers may refuse accommodation if it imposes "more than a de minimis cost" on the business. Three current justices (Samuel Alito, Neil Gorsuch, Clarence Thomas) have indicated that this rule should be reconsidered. Goff's attorney suggested that the standard should be "significant difficulty or expense" for an employer to reject a religious accommodation.

Solicitor General Elizabeth Prelogar, representing the Post Office, said that the *Hardison* case actually requires more than de minimis cost. She gave examples of kinds of religious issues employers face: schedule changes for the Sabbath, midday prayer breaks, exemptions from dress code or grooming rules, or requests to display a religious symbol in the workplace. Gorsuch said he thought other courts have taken de minimis language too far. While some justices seemed to agree about that, there did not seem to be any agreement about what to do in the Goff case.

Goff's post office made an effort to accommodate him, once Sunday deliveries started. He was transferred to a more rural post office that didn't offer Sunday service, but eventually that post office had them, too. Officials said that Goff's unavailability created tension and morale problems, forcing other employees to do extra work.

Justice Amy Coney Barrett suggested the Court might send the case back to lower courts for another review. Whatever happens, it's clear these kinds of cases aren't going away.

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### **Surprise! Another Abuse Cover-up Scandal**

Of course abuse cover-up stories in the Catholic church no longer qualify as news. What's interesting about this one is when it happened: 2013, long after the church swore it had reformed.

Per the Philadelphia *Inquirer*, [inquirer.com](http://inquirer.com), the basics of the story are typically grotesque. A woman has sued Rev. Kevin Barry McGoldrick, accusing him of getting her drunk and sexually assaulting her while he was a college chaplain in Tennessee. But she has also sued the Archdiocese of Philadelphia for failing to disclose, or deal with it any way, similar accusations about McGoldrick before he was transferred from Philadelphia to Tennessee in 2013.

McGoldrick was ordained in 2003, and was a pastor in several Philadelphia-area churches, and also was a chaplain at Roman Catholic High School. Even while he was in Philadelphia, the article states that he had a reputation for "socializing" with young women. He was transferred to become chaplain at Aquinas College in Nashville in 2013. (Yes, it is an especially nice touch that a priest rumored to behave inappropriately with young women was transferred to a college chaplain position. Also, Catholic priests are rarely transferred outside their diocese; it's usually a sign the church has a reason to get the guy out of town.)

McGoldrick wasn't subtle. In 2015, while a college chaplain, he created a YouTube channel on which he discussed theology over drinks, called "Whiskey Couch." The woman who sued him claims that he "plied" her with bourbon until she blacked out, and when she regained consciousness, she had reason to believe she had been sexually assaulted. McGoldrick begged her not to tell anyone, and continued to pursue her, although she tried to avoid him. She reported him to the Diocese of Nashville in 2019, but the church ignored her until she filed a police report, sued the Nashville Diocese and notified the Archdiocese of Philadelphia of her claims.

The Philadelphia Archdiocese investigated, and substantiated her claims. Nashville settled her suit for \$65,000. However, the Nashville diocese says that Philadelphia never told them there had been any problems with McGoldrick, and in fact had sent a letter to Nashville, calling him a priest in good



Despite all this, Philadelphia officials have avoided answering the accuser's questions about whether they knew about him.

Imagine her surprise when she found an article online stating that at least two other women had filed complaints against McGoldrick in 2013 (one of which accused him of rape), and that the archdiocese had investigated those complaints. The accuser states that if Philadelphia had acted on those complaints, McGoldrick would not have been transferred, and she would not have been assaulted. McGoldrick has voluntarily resigned from the priesthood, and is married to a former employee of the Nashville diocese.

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### Mormons Don't Want to Be Called Mormons

*Colleen Dzwonczyk*



So, the Mormon Church doesn't want to be called the Mormon Church anymore. According to the new style guide you shouldn't use the abbreviation LDS either. They want you to refer to them as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Now that's a mouthful so if you really want to use an abbreviation the sanctioned ones are now "the Church" or "Church of Jesus Christ", or the "restored Church of Jesus Christ" I mean that's not confusing at all. It's not like they are the only church but I guess in their minds that is the truth.

That brings us to what do we call the members? When referring to Church members, the terms "members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints" or "Latter-day Saints" are preferred. The term

“Mormons” is not to be used. The new guidelines also state that “‘Mormonism’ is inaccurate and should not be used,” and that the term “‘the restored gospel of Jesus Christ’ is accurate and preferred.” The style edict says “Mormon” is correctly used in proper names such as the Book of Mormon, the faith’s signature scripture, or when used as an adjective in historical expressions such as “Mormon Trail.” President Russell M. Nelson received all this information directly from the Lord during revelations in the middle of the night. He tells his wife, Wendy “OK dear, it’s happening.” “I just remain quiet and soon he’s sitting up at the side of the bed, writing,” she said in a recent church video. Sometimes the spirit prompts the prophet’s wife to leave the bed, though she’d rather sleep. One such morning, Wendy Nelson told Mormon leaders, her husband emerged from the bedroom waving a yellow notebook. “Wendy, you won’t believe what’s been happening for two hours,” she recalled Russell Nelson saying. “The Lord has given me detailed instructions on a process I am to follow. The Lord impressed upon my mind the importance of the name He decreed for his church,” Nelson said, “the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.” Russell Nelson has instituted several changes based on revelations since becoming church president in 2018.

The church has changed its websites, social media accounts, email addresses, even the name of its famous “Mormon” Tabernacle Choir based on Nelson’s revelation. Church leaders have also lobbied the media to stop referring to Latter-day Saints as “Mormons.” Nelson has been forceful in his rejection of the “Mormon” nickname, saying it offends God and represents “a major victory for Satan.” Church leaders say “Mormon,” which refers to a prophet who plays a pivotal role in the Book of Mormon, still holds a place of honor in the faith, but, as a reference to Latter-day Saints, it is an inaccuracy imposed by outsiders. (For that matter, the words “Shakers” and “Quakers” started as pejorative nicknames as well.)

So, the burning question for me was “What is the new name of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir? Well, it is The Tabernacle Choir at Temple Square. According to the official announcement “The Choir’s new name preserves the heritage of the Choir’s home in the Tabernacle and its location on Temple Square, a place of reverence and worship.”

I’m thinking they won’t be changing the name of the Broadway play (which is obviously not church sanctioned.)

*Meet the Tabernacle Choir at Temple Square!*



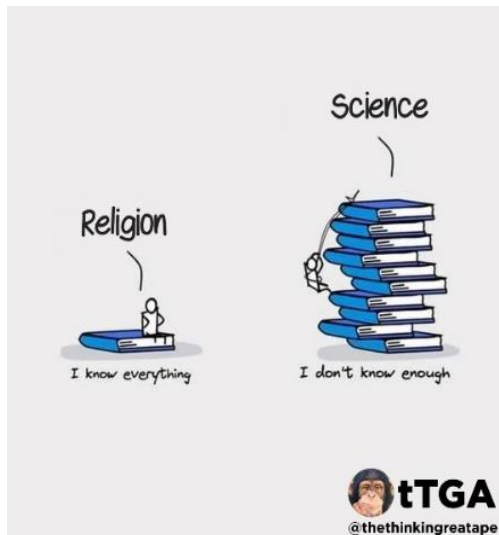
Sources: <https://www.slttrib.com/news/2018/08/16/lds-church-wants-everyone/>

<https://www.cnn.com/2018/08/17/us/mormon-church-name-trnd/index.html>

<https://www.cnn.com/2019/03/22/us/mormon-lds-name-change-revelation/index.html>

<https://www.thetabernaclechoir.org/content/dam/motab/newsroom/press-release/Choir%20Name%20Change%20News%20Release%20and%20FAQs%2018-10-03.pdf#:~:text=SALT%20LAKE%20CITY%20%E2%80%94%20The%20world,Christ%20of%20Latter%20day%20Saints.>

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### Do No Harm

Congress passed the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) more than twenty years ago. Supporters claimed that RFRA was necessary to protect the right to free religious expression. The law prohibits the federal government from “substantially burden (ing)” religious activities unless doing so is the least restrictive way of furthering a compelling government interest. This law was used in the Hobby Lobby case, which allowed private employer medical plans to ignore the requirement to cover contraceptives under their medical plans.

Congress proposed the Do No Harm Act as a way to keep RFRA from allowing religious rules to trump laws.

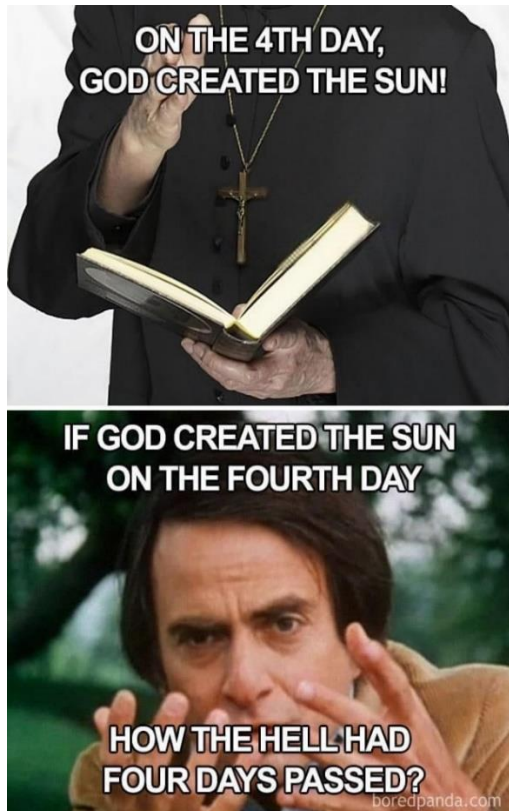
It failed to pass when originally introduced, but it was reintroduced on April 19, 2023, in the House of Representatives by Reps. Mary Gay Scanlon (PA, the Philadelphia suburbs), Robert “Bobby” Scott (VA), Jamie Raskin (MD) and Steve Cohen (D-TN-09), as well as in the Senate by Sen. Cory Booker (NJ). The American Humanist Association, thehumanist.com, explains the law is necessary to prevent people and groups from using religion to justify discrimination, and deny civil rights.

AHA explains that RFRA is being used inappropriately to harm LGBTQ+ people, the disabled, women, religious minorities and the nonreligious. According to the AHA, the Do No Harm Act fights these incursions in the following ways:

- 1) establishing exceptions to RFRA’s applicability to laws that protect against discrimination or promote equal opportunity, such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964;
- 2) prohibiting RFRA’s applicability to laws that require employers to provided compensation or benefits, protect against child labor or exploitation, or provide healthcare coverage;
- 3) protecting a person’s enjoyment of established government accommodations, including in government awards and contracts;
- 4) requiring the government to be an involved party in any judicial proceeding asserting a violation of RFRA.

The AHA encourages members of the secular community to contact our congress members and ask them to vote for this law.

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## News from Texas

Texas is filled with interesting news. According to [vanityfair.com](http://vanityfair.com), the Texas Senate passed a bill mandating that all Texas public elementary and secondary classrooms display the Ten Commandments.

The legislators are leaving nothing to chance. The Commandments must be a durable poster or framed copy, 16 inches wide and 20 inches tall, posted in a “conspicuous” place, with a font that will be legible anywhere in the classroom. The bill’s sponsor, state Sen. Phil King, claims the Commandments are part of America’s national identity and wants the bill to “remind students all across Texas of the importance of a fundamental foundation of American and Texas law.” Precedent suggests the bill will be found unconstitutional, but King thinks it has a chance, pointing to the Supreme Court decision involving prayer and a football coach already mentioned in *PANViews*.

But wait, there’s more. Another Texas senator has introduced a bill that would allow a school district’s board of trustees to force schools to grant students and employees time to pray and have religious readings during school hours.

Theoretically, this would apply to readings from any religions, but *PANViews* readers know better. The initial version of the bill described it as “An act relating to a period of prayer and Bible reading in public schools.” Texas Lt. Governor Dan Patrick is an enthusiastic supporter. The *Texas Tribune* quotes him: “I believe that you cannot change the culture of the country until you change the culture of mankind. Bringing the Ten Commandments and prayer back to our public schools will enable our students to become better Texans.”

Texas isn’t done yet. The Texas Legislature is considering a law that would let unlicensed “chaplains” replace public school counselors. Under current Texas law, school counselors must pass a certification exam, have at least a 48-hour master’s degree in counseling from an accredited institution, and have two years of classroom teaching experience. The proposed law would do away with all these requirements. It reads, “A school district may employ a chaplain instead of a school counselor to perform the duties required of a school counselor under this title. A chaplain employed under this subsection is not required to be certified by the State Board for Educator Certification.”

Interestingly, this bill is opposed by some religious groups, who are apparently afraid kids would be indoctrinated in another religion. [Baptistnews.com](http://Baptistnews.com) quotes Jennifer Hawks, associate general counsel to the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty, as follows: “Religious instruction for Texas students is best left to houses of worship, religious institutions and families. Allowing Texas schools to hire anyone under the label of ‘chaplain’ to perform the work of school counselors threatens religious liberty by substituting an undefined religious title for licensed counselor. The goal of public schools is not religious indoctrination.”

[Baptistnews.com](http://Baptistnews.com) also quotes The Friendly Atheist, Hemant Mehta: “Even though Texas has a budget surplus of roughly \$32.7 billion, these lawmakers aren’t even thinking about giving schools the resources they need to hire more mental health professionals. Instead, they want those positions staffed by chaplains who would undoubtedly be Christian and who don’t need any paperwork to attest to their abilities to do the job. We’ve seen plenty of *symbolic* examples of Christian nationalism, like putting ‘In



God We Trust' in public schools, but this legislation would *actively* harm children by not giving them access to qualified professionals in a place where, and at a time when, they arguably need them more than ever.”

The bill seems to be part of a drive by the National School Chaplain Association. It says that adding chaplains will make Texas “a national leader in school safety because of the courageous actions of its legislators to protect public school teachers and students.” The Chaplain Association is clearly hanging its hat on school safety; its news release goes on to say that chaplains can help reduce “the prevalence of school violence, which includes shootings, fighting, bullying and physical assault” by giving students “a solid spiritual foundation and a safe space to express their pain and frustrations.” And it continues: “school violence often starts with students experiencing intense psychological or emotional pain. Then, without support at home, kids let these frustrations out through destructive behavior like disobedience, physical violence, disrespect for authority and vices.”

Finally, *PANViews* will leave Texas by noting Newsweek.com reports that this year, at least 10 Texas pastors, former pastors and youth ministers have been arrested, charged or convicted for various allegations of sexual abuse of children.

The charges involve online distribution of pornography, persuading children to provide sexually explicit pictures of themselves, as well as actual in-person sexual activity with minors.

The Southern Baptist Convention released a document last May revealing that from 2000 to 2009 more than 700 Baptist leaders had been accused or found guilty of various types of sexual abuse of children. The list was designed to uncover the cover-up of cases that had been kept quiet.



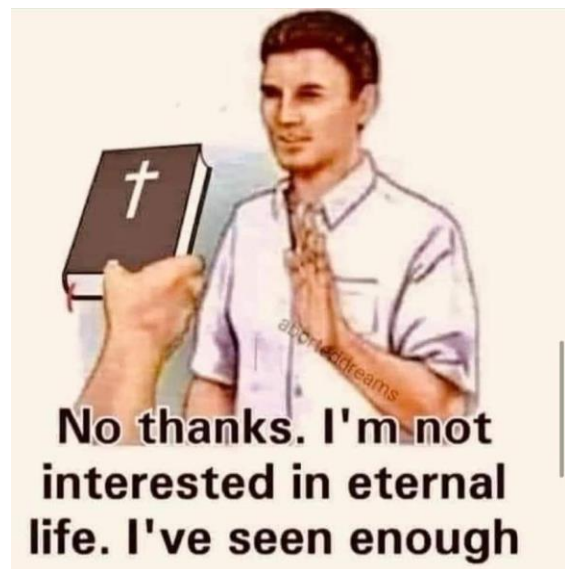
The article notes that the SBC does not have established hierarchy, which will make it harder to change the way it operates.

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### Trouble at Bob Jones

Bob Jones University is a private religious university in Greenville, SC. Recently its president, Steve Pettit, resigned. Why?

The Washington *Post*, [washingtonpost.com](http://washingtonpost.com), reports that, as is often the case in these situations, Pettit didn't get along with the university board. Bob Jones is quite conservative; students may not drink alcohol or watch movies rated lower than "G." Black students weren't admitted until the 1970s, and interracial dating was not allowed until 2000.



The dress code is specific: women must wear pantsuits, or skirt suits with a button-down shirt or blouse, and men must wear suits, dress shirts and ties. If allowing pantsuits seems oddly liberal, it's a recent change: Pettit first permitted them in 2018. Skirts are supposed to reach below the knee, although the *Post* notes that is not as strictly enforced as it once was.

Apparently the shameless hussies on campus caused the problem between Pettit and the board. A board member complained the clothes women were wearing on campus emphasized their “boobs and butts.” The board member had the bright idea of taking pictures of the offending women, without their knowledge or permission.

Women found out, and filed a Title IX complaint with the school. (Title IX is the part of the federal civil rights law that prohibits sex-based discrimination in any school receiving federal funding.)

In his resignation letter, Pettit said the board chair tried to prevent any investigation of the picture-taking. Bob Jones is sensitive about Title IX issues; in the past, the school got into trouble when it blamed people who complained of sexual abuse for causing the situation, and were told not to embarrass their families, churches and the school if they went through with their complaints.

There were other issues. For example, Pettit expressed concern about the school's finances. A former faculty member, Camille Lewis, who runs a website about the school, posits another reason for trouble: staff and students actually like Pettit. The prior presidents, Bob Jones, Sr., Jr. and III, were not anywhere near as popular, and the contrast with Pettit did not go over well with long-time board members.

Pettit's resignation will be effective after this academic year has ended. After his letter was received, nearly all the school's senior leadership asked that the board chair be removed. The chair has now resigned.

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### **Anti-Gay Activism in Uganda**

In late March Uganda's Parliament passed an anti-gay bill calling for life in prison for anyone engaging in same-sex conduct, with the possibility of the death penalty in some cases. According to the *New York Times*, [nytimes.com](http://nytimes.com), lawmakers claimed there was a plot to promote homosexuality in school, and officials attacked gay people on TV and social media. One military official said they should be denied health care. Muslims led marches against gay people, and Christian clerics warned their members to be on the alert for attempts to lure children in homosexuality. Last August, the authorities took their most drastic action yet when they closed Sexual Minorities Uganda, the country's leading gay rights group.

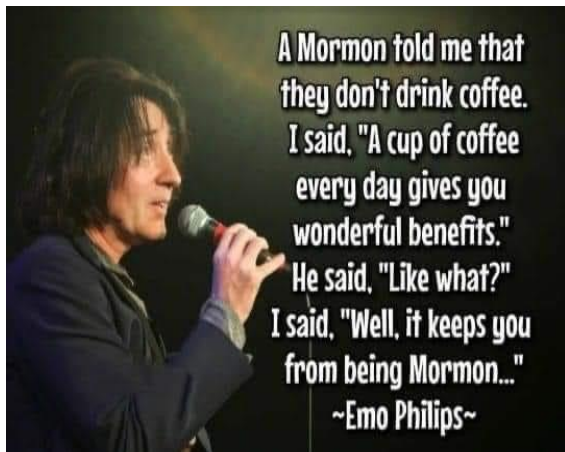
The law passed 387 – 2. Among other things, it would make it illegal to lease property to gay people, and calls for them to be “rehabilitated.” President Yoweri Museveni supported the bill, but sent it back to Parliament for “improvement.” Gay rights activists in Uganda are now planning to challenge the measure in court if it is signed.

The president congratulated lawmakers for resisting pressure from “imperialists,” Western countries who opposed the bill. Anti-LGBTQ laws and rhetoric have become more common in Africa in recent years,

particularly in Ghana, Zambia and Kenya. Representatives of more than a dozen African countries met in Uganda last month and pledged to introduce measures in their home countries that would protect families and children from “the sin of homosexuality.”

Same-sex acts were already illegal in Uganda, but the new bill has harsher penalties, and extends the range of possible offenses. Officials removed rainbow colors from a park, and parents attacked a school because it was thought to have a gay teacher. This latest law has received support from the Christian and Muslim communities in Uganda, and financial and logistical backing from US conservative evangelical groups. Family Watch International, an anti-LGBTQ and anti-abortion group based in Arizona, helped organize the conference in Uganda. The United Nations, human rights groups and the Biden administration have all condemned the Uganda law. Uganda is a close ally of the US, and received more than \$950 million each year in assistance. The State Department has said that if the bill is ratified, it would leave the funding for PEPFAR, the program that provides HIV treatment to millions, “severely compromised.” It would also “jeopardize” Uganda’s progress toward ending AIDS as a public health threat by 2030.

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### Crazy Cult in Kenya

A Kenyan cult leader told his followers the world would end on April 15. To ensure they would get to heaven quick, he instructed them, they should starve themselves.

Reuters.com reports that at least 89 members of the Good News International Church in eastern Kenya have died. However, the Kenya Red Cross says that more than 300 people were reported missing. The cult leader, Paul Mackenzie, has been in police custody since April 15. He is reportedly refusing food and water. PANViews could not find an update as to whether Mackenzie is still alive.

Stephen Mwiti, whose wife and six children joined the cult and are feared dead, said, "He told them to starve themselves ahead of the world’s end on April 15, saying he would be that last one and that he would lock the doors." Mwiti said a former cult member told him that he’d been expelled for drinking water. Hospital official confirmed hearing the same account from survivors. Children and young people would die first, then adults, and then Mackenzie. Mwiti said that he contacted the police, but was ignored.

Not unsurprisingly, Mackenzie preached a great many odd things. According to BBC.com, he believes education is satanic, and used to raise money. "They know education is evil. But they use it for their own gains...Those who sell uniforms, write books...those who make pens... all kinds of rubbish. They use your money to enrich themselves while you become poor." He was arrested in 2017 and 2018 for encouraging children to stop attending school, because education is “not recognized in the Bible.” He also thought education taught homosexuality.

Assuming he survives, he’ll have a smaller church.

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### Expensive Tradition

Eid is a Muslim holiday that marks the end of Ramadan, the annual month of fasting and prayer. Part of the Eid tradition is the eidiya, a gift of money that is distributed. The New York Times, nytimes.com, explains the practice of giving an eidiya goes back 1,000 years, although it has no religious basis.

In most Muslim cultures, the eidiya is a token gift to children. However, Palestinian men give money to both children, and adult female relatives. The *Times* compares the financial burden and expectation to Christmas giving in the West. Amounts can range from 20 shekels, about \$6, to around \$100. Because of the 16-year blockade of Gaza, the unemployment rate among Palestinians is around 50%, which makes coming up with eidiyas challenging.

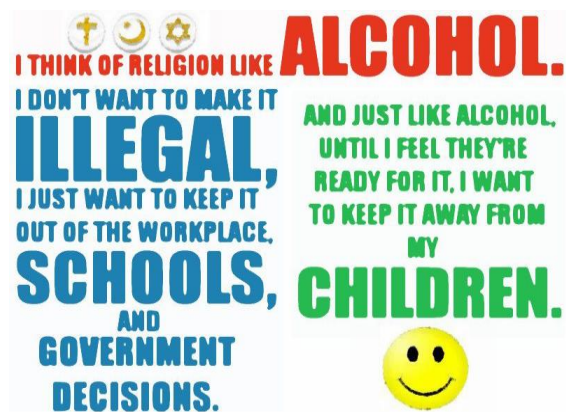
Men will go into debt, or wait until their wives get an eidiya from their relatives, and pass that money along. Ramadan is already expensive, with big dinners after sundown every night, decorations and new clothes. Stores now offer eidiya cards with small boxes, to make the giving of eidiya more subtle. Men who can't afford gifts for all the women and children in their family have stopped visiting relatives on Eid, to avoid embarrassment. Palestinian religious leaders now urge men not to avoid the religious obligation of visiting family on Eid because of a social obligation.

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### The Vatican and the Colonies

The Catholic Church enthusiastically encouraged the exploration of the Western World beginning in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, in part by issuing "papal bulls" or decrees that supported the "Doctrine of Discovery," which legitimized the seizure of Native lands by European explorers.

According to the Associated Press, [apnews.com](http://apnews.com), the Vatican issued a statement repudiating this doctrine, saying it "did not adequately reflect the equal dignity and rights of Indigenous peoples."



The statement, from the Vatican's development and education office, was produced a year after Pope Francis met with Canadian Indigenous leaders, who raised the issue. These leaders found the statement as a good start, although the Vatican did not actually rescind the bulls, and avoided actually taking responsibility from the actions of the colonizing countries. Instead, the statement claimed that papal documents had been "manipulated" by competing powers "to justify immoral acts against Indigenous peoples that were carried out, at times, without opposition from ecclesial authorities."

The bulls were part of the foundation for the "Doctrine of Discovery," a legal concept coined in a 1823 U.S. Supreme Court decision that has been interpreted to mean Europeans assumed ownership and sovereignty over lands in the New World because they "discovered" it. The article notes that the Doctrine was cited in a 2005 Supreme Court decision written by Ruth Bader Ginsburg, involving the Oneida Indian Nation.

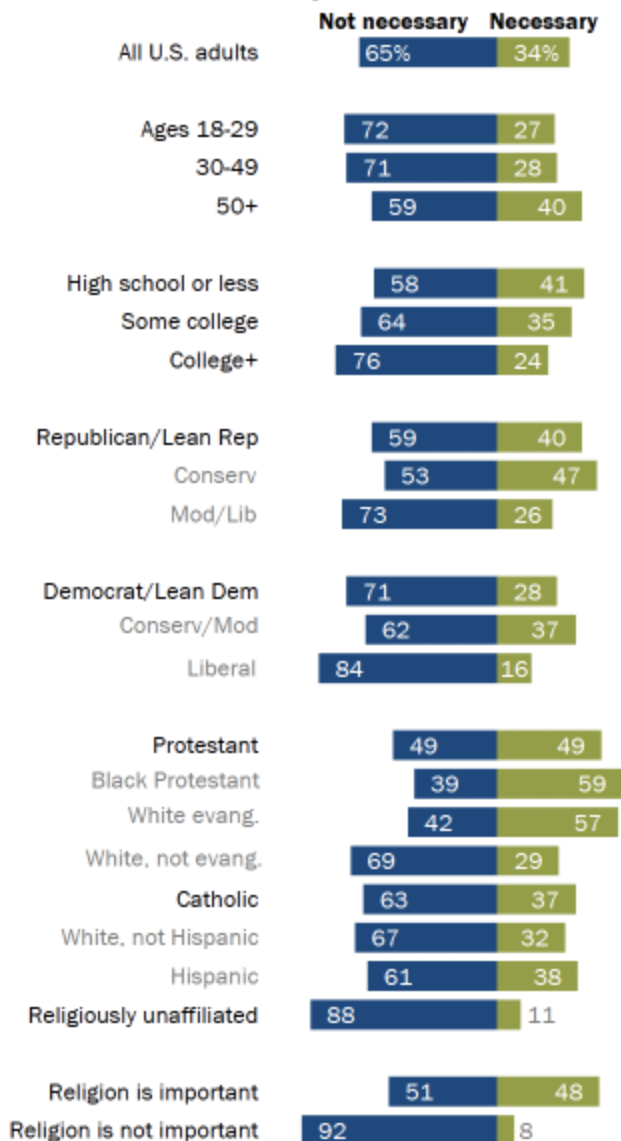
Cardinal Michael Czerny, who co-authored the statement, explained that the bulls had been abrogated a long time ago, and had been a "doctrine" only in a legal, not a religious, sense. He said it was important not just to set the record straight, but "to discover, identify, analyze and try to overcome what we can only call the enduring effects of colonialism today."

It's almost certainly not a coincidence that the rejection of the Doctrine of Discovery came during the reign of the first Latin American pope. Francis had already apologized to indigenous people in Bolivia for crimes committed during the colonial era.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Most Americans say it's not necessary to believe in God to be moral, but views differ by religion

*% of Americans who say it is \_\_\_ to believe in God in order to be moral and have good values*



Note: Those who did not answer not shown. This report cannot analyze the views of U.S. Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus and other smaller religious groups due to sample size limitations. Source: Spring 2022 Global Attitudes Survey. Q33.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

### Religious Surprises

As the chart on the left shows, most Americans aren't convinced the godly are the most moral.

The percentage by which people believe this vary by group, but in only two categories do a majority of members think belief is necessary for good behavior: black protestants, and white evangelicals.

Pew did a similar world-wide survey in 2000, and the not necessary side also won, although it was closer: 54% said belief was not necessary, and 44% said it was. Western European countries were strongly on the not necessary team, while African and some Asian countries (India, Indonesia and the Philippines, in particular) overwhelmingly believed in the necessity of religion for morality.

On a related note, the Washington Post, [washingtonpost.com](http://washingtonpost.com), reports that Latinos are leaving Catholicism, and religion in general. 30% of Latino adults are not religiously affiliated, as opposed from 10% in 2010. 50% of Latinos between 18 and 29 aren't religious. In 2010, 67% of Latinos were Catholic, but today it is 43% - which the article notes is twice the percentage of other US adults. Still, it concludes for every one Latino adult who joined the Catholic church after 2010, 23 have left.

FUN!



Solution is at the end of PANViews.

# WORD SEARCH

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**Find and circle all of the words from the list below.**

Backseat	Parks
Beep	Pitstop
Billboard	Podcast
Camera	Radio
Driver	Road Trip
Explorer	Seatbelt
Family	Snacks
Interstate	Souvenir
Map	Vacation
Miles	Wildlife
Navigate	

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## PAN News & Update

**Save the Date:** Come picnic with PAN at Gifford Pinchot State Park, Sunday August 27. Details to follow!

**The Summer Festival Season is beginning!**

- May 13, Dillsburg Pickle Fest, 8:00 am – 3:00 pm.
- June 10, Olde Annville Days, 9:00 – 2:00 pm
- June 10, York Pride, 10:00 am – 4:00 pm, York Fairgrounds, 334 Carlisle Ave.

**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](mailto: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, 398 N. York Street , Mechanicsburg, PA

Harrisburg– First Wednesday of the month, 6:30 pm, Zeroday Brewing Company Taproom, 923 North 3rd Street  
 Lancaster – Fourth Wednesday of the month, 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 Drafthaus, 238 S 3rd Ave, Reading, PA 19611  
 York Meeting – First Sunday at noon, Mexitaly Brick Oven Brewhouse, 2440 East Market St.

**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](http://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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Dietrich Dellinger, Vice-President	Nick Consoli	Cathryn Smith
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**Find and circle all of the words from the list below.**

Backseat	Parks
Beep	Pitstop
Billboard	Podcast
Camera	Radio
Driver	Road Trip
Explorer	Seatbelt
Family	Snacks
Interstate	Souvenir
Map	Vacation
Miles	Wildlife
Navigate	