

AOK|ATHÉE OKIE

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NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER PROTEST ON MAY 1ST, 2003

On Thursday, the first day of May, the activists and supporters of the religious right in Oklahoma will descend upon the state capitol to preach the word that this is a Christian nation. They will praise the current administration for its unprecedented efforts to undermine the historical separation of church and state, and they will damn those who believe in freedom of conscience for all Americans.

They will pray time and again that God will pour out Holy and Divine blessings upon our nation, as we wage a crusade against Islamic society in the name of Christian values. They will read aloud the prayer proclamations of both George Bush and Brad Henry, and they will smugly (and correctly) interpret these as a government endorsement of their own brand of Christianity. At noon, they will recite a blatantly sectarian prayer in the name of their "Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ." They will do all these things based on the assumption that *the state has the prerogative to advise its citizens on when, how, and whether to pray.*

The organizing force behind this event is the National Day of Prayer Task Force, chaired by Mrs. Shirley Dobson, wife of prestigious Evangelical Christian psychologist and author Dr. James Dobson. In a recent press release from the task force, he made his goal of reinstitutionalizing the Judeo-Christian civic religion painfully explicit, "The trend of removing God from all aspects of American public life has become increasingly disturbing. President Ronald Reagan once said, 'If we ever forget that we are One Nation Under God,

then we will be a Nation gone under.' Whether it involves the Ten Commandments or our Pledge of Allegiance, there is a very small number of people leading this movement to expel the Creator of the universe from society altogether. The National Day of Prayer provides an opportunity for the community of faith to take advantage of our freedom to worship and bring the Lord back into the public arena."

Maybe Dr. Dobson is correct, and there really is only a "very small number of people" willing to stand up against the Christian Right in favor of religious liberty for all citizens. Last year, only *four* people came out to protest the National Day of Prayer in OKC. This year...we shall see. For more information, visit <http://NationalDayOfReason.org>

April-May 2003 Freethought Calendar

May 1st – Capitol Building, OKC

Get there well before noon if you want to hold up one of the freethought banners!

April 25th – Dining out at Galileo's

Chill-out time in the Paseo district – 7pm
Good food, good drinks, and good people!

April 15th – Meetup @ Starbucks

8500 N. Rockwell Ave, OKC – 7pm
See <http://atheists.meetup.com> for more info.

April 6th – Book Club @ B&N Books

Barnes & Noble Booksellers located at
6100 N. May in Oklahoma City – 1pm
Topic: Pascal Boyer's *Religion Explained*

Thomas Jefferson to Rev. Samuel Miller On a National Day of Prayer and Fasting

23 January, 1808

I have duly received your favor of the 18th and am thankful to you for having written it, because it is more agreeable to prevent than to refuse what I do not think myself authorized to comply with. I consider the government of the U.S. as interdicted by the Constitution from intermeddling with religious institutions, their doctrines, discipline, or exercises. This results not only from the provision that no law shall be made respecting the establishment, or free exercise, of religion, but from that also which reserves to the states the powers not delegated to the U. S. Certainly no power to prescribe any religious exercise, or to assume authority in religious discipline, has been delegated to the general government. It must then rest with the states, as far as it can be in any human authority. But it is only proposed that I should *recommend*, not prescribe a day of fasting & prayer. That is, that I should *indirectly* assume to the U. S. an authority over religious exercises which the Constitution has directly precluded them from. It must be meant too that this recommendation is to carry some authority, and to be sanctioned by some penalty on those who disregard it; not indeed of fine and imprisonment, but of some degree of proscription perhaps in public opinion. And does the change in the nature of the penalty make the recommendation the less a law of conduct for those to whom it is directed? I do not believe it is for the interest of religion to invite the civil magistrate to direct its exercises, its discipline, or its doctrines; nor of the religious societies that the general government should be invested with the power of effecting any uniformity of time or matter among them. Fasting & prayer are religious exercises. The enjoining them an act of discipline. Every religious society has a right to determine for itself the times for these exercises, & the objects proper for them, according to their own particular tenets; and this right can never be safer than in their own hands, where the constitution has deposited it.

I am aware that the practice of my predecessors may be quoted. But I have ever believed that the example of state executives led to the assumption of that authority by the general government, without due examination, which would have discovered that what might be a right in a state government, was a violation of that right when assumed by another. Be this as it may, every one must act according to the dictates of his own reason, & mine tells me that civil powers alone have been given to the President of the US. and no authority to direct the religious exercises of his constituents.

I again express my satisfaction that you have been so good as to give me an opportunity of explaining myself in a private letter, in which I could give my reasons more in detail than might have been done in a public answer: and I pray you to accept the assurances of my high esteem & respect.

Quoted from *The Works of Thomas Jefferson*. (11:7-9)
Edited by Paul Leicester Ford. Federal Edition. G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1904-5.