

OK ATHEE OKIE

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NATIONAL DAY OF REASON—SUCCESS!

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May 1st – The first annual celebration of the National Day of Reason was by all accounts a resounding success. No less than thirty atheists, agnostics, freethinkers, and religious liberals came together to promote reason and protest the blatantly sectarian state-sponsored worship service being held on the south steps of the Capitol.

Some folks came out particularly to protest the statue laws affirming a day of prayer, some to protest the prayer proclamations recently pronounced by the President and the Governor. Others were less concerned with the Day of Prayer *per se* and more concerned with other infringements of church/state separation, such as the hundreds of thousands of tax dollars being laundered through the Oklahoma State Office of Faith-Based Services¹ into the hands of evangelical organizations such as the Cornerstone Assistance Network . While different folks had differing motivations, the underlying theme was shared in common by all and rang out with resounding clarity, “Church and state must separate!”

Oklahoma Atheists joined with various other local groups at the state capitol to protest the National Day of Prayer and promote strict church / state separation



The protest received well-balanced coverage from both FOX 25 and the *Edmond Sun*; nevertheless, the *Daily Oklahoman* took no notice of the protest in its article covering the National Day of Prayer. The *Oklahoma Gazette*, however, took notice of this oversight and called them on it (May 8th, pg. 23). Thank you, Chicken Fried News.

Should we experience another sevenfold increase in turnout next year, the protest will rival the main event on the Capitol steps. I can only pray that this will come to pass. ☺

¹ For more info - <http://www.faithlinks.state.ok.us/>

The Even Greater Tragedy

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News sources report that Deanna LaJune Laney of Tyler, Texas stated that God told her to kill her children, two of whom were found beaten to death with rocks on May 10th, 2003. The youngest was found in critical condition with severe head trauma.

Consider this horrible story, and compare it to what happened a few years back when a Japanese mother out in California walked into the sea with her two young children to commit suicide. Virtually everyone in this country (and rightfully so) condemned that custom as horrific.

Or look at 9/11 and numerous other atrocities committed by devout Muslims – e.g. Ibn Warraq’s article in *The Guardian*² – most people (reasonably) believe that Islam should be held culpable (at least to some extent) for the many atrocities committed by devout Muslims the globe over.

But (och and begorra!) it’s safe to say that (as with Andrea Yates and many other similar cases) fundamentalist Christianity will **not** – at least by most here in this country – be held even one iota responsible in this whole fiasco, not even by those very same Americans who would (understandably) condemn a Japanese custom and (deservedly) Islam for aforementioned tragedies.

I sent out the “Turbans” article on my default lists a few days back, and I received a number of positive e-mails about it. Guess what, though? Only **one** of those who praised Wurraq’s insight in that article has had ANYTHING to say about this story and its parallels. (And **that** fellow is a fellow rationalist!)

What’s sauce for the goose is, I guess, not sauce for the gander.

We find it acceptable (and well we should) when families of People’s Temple victims sue what is left of Jim Jones’ cult. We applaud (and rightfully so) when black mothers sue the Klu Klux Klan for having spread its message of hate and for having created murderers as a result. We concur (and wholeheartedly) when family members of 9-11 victims sue the very Saudis who financed Al Qaeda and other hate groups. **Why, then, should churches here in the good ol’ U.S. of A. be held to any different standard?**

² Available at <http://www.frontpagemag.com/Articles/Printable.asp?ID=4366>

We're not talking "gentle Jesus, meek and mild" here, folks. We're talking Abraham and Isaac. We're talking Jephthah's daughter. Some brave souls would even argue that we're talking the Atonement itself here. The Judeo-Christian tradition is replete with stories of divinely ordained genocide, cruel and unusual punishment, and, yes, infanticide.

Now, couple these gruesome tales with a strong belief in ongoing divine revelation (the Assemblies of God believes in this kind of revelation), the priesthood of all believers (the AoG teaches this), dark Satanic forces (another common belief), etc., etc. and – pretty soon, before you know it – you have a heady mixture of some damn dangerous ideas – ideas that are highly volatile catalysts for someone already prone to strong suggestion.

It's safe to assume that Ann Coulter and Cal Thomas and John Leo and other darlings of the Religious Wrong will, if asked, rise to "true" Christianity's defense while continuing to condemn Islam for horrors perpetuated by Muslims. **The hypocrisy will be overwhelming and the silence deafening.**

Just watch – the media will handle this whole affair with kid gloves lest they offend the hellfire and brimstone, gurgling glossolalians who have already given us such dubious figures as Jimmy Swaggart, Jim Bakker, and John Ashcroft.

Yes, the media will tread carefully to avoid giving umbrage to the parent religion (fundamentalist Christianity), and to most Americans in general. The truth will be nicely sugar coated, and the pink elephant in the middle of the living room deemed a mere coffee table worthy of our admiration.

In a typically maudlin and thoroughly disingenuous attempt at paying the requisite homage, "true" Judaism and Christianity will be proclaimed religions of peace and long-suffering and virtue, and the story of Abraham and Isaac will be promptly and conveniently forgotten. The grim tale of the daughter of Jephthah will be swept under the carpet. And few if any will dare bring up the bloody Atonement as yet **another** example of "divinely ordained" infanticide in the Bible.

No, suddenly, the media and the American public will start blaming mental illness, or demon possession, or some hitherto unheard of maternal disorder, or, oh, hell, I dunno, jumping rocks, or WHATEVER – **anything** to let religion in general and fundamentalist Christianity in particular off the hook in this horrible, senseless tragedy.

And **that** may be the even greater tragedy in the long run.

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There is No God

Arthur Hugh Clough

“There is no God,” the wicked saith,
“And truly it’s a blessing,
For whoa he might have done with us
It’s better only guessing.”

“There is no God,” a youngster thinks
“Or really, if there may be,
He surely didn’t mean a man
Always to be a baby.”

”There is no God, or if there is,”
The tradesman thinks, “’twere funny
If he should take it ill in me
To make a little money.”

“Whether there be,” the rich man says,
“It matters very little,
For I and mine, thank somebody,
Are not in want of victual”

Some others, also, to themselves
Who scarce so much as doubt it,
Think there is none, when they are well,
And do not think about it.

But country folks who live beneath
The shadow of the steeple;
The parson and the parson’s wife,
And mostly married people;

Youths green and happy in first love,
So thankful for illusion
And men caught out in what the world
Calls guilt, in first confusion;

And almost everyone when age
Disease, or sorrows strike him,
Inclines to think there is a God,
Or something very like him.

May 2003 Events

May 14th – Atheists movie night

E-mail movies@OklahomaAtheists.org for info.

May 20th – Atheists meetup – 7:06pm

Dina’s Café at 5816 NW 63rd St.

May 24th – Agnostics meetup – 1:00pm

Please vote for your favorite location at

<http://agnostic.meetup.com>

May 30th – Labyrinth Deli – 7:06 pm

Food, fellowship, fun! 3214 N. Classen Blvd.



Visit <http://www.CafePress.com/AOK1>
(or AOK2, AOK3, AOK4, etc. and so forth...)

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