



## HAPPY 16TH BIRTHDAY NTCOF !!!!!!!!!!!

## NEW SERVICE LOCATION(S) IN 2011 !!

**BEGINNING NEXT MONTH, March 6th, 2011, the NTCOF's monthly first-Sunday services will be held at the Sheraton Grand Hotel located right across Highway 114 from the Wyndham at 4440 W John Carpenter Freeway. NO CHANGE in the time at 10:30 AM and encouragement to come early for coffee and conversation and join us afterwards at the Golden Corral on East Grapevine Mills Circle near Grapevine Mills Mall. For May and September 2011 only services will be held at the Westin Hotel right on the other side of Esters Boulevard from the Wyndham. It will be fun to have a change of scenery after being so long at one location!**

## GOOD WITHOUT GOD(S) - AND WITH

Back in October of 2009, in the *Washington Post's* online "On Faith" section, John Mark Reynolds, Philosophy Professor at Biola, a Christian college in Southern California, wrote:

"Moral secularists depend on God for their morality, but don't recognize it."

In other words, there can be no good without the Christian God. Reynolds says:

"Theists have learned a thing or two about ethics from divine revelation"

So on this implausible logic "moral secularists" depend on divine revelation. We just don't know it.

"God is the cause of moral goodness, but nobody has to recognize the cause in order to get the benefit."

Here Reynolds admits that the Christian account of "where right and wrong come from" is not even motivating in a moral sense. It's like saying that we human beings are the products of evolution, although no one need believe in evolution to enjoy the benefits – and suffer the consequences – of our having come into existence in this way. The big difference is that there is a mountain of evidence that evolution produced humans and other living things but there is no evidence – but for the divine revelation Reynolds believes in – that God ever caused anything.

"Goodness is an idea that exists in the mind of God. It is built into the very fabric of His creation."

Even if God existed it's quite plain that believers don't agree about what on its mind. Nor do we see

goodness "built into" reality other than that there are good things – as well as bad things. So if evil is also a part of the fabric of reality then, on theistic terms, it must also exist "in the mind of God."

"Concepts such as good and evil are built into the human soul."

No, I think human beings are not born with any concepts, or even with minds to have concepts. We are born ignorant of such things and learn about good and evil. If we are lucky, we learn more and more as we go on, just as we do about other things.

"Our own time has developed weird and wicked obsessions, but history is a good corrective to them. The image of God can be seen in looking at large numbers of men, even if it is obscured just in looking at me, because of where I fall short."

The "weird and wicked obsessions" of our time, almost all of them, are the legacy of a history dominated by notions of divine-command theories of morality that made many people quite certain that slavery was a good thing, that killing "witches" and heretics was a good thing, and that women were intrinsically inferior, not just physically, mentally and emotionally, but even morally. These evils were all, supposedly, "in the mind of God." It took many people over many years to finally overcome these evils that nevertheless manage to survive in some form, to a greater or lesser degree, in some parts of the world.

"All the great world religions contain a seed of [God's] call, though Christianity contains that message in its fullness."

Well, Reynolds, being a Christian, has to say this, we can suppose.

“This dependence on God, directly and indirectly, is obvious by looking at the creation of human cultures. In terms of global culture, theists create and secularists appropriate what theists create. There is no evidence that great world cultures can be created or sustained over the long haul without religion.”

Since Reynolds is a professional philosopher I don't think it's taking unfair advantage to note his being unintentionally honest in saying – not once but twice – that “theists create.” Because divine-command theories of morality have it that theists only obey the rules that their god(s) create. Theists only create the god(s) and atheists have no interest in appropriating those. If anything, it's theists who rush to appropriate what more reasonable people come up with by reinterpreting – usually by just completely ignoring – what their deities say is morally right that is, in fact, very morally wrong, the aforementioned slavery, etc.

Can great world cultures be created or sustained without belief in god(s)? I'm glossing over Reynolds' substituting “religion” when surely he knows that not all religions are theistic, not even counting the religious opinions of Freethinkers. We may never know about whether they can be so created because it just happens that all human cultures have their origins in a barbarous and superstitious past. Maybe “great world cultures” cannot be created without some bloody wars, periods of autocratic tyranny and famines and plagues.

It will take longer to see whether great cultures can be sustained without god-belief depending on how long “the long haul” is. The record of cultures that do embrace god-belief – or other irrational ideologies – has not been all that good if wars and genocide are used as the measure. Ans so far it does not appear that as god-belief wanes that cultures become more violent and brutal or even unstable. Quite the contrary: see the article by Gregory S. Paul from the 2005 *Journal of Religion & Society* at <http://moses.creighton.edu/JRS/2005/2005-11.html> !

**COMING NEXT MONTH:  
“THE OPEN SOCIETY”**

**and more!**

**AT THE NEW LOCATION: SHERATON  
GRAND HOTEL AT 114 AND ESTERS**

**YOUR GENEROUS DONATIONS TO THE  
NTCOF ARE NEEDED, APPRECIATED,  
AND TAX-DEDUCTIBLE!!**

All NTCOF events can be found through our website calendar (yes, website needs and will get an update!), or through our meetup page, from which you can RSVP, at: - [www.meetup.com/church-of-freethought](http://www.meetup.com/church-of-freethought) - JOIN THE NTCOF MEETUP GROUP to get email updates too!

**Social Luncheon:** Today, immediately after our Service, join us for lunch and discussion at the Golden Corral Buffet and Grill in Grapevine, located just across from the Grapevine Mills Mall, at 2605 E. Grapevine Mills Circle, phone (972) 874-7900. To reach Golden Corral from the Wyndham, take the SOUTH exit from the parking lot (turn your head left as you walk out the main entrance), then drive across Esters Blvd onto John W. Carpenter Freeway (114). Then take the first exit RIGHT onto International Parkway (121), then Grapevine Mills Parkway exit. Turn LEFT on Stars and Stripes Way, continuing on to E. Grapevine Mills Circle.

**Freethought Salon:** Get together to discuss today's service topic or other conundrums of interest to Freethinkers. Second Sunday monthly, over breakfast, at the Hilton Vineyard in Grapevine this month; see the meetup site!

**Game Night:** The regular game night crew meets nearly every Friday night at the IHOP on 2310 Stemmons Trail (I-35), near Northwest Highway (Loop 12). Plan to arrive at about 7:30 PM, and stay late playing Risk, Rummikub, and other fun games!

**Secular Singles:** Freethinkers have met their life-partners with whom they have begun families through the Secular Singles group. Check the meetup site for the next date, time and location!

**Aim above morality. Be not simply good. Be good for something.**

- Henry David Thoreau



**DFWCOR**

Dallas-Fort Worth Coalition of Reason

The North Texas Church of Freethought  
A Fellowship of Unbelievers

**Presenters:** Dave Burgess and Tim Gorski  
**Music (usually) by** “Faithless Companions”  
Jay Purrington, Ed McGuire,  
Cathy & Kevin Smith and Scott Williams  
**Welcome Coordinator** Mark Barnick  
**Equipment Wrangler:** John Hendricks  
**Videographer:** John Gauthier  
**Minister:** Dr. Tim Gorski

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