



AMERICAN EXCEPTIONALISM



COMING AUGUST 1st 2010: “Why Does Truth Matter?”

Nearly all of us in the North Texas Church of Freethought are here because of the importance we attach to the idea of truth. We just don't think it is truthful to say that there are god(s) and that they wrote "holy books" and "divine laws" that we are bound to obey simply because these god(s) say so, and so on. At the very least, we hold doubt about these and many other things - and to some extent everything - to be a virtue, while faith is a kind of willful blindness and ignorance.

But why is this so important to us? And why does it seem to us that the truth is so unimportant to others? What is or how can anything be more important than the truth? Is there anything that matters more than facts and reason?

Our service on August 1st will be a consideration and exploration of these issues. Join us then for another unique, stimulating, and enlightening celebration of freethought. And bring the kids too!

“America is the only nation in the world that is founded on a creed,” said British writer and Christian apologist G.K. Chesterton in 1922.

“That creed is set forth with dogmatic and even theological lucidity in the Declaration of Independence; perhaps the only piece of practical politics that is also theoretical politics and also great literature. It enunciates that all men are equal in their claim to justice, that governments exist to give them justice, and that their authority is for that reason just. The point is that there is a creed, if not about divine, at least about human things.”

The truth is subtly shaded here. Like Christian apologists today, Chesterton wanted 18th Century Deism to be the Christian theism to which he was committed. But Chesterton gave ground in the last sentence. He evidently preferred not to sacrifice his real point over the issue of “Nature’s God.”

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”

It may be one of the best known sentences in the English language. Chesterton’s point, that this creed, “at least about human things,” is the basis for the American state, is made in the sentence that immediately follows:

“That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.”

These were radical ideas in the 1770’s. They were radical thereafter as well, erupting into civil war in the US in the 1860’s.

Even Chesterton, who became a Catholic in 1922, glossed over Jefferson’s assertion about “the consent of the governed.” For Chesterton, just authority of government attaches instead to an intention to “give justice.”

Among Americans today there is still argument – often bitter, partisan, and relentless argument - over what is life, whether and how people are

entitled to defend their lives, the form and extent and limits of liberty, and, above all, what happiness and the necessary means to pursue it are. Meanwhile, much of the rest of the world remains mired in archaic, authoritarian, "might makes right" and "we know what is best for you," and even theocratic notions of what government is and where its authority comes from.

One way to look at American Exceptionalism is that, in the US, we continue to discuss and debate and struggle over the meaning and practical application of what Jefferson and his colleagues asserted was "self-evident." What sort of nation would we even be if we were not preoccupied with such questions?

For we are not bound together by a single ethnicity or "color" or - despite the efforts and wishful thinking of some - religion, much less some thousands-of-years old history stretching back to antiquity and earlier. And it is scarcely possible for citizens of any country but the US to place their identity in question simply by objecting to what Chesterton called "a creed, if not about divine, at least about human things." Someone who said that things were better when they run by kings or queens, or who said that freedom of speech is a bad thing, would be almost instantly recognized as "un-American." But there is no meaningful concept of being "unJapanese" or "unMexican" or "unSudanese."

This is why, in the United States, a devotion to the Founders and the founding documents such as the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the First Amendment is no mere fetish. There simply is nothing else like it anywhere in the world.

So today, on the birthday of the United States of America, be proud to be an American. Be proud of the creed of the inalienable right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, even if - indeed, especially if - most of us are still learning about what it all means.



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

TEEN GET-TOGETHER AFTER LUNCH TODAY AT THE MALL!

All NTCOF events can be found through our website calendar(if it doesn't work, we're working on it!) , or through our meetup page, from which you can RSVP, at: - 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!

Facilitated Discussion on Moving Beyond Religion - join at <http://www.meetup.com/Freethinking/> - June meeting scheduled 6/24/2010 at 7 pm in Plano



DFWCOR

Dallas-Fort Worth Coalition of Reason

The North Texas Church of Freethought
A Fellowship of Unbelievers

Presenters: David Burgess, Don Lewellyn, Tim Gorski
Music Coordinator: Jay Purrington
Equipment Wranglers: Michael Grob, John Hendricks, Don Lewellyn
Videographer: John Gauthier
Ministers: Dr. Tim Gorski and Lu Whipple LPC

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