



## WHAT IF AN ATHEIST AMERICA IS NOT IN OUR FUTURE??

Polling data show a rising prevalence of Americans whose religious identity is "none." At least a part of this appears to reflect an increasing theological skepticism if not outright atheism. But what if this were not the case? What if orthodox fundamentalist Christian (and/or Jewish and/or Muslim) views were making rapid gains? What if unbelievers were shrinking to an even tinier minority than they have been? Or, what if, as analysts at the Pew Research Center projected in April of this year, higher fertility rates among believers will mean that the "unaffiliated" will dwindle?

What if – take it as a thought experiment – one were to wake up one day and, like some "Twilight Zone" story of the last human being on earth, find ourselves the only Freethinker on the planet? It would be as if human progress had been turned back to when the very first person had begun to doubt that spirits lived in every rock, tree and stream. What would be the harm in that? After all, as Thomas Jefferson put it:

"It does me no injury for my neighbour to say there are twenty gods, or no god. It neither picks my pocket nor breaks my leg."

Yet Jefferson said this by way of objecting to "the error" of supposing that religious opinions ought to be supported – today the word is "protected" – by the power of the state. How well has that worked, Jefferson asked, before answering:

"Millions of innocent men, women and children, since the introduction of Christianity [and the same may be said of Islam!], have been burnt, tortured, fined, imprisoned: yet we have not advanced one inch towards uniformity. What has been the effect of coercion? To make one half the world fools, and the other half hypocrites. To support roguery and error all over the earth."

These are injuries worse than petty thievery or a broken leg. This Jefferson well knew, just as he knew that beliefs about what deities want their followers to do lead to "roguery and error all over the earth." Indeed, if Jefferson had been the only religious skeptic on earth, as indeed, he called himself "a sect of one," he would have had only his words to

defend his ideas. More importantly, he would have needed others with minds open enough – who were allowed to be open – to receive such ideas.

It would be a hard existence to be the only Freethinker on the planet, though perhaps not so hard as it would be to be the only Christian, or the only Muslim or the only Hindu on earth. After all, it is only being free to think that leads to religious skepticism. It is not necessary to be persuaded of any doctrine or to "have faith" of any kind to be a Freethinker. It is only necessary to doubt, and to find in doubt an important tool toward building and improving upon an understanding of oneself and the world.

For reasons too many to mention here, it would be much better for America and the world if an "atheist America" is in our future. It would even be much better if believers of all kinds came to hold their beliefs with less ferocity and a greater capacity to appreciate them as manifestations of the internal human experience rather than revelations from an external divine source. But methods of polling people about their religious opinions will have to get much more sophisticated before we will be able to guess at whether that may happen.

In the meantime, it is important that people like ourselves "join the fray" in the marketplace of ideas concerning religion. It is not that we are under orders or obligation to do so. But what is to be human if it is not to struggle for truth and goodness? This must include a vigorous opposition to nonsense and negligence, especially moral nonsense and negligence, which is epitomized in supernatural religions.

The late Christopher Hitchens observed that:

"especially Monotheistic, Messianic religion, with a large part of itself it quite clearly wants us all to die, it wants this world to come to an end. You can tell the yearning for things to be over, whenever you read any of its real texts, or listen to any of its real authentic spokesman, not the pathetic apologists who sometimes masquerade for it. ... the contempt for the things of this world shows through all of them. ... You can tell it when you see the extreme Muslims talk, they cannot wait for death and destruction to overtake and over-

whelm the World, they can't wait for what I would call without ambiguity a Final Solution. ... and there are Christians in this country who consider it their job to help this happen so that Armageddon can occur, so that the painful business of living as humans, and studying civilization, and trying to acquire learning, and knowledge, and health, and medicine, and to push back the frontiers can all be scrapped and the cult of death can take over. ... there are people who sincerely mean it, who want to ruin the good relations that could exist between different peoples, nations, races, countries, tribes, ethnicities; who openly say they love death more than we love life and who are betting that with God on their side that they're right about that."

This must be resisted and defeated. And an atheist America would be helpful in accomplishing this. But it is not necessary.

## THANKS TO BELIEVERS, AMERICA IS ALREADY AN ATHEIST NATION!

In one important sense, we already live in an atheist America, a nation in which our system of criminal justice takes no notice of god(s). More importantly, it is an America in which our courts take no notice of god's antagonist, "the devil."

This has not always been the case. At this very time of year, in 1692, 19 people had, since June, already been tried, convicted and hanged for witchcraft during the New England Witch Hysteria or "Salem Witch Trials." One man had been pressed to death under stones for refusing to plead. The charges and convictions depended on "spectral evidence," apparitions that could only be seen by the accusers.

By October 12th, 1692, Massachusetts Bay Governor William Phips was faced with a situation that was spiraling out of control with no end in sight. On that date he wrote the Privy Council of the British monarchs William and Mary to say that he had "stopt" the proceedings. The letter pitifully expresses his fears that "my enemies are seeking to turn it all upon me." But it includes the key observation that Phips realized "what danger some of their innocent subjects might be exposed to, if the evidence of the afflicted persons only did previle."

This realization is why, today, courts of law in the US do not accept "spectral evidence." Nor do defendants – unless they are pleading insanity – offer the excuse that "the devil made me do it" or even "God commanded me to do it."

It is also why October 12th, besides being Columbus Day, is celebrated as Freethought Day by religious skeptics, rationalists, humanists, atheists and agnostics. Enjoy the New World of Freethought!

**All NTCOF events can be found through our website calendar , or 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 !!!**

**Social Luncheon:** Today, immediately after our Service, join us for lunch and discussion at the Jason's Deli on MacArthur Blvd just south of 635, at 7707 N MacArthur Blvd, phone (972) 432-0555.

**Freethought Salon:** Discuss today's service topic or other conundrums of interest. It happens most non-1st Sundays, over breakfast, at the Hilton DFW Lakes Hotel restaurant in Grapevine beginning 10:30 AM.

**Game Night:** This is 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!

**Freethought Book Club November 14th!** BOOK: Why We Believe in God(s): A Concise Guide to the Science of Faith by J. Anderson Thomson & Clare Aukofer.

**Communitas Dinner Group: Also planned for 11/14!**  
Have Another Idea? Email or call us about it!

**PLANNED FOR NEXT MONTH:**

**"HOW DO ATHEISTS  
HAVE THANKSGIVING?"**  
> **Sunday, November 1, 2015** <  
**COMFORT INN DFW AIRPORT NORTH**  
(about 1/2 mile west of the Sheraton on 114  
- take the Freeport Parkway exit, then the  
frontage road east just past Best Western)

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

The North Texas Church of Freethought  
The Fellowship of Unbelievers

Pastor (It's a Job Description, NOT a title!)	Tim Gorski
Operations Coordinator	Will Smith
Welcome Coordinator	Mark Barnick
Videographer:	John Gauthier
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