



Mid Ohio Atheists

A Newsletter for Atheists in the Mansfield Area

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Awaken Your Divine Heart Expo

Most atheists were skeptics before they were atheists. We just go one step further than people who call themselves skeptics but not atheists or agnostics. We apply our skepticism to religious claims as well as all other claims we hear.

On that note, members of Mid Ohio Atheists will be interested to know that pseudoscience has made it to our area in a big way. The Mansfield Reiki Association will be holding an "Awaken Your Divine Heart Expo" at the Richland County Fairgrounds on November 12th.

The association proclaims on its website to have vendors who will provide an "eclectic selection of holistic modalities, products and services" which includes among other things- Crystals, Stones, Aura photography, Reiki, Reflexology, Iridology, Polarity therapy, Intuitive readers, Natural holistic products.

Are you unfamiliar with some of these terms? Let's take a closer look just at Iridology. According to Wikipedia it "is an alternative medicine technique whose proponents claim that patterns, colors, and other characteristics of the iris can be examined to determine information about a patient's systemic health. Practi-

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tioners match their observations to iris charts, which divide the iris into zones that correspond to specific parts of the human body. Iridologists see the eyes as

"windows" into the body's state of health."

Further down the article it is stated that- "As opposed to evidence-based medicine, Iridology is not supported by quality research studies and is widely considered pseudoscience." This statement is backed up with references.

It always amazes skeptics that people can be taken in by practitioners of techniques as patently false and ridiculous as iridology.

Business for the association must be good since they charging vendors one hundred dollars (Continued Page 2)



Expo (cont.)

to set up a booth and an additional twenty five dollars if electricity is required. This is for a small ten foot by ten foot square that will be in use for only seven hours.

Now here's where the fun begins. Some members of Mid Ohio Atheists plan to attend the expo and sample the pure credulousness to be found there. There is a \$5 entrance fee but it should pale in comparison to the pure enjoyment to be had in going to the different booths to witness the silliness being put on display.

If you would like to go with the rest of the gang, let Mike Adams know you are interested and he will give you the details on when the group is going.

All members are gently reminded to be good ambassadors for Mid Ohio Atheists by treating everyone with respect. We should certainly question people's claims and beliefs but we should not disrespect the person. Just remember- there but for the grace of reason, go us all.



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Mid Ohio Atheists Newsletter

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The DeWeese farce is over. Or is it?

Richland County Common Pleas Court Judge James DeWeese has been trying to hang a religious poster in the Richland County Courthouse for over ten years now. He first started with a poster of the Ten Commandments in 2000. The ACLU filed suit on behalf of a local attorney and won in Federal Court. DeWeese removed the poster, only to replace it with another one a

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short time later. The second poster also had the Ten Commandments and was even more egregious than the first in that it also stated the Judge's personal religious beliefs. The ACLU tried to get the judge on contempt of court charges but the court said the poster was not the same one he was ordered to remove.

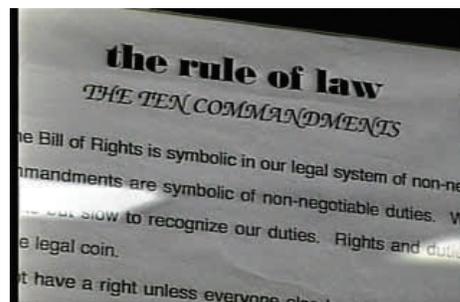
This meant the ACLU had to start over with a new lawsuit to have the second poster removed. Eventually, DeWeese was ordered to not display the second one two years ago, in October 2009. He appealed that decision and finally, after all Federal Courts that heard this case sided with the ACLU, on Monday, October 3rd, the U.S. Supreme Court refused

to hear the case. This lets the original ruling stand, that DeWeese cannot display the poster.

Notice the order was to "not display" the poster. The order does not say to remove the poster.

So, just like a petulant child, DeWeese kept the poster on the wall of the courtroom where he presides. He just covered it with a cloth and attached a sign that says "Censored". Even after the Supreme Court didn't think his appeal was worth hearing, DeWeese was quoted saying, "I will probably eventually take the display down."

What does 'probably' mean? Does it mean there is a chance that the poster will remain on the courtroom wall? What does 'eventually' mean? Does it mean the poster will stay up long term, as in- until DeWeese is no longer the judge?



Poster in Richland County Courthouse

This farce has gone on too long. Judge DeWeese has received his answer from his appeals; that his religious display has no place in the people's courtroom. This is no different from the answer he received after displaying the first poster.

On behalf of the members of Mid Ohio Atheists, I ask Judge DeWeese to remove your unconstitutional poster from off the wall of the people's courtroom, and don't replace it with another one. Higher courts have decided against you multiple times. I think you should follow their orders, just as you expect the people who appear before you to follow yours.

Ron Stephens, President
Mid Ohio Atheists

The Separation of Church and State

By Drenn Workman

Secularism is defined as:

1. *Religious skepticism or indifference.*
2. *The view that religious considerations should be excluded from civil affairs or public education.*

A lot of Christians feel that if the Government is secular that it is atheistic. This simply is not the case. Whenever some-

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one makes the assertion that the Church and State must remain separate and secular, they are simply saying in effect, that the state must remain separate and neutral from religion.

Our founding fathers came to America to escape the religious tyranny in Europe. In the United Kingdom the church ruled supreme, oppressing any contrary religious beliefs.

In an effort to ensure that everyone would enjoy complete religious freedom, free from oppression, it was decided to declare the government and religion separate entities. The government was not to take part in the establishment of any religion and to refrain from interference in the practice thereof.

Immediately Christians began a crusade that has lasted to this day of attempts to foil this concept of "Separation of Church and State".

Numerous attempts to make tax monies available for religious use have occurred. No sooner has one attempt been foiled than another is discovered. These blatant

attempts having been foiled, the religious finally found another way to sneak around this prohibition. Government needs a certain amount of income to function, to supply essential services, and to run the legal system. The churches' tax-exempt status removes it from the tax rolls and sloughs the burden of taxation onto the individual citizen. In this way, everyone, religious or not, is forced to support your local church.

This entanglement of religion and state must end. No tax monies of any kind should go to religious institutions no matter how noble the purpose, no matter how desperate the need. The tax-exempt status of the church needs to be abolished to relieve the burden of the individual tax-payer. If the tax-exempt status cannot be ended, then at the very least churches should be made to account for the expenditure of every last dime of donations, just as all other non-profit entities must now. The free ride of religious institutions must end.

Atheism and Morality

By Michael Adams

There has been much discussion recently from people about humanist values and how they relate to atheism or if they should be a concern for atheist groups.

I hear repeatedly from even fellow non-believers that by doing things like our group's regular donations, Adopt-a-Highway, and other such socially beneficial projects, that were attempting to tell people that we as atheists are somehow morally superior. Don't get me wrong, there are tons of arguments that can be made by people on both sides of that debate, but I'm not here to make those arguments. What I want to discuss is the way people view good actions.

When a religious group in America helps the homeless, feeds the hungry, or clothes the poor, no one accuses them of trying to act morally superior to anyone else. Their actions are never portrayed

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Atheism and Morality (continued)

as being arrogant or selfish. When people want to prove to another party that a person they are speaking of is of fine upstanding character, they might say something like- 'He's a good Christian.' Implying that even among Christians that he represents them better than most. Other Christians don't take offense, and often are the ones offering the sentiment. To simply call yourself Christian is to imply a better moralistic world view than your non-Christian counterparts.

Atheists, being only a product of disbelief, or lack of belief, whichever you prefer are often told that for atheists to

form groups makes them no better than the Churches. Atheists gathering and organizing is, in the eyes of some of

But for good people to do evil things, that takes religion.

our fellow atheists, tantamount to forming our own Church. When those atheist groups then begin to embrace Humanistic ideas, as many do, then they are frowned upon by some of their fellow atheists. Accusations of attempt-

ing to prove our moral superiority begin to get thrown, or sometimes even the age old playground taught resurfaces-- 'What, you think you're better than us?'

I believe it was Steven Weinberg who said it best, when asked about Religion, "With or without it you would have good people doing good things and evil people doing evil things. But for good people to do evil things, that takes religion. "

We've been fighting an uphill battle to simply prove atheists are at least as moral as anyone else...



While not all atheists are going to find value in the same things, or see the benefit of providing social services to the community where they are needed, that doesn't make those who do any less of an atheist-- we are still nonbelievers. We are nonbelievers that see the value in helping society and working to better the world in which we live. It doesn't mean we're better than anyone, and while I can't speak for everyone I feel I can speak for my group when I say we've been fighting an uphill battle to simply prove atheists are at least as moral as anyone else you might meet on a given day.

So to my fellow atheists who happen to also be Humanists, I applaud you! Continue to show those people who would quieten you that if nothing else you are a Good person, doing Good things first, and an atheist somewhere after that...