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Western Colorado Atheists

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Q & A about Atheists:

What is an Atheist?

A. Atheism is defined as:

1. The doctrine or belief that there is no god,
2. Disbelief in the existence of a supreme being or beings.

Atheists do not believe in fairies, angels, ghosts, gnomes, gods, prophets, demons, witches, leprechauns, devils or any other magical or supernatural beings.

Q. Is atheism a religion?

A. No. The only shared opinion among atheists is the nonexistence of a deity.

Q. Aren't atheists immoral?

A. No. Atheists simply promote human values and mutual kindness *without invoking specific religious doctrines*. The idea that comes closest to describing an atheist moral code is the idea that we should treat others as we ourselves would like to be treated.

Q. Aren't atheists Satanists?

A. No. Satan is part of the Christian belief system, and thus has no association with atheism. Beyond that, much of the negative information people believe about atheists is borne out of fear of atheism, and is spread to make atheists look as though they lack morals, ethics, direction and purpose in life without religious affiliation. This is far from being the truth.

Q. Aren't atheists communists?

A. No. Atheism has nothing to do with political beliefs. Contrary to communism, atheists believe in

freedom of thought, and in the values of freedom brought by a secular government. While some communist governments have supported atheism, being an atheist does *not* require an individual to subscribe to a communist political belief system, or any other type of political system.

Q. Aren't atheists just angry, depressed people?

A. No. Atheism is not derived from psychological conditions like depression, nor is it the result of anger. Most non-believers are emotionally healthy, but reject faith based on principles of sound reason rather than emotional problems.

Q. Don't atheists just want to attack Christianity?

A. Atheists do not "attack" Christianity, Catholicism, Islam, Judaism or any other religion. We consider all religions and gods to be equally without merit in an enlightened age of science and reason.

Q. Then what *do* Atheists believe?

- Atheists believe that society flourishes when people are free from religiously-inspired guilt and fear.
- Atheists believe in freedom of thought and inquiry.
- Atheists believe in gender equity for men and women.
- Atheists believe that people should be taught to respect each other because it is

simply the *right thing to do*, and not because they feel coerced into respecting others through threats of hell or promises of utopia after they die.

Q. But wasn't the United States was founded as a "Christian nation"?

A. No, the Founding Fathers were very *clear* that this country was NOT founded as a "Christian nation."

Amendment 1 of the U.S.
Constitution states:

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of the people to peaceably assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”

Article VI, Part 3 of the U.S. Constitution states:

“The Senators and Representatives before mentioned, and the Members of the several State Legislatures, and all executive and judicial officers, both of the United States and of the several States, shall be bound by Oath or Affirmation, to support this Constitution; **but no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States.**”

Q. What did the Founding Fathers actually say about religion?

“Religious controversies are always productive of more acrimony and irreconcilable hatreds than those which spring from any other cause. I had hoped that liberal and enlightened thought would have reconciled the Christians so that their [not our?] religious fights would not endanger the peace of Society.”

--First American President George Washington, in a Letter to Sir Edward Newenham, June 22, 1792

“The divinity of Jesus is made a convenient cover for absurdity.”

“The government of the United States is not, in any sense, founded on the Christian religion.”

--John Adams, 2nd President of the United States, Treaty of Tripoli, Article 11, 1796

“During almost fifteen centuries has the legal establishment of Christianity been on trial. What has been its fruits? More or less, in all places, pride and indolence in the clergy; ignorance and servility in the laity; in both, superstition, bigotry, and persecution.”

-- James Madison, American president and political theorist (1751-1836).

“History I believe furnishes no example of a priest-ridden people maintaining a free civil government. This marks the lowest grade of ignorance, of which their political as well as religious leaders will always avail themselves for their own purpose.”

– Thomas Jefferson, U.S. President, author, scientist, architect, educator, and diplomat, to Baron von Humboldt, 1813

“Question with boldness
even the existence of a God;
because, if there be one, he
must more approve of the
homage of reason, than that
of blindfolded fear.”

**--Thomas Jefferson to Peter
Carr, 1787. ME 6:258 Papers
12:15**

“All national institutions of churches, whether Jewish, Christian or Turkish, appear to me no other than human inventions, set up to terrify and enslave mankind, and monopolize power and profit.”

-- Thomas Paine, English-born American author and revolutionary leader (1737-1809).

“The way to see by faith is to shut the eye of reason.”

--Benjamin Franklin, *Poor Richard's Almanack*, 1958

“The Bible is not my book nor Christianity my profession. I could never give assent to the long, complicated statements of Christian dogma.”

--Abraham Lincoln, American President (1809-1865)



We imagine a world without
religion...



...without religious oppression of women.

We imagine a world without
religion...

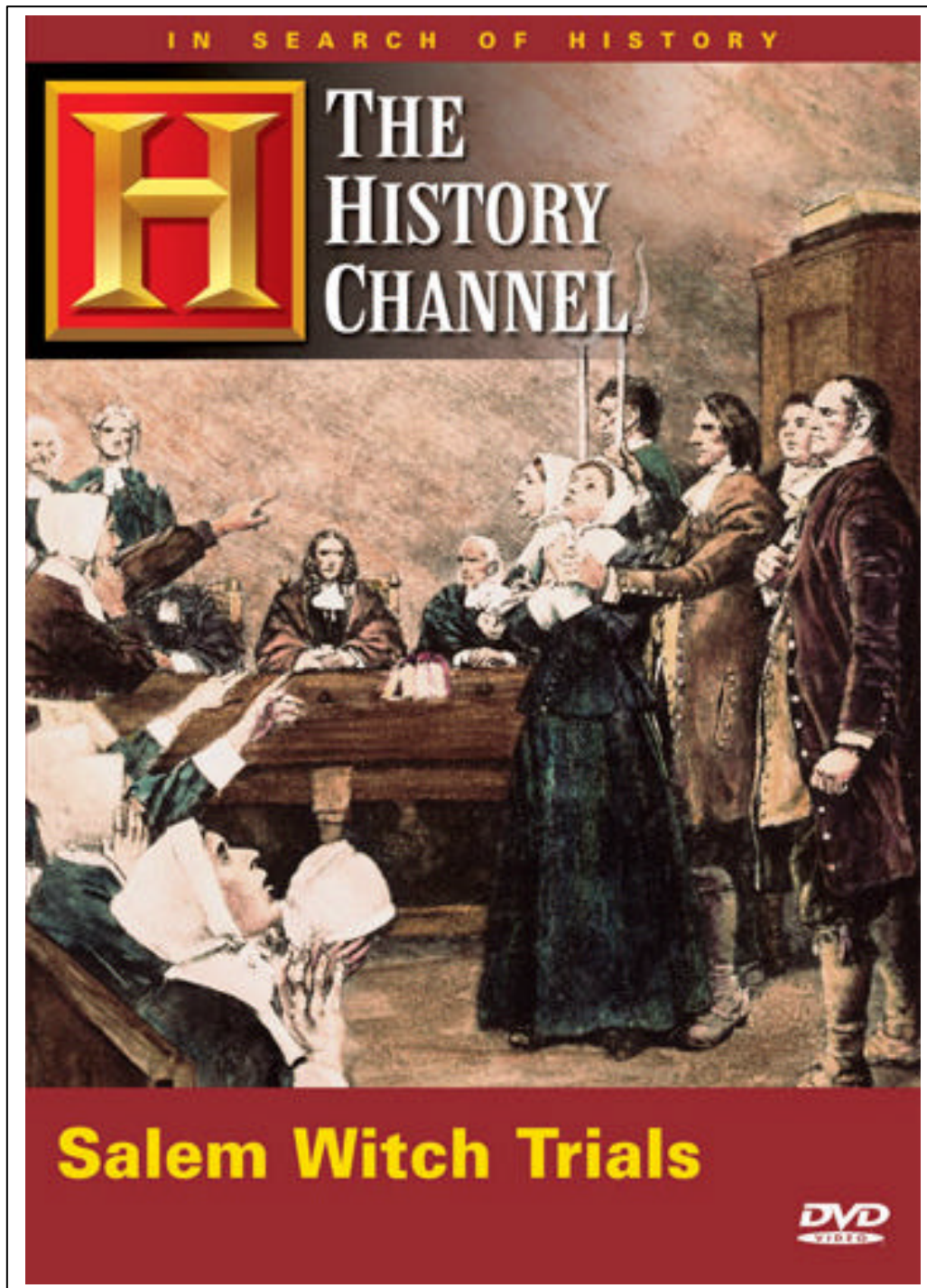
Theocracy is a form of government in which a god or deity is recognized as the supreme civil ruler. In a theocracy, religious institutional representatives, like a divine power or church, replace or dominate civil government.

Q. Do you want the United States to be a theocracy? If so, check out these existing models of modern theocracy:
! Iran ! Saudi Arabia ! The Taliban in Afghanistan ! The Vatican ! Hizbullah (“The Party of God”)

Atheists are deeply concerned about religious wrongs that have plagued, and still plague, our country and the world:



1632 - Italian physicist and astronomer **Galileo** maintained that the Earth revolved around the sun, disputing the belief held by the **Roman Catholic Church** that the Earth was the center of the universe. He refused to obey orders from Rome to cease discussions of his theories and was sentenced to **life imprisonment**. The Church did not acknowledge it was wrong until **1984**.



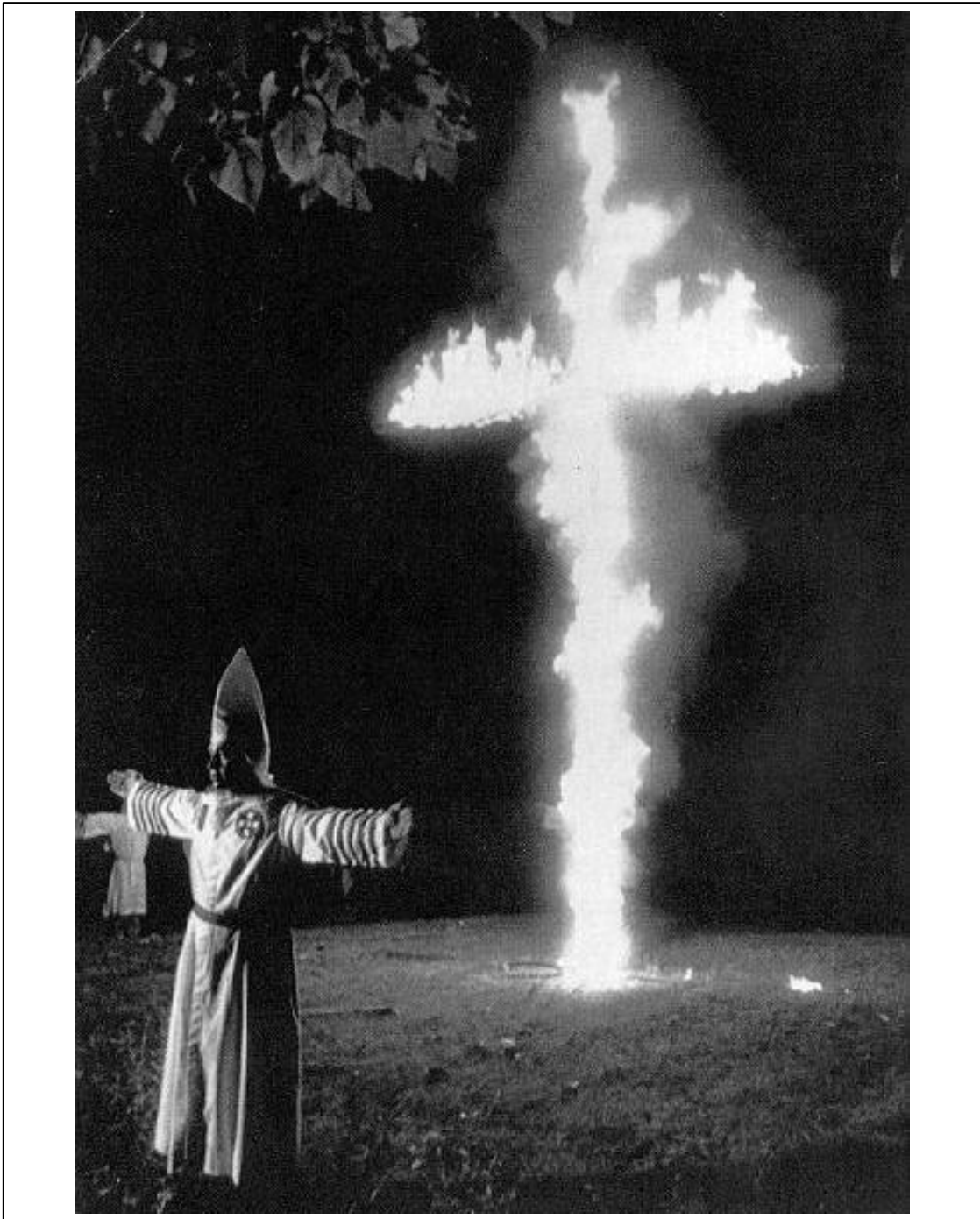
1692: Nineteen people were hung for allegedly practicing witchcraft

Imagine a world without religion...



World War II- The Holocaust--six million Jews
murdered because of their religious affiliation

Imagine a world without
religion...



Racial hatred and cross burnings by the Ku Klux Klan

Imagine a world without religion...



Evangelical preacher **Ted Haggard** founded the New Life Church in Colorado Springs, and was a leader of the National Association of Evangelicals from 2003 until November, 2006. Haggard was removed from his leadership positions in 2006 after allegations of **homosexual sex** and **drug abuse** were made by former prostitute Mike Jones. Initially Haggard denied even knowing Jones, but as a media investigation proceeded, he acknowledged that some allegations, like his purchase of **methamphetamine**, were true. He later added “sexual immorality” to his list of confessions.



Homophobia (irrational fear or hatred of people who are homosexual)



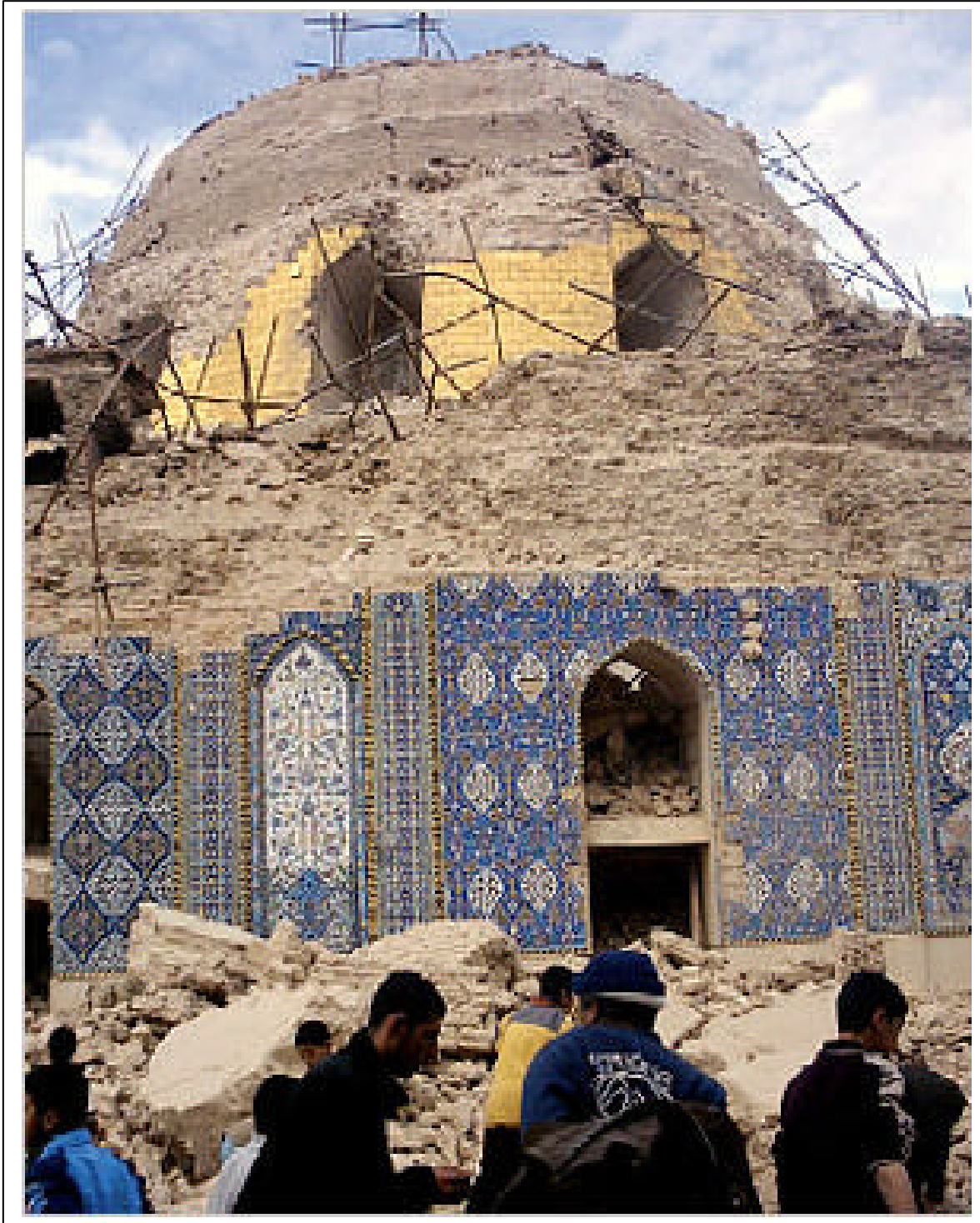
Jimmy Swaggart, America's leading "televangelist," resigned from his ministry after it was revealed he had been consorting with a prostitute. --BBC, Feb. 21. 1988



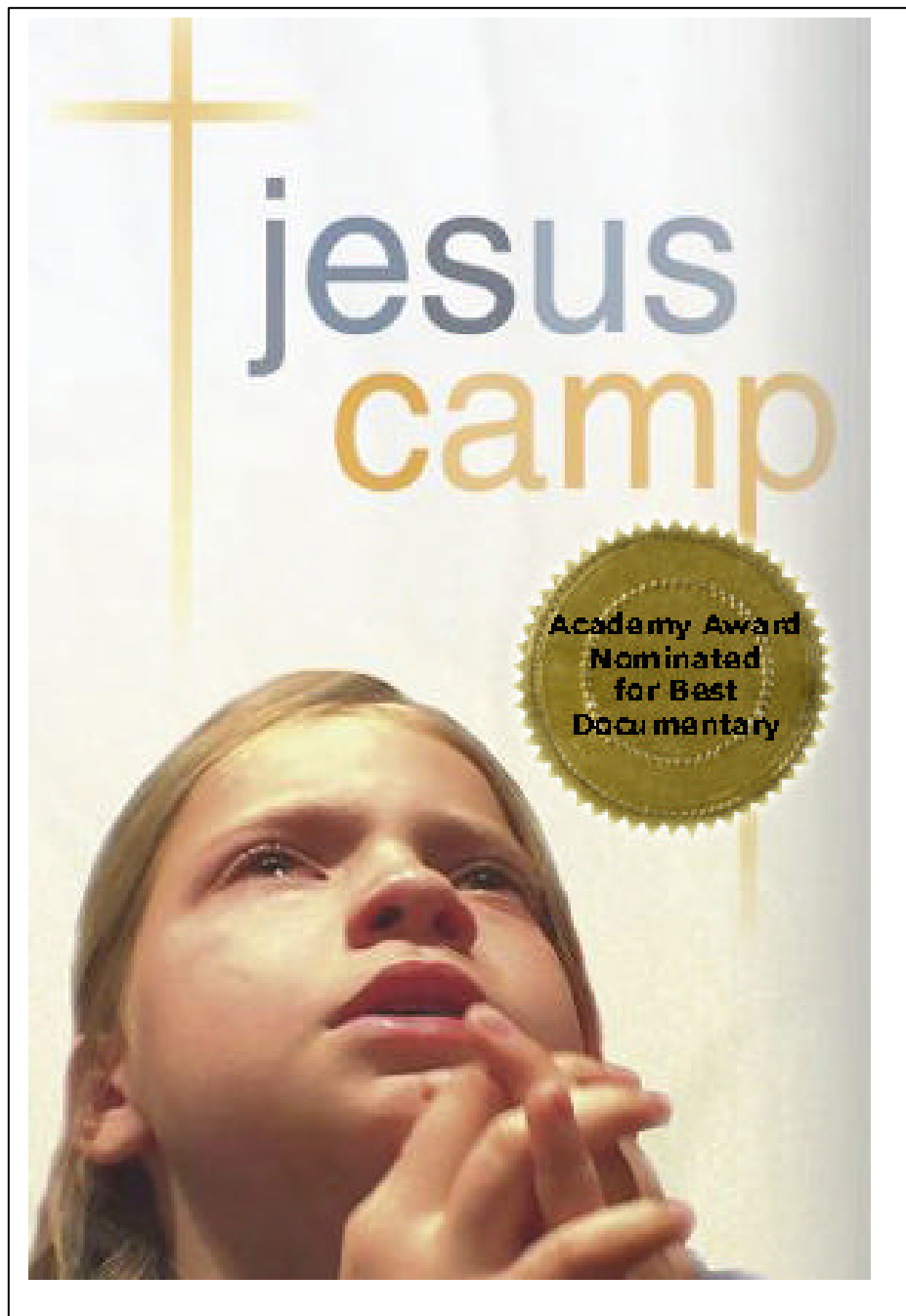
Televangelists **Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker** ran the PTL Club, and operated a national Christian ministry by satellite. Their incomes as professional Christians allowed them to own lavish homes and operate a Christian theme park. In 1989, Jim Bakker was convicted to defrauding contributors and sentenced to 18 years in prison.



Cardinal Bernard Law resigned as archbishop of Boston on December 13, 2002, as a result of the continuing Roman Catholic Church pedophile sex abuse scandals.



A group of Sunni Muslims bombed the Golden Mosque of Samarra, Iraq, in February 2006.



"I want to see them [the children] as radically laying down their lives for the gospel as they are in Palestine, Pakistan and all those different places," Fisher said. "Because, excuse me, we have the truth."

-- Pastor Becky Fisher, talking about her youth Bible camp in the film "Jesus Camp."

Iraq: Americas' "holy war?"



“...former Palestinian foreign minister Nabil Shaath says [President] Bush told him and Mahmoud Abbas, former prime minister and now Palestinian President: **"I'm driven with a mission from God. God would tell me, 'George, go and fight those terrorists in Afghanistan.' And I did, and then God would tell me, 'George go and end the tyranny in Iraq,' and I did."**

--U.K. *Independent*, “Bush: God Told Me To Invade Iraq,” 10/7/05

Well-known Atheists:

Douglas Adams, Ayaan Hirsi Ali, Lance Armstrong, Darren Aronofsky, Isaac Asimov, Dave Barry, Ingmar Bergman, Ambrose Bierce, Lewis Black, Richard Branson, Marlon Brando, Berkeley Breathed, Warren Buffett, Albert Camus, George Carlin, John Carmack, Adam Carolla, John Carpenter, Asia Carrera, Dick Cavett, Noam Chomsky, Samuel Clemens ("Mark Twain"), Billy Connolly, Noel Coward, Michael Creighton, Francis Crick, David Cronenberg, David Cross, Alan Cumming, Marie Curie, Rodney Dangerfield, Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, David Deutsch, Ani DiFranco, Micky Dolenz, Thomas Edison, Harlan Ellison, Brian Eno, Richard Feynman, Harvey Fierstein, Dave Foley, Jodie Foster, Robert Frost, Sigmund Freud,

Galileo, Janeane Garofalo, Bill Gates, Bob Geldof, Ricky Gervais, Ira Glass, James Gleick, Katherine Hepburn, Robert Heinlein, Nat Hentoff, Katharine Hepburn, Christopher Hitchens, Eddie Izzard, Penn Jillette, Billy Joel, Angelina Jolie, James Joyce, Wendy Kaminer, Diane Keaton, Ken Keeler, Helen Keller, Neil Kinnock, Michael Kinsley, Burt Lancaster, Richard Leakey, Bruce Lee, Tom Lehrer, John Lennon, Tom Leykis, James Lipton, H.P. Lovecraft, John Malkovich, Barry Manilow, Todd McFarlane, Sir Ian McKellen, H.L. Mencken, John Stewart Mill, Arthur Miller, Frank Miller, Marvin Minsky, Julianne Moore, Desmond Morris, Jack Nicholson, Freiderich Nietzsche, Randy Newman, Mike Nichols, Jack Nicholson, Gary Numan, Bob Odenkirk, George Orwell, Patton Oswalt, Camille Paglia, Linus Pauling, Steven Pinker, Paula

Poundstone, Terry Pratchett, Ayn Rand, James Randi, Ron Reagan Jr., Christopher Reeve, Keanu Reeves, Rick Reynolds, Gene Roddenberry, Joe Rogan, Henry Rollins, Andy Rooney, Salman Rushdie, Carl Sagan, Bob Simon, Steven Soderbergh, Annika Sorenstam, George Soros, Richard Stallman, Bruce Sterling, J. Michael Straczynski, Julia Sweeney, Jonathan Swift, Matthew Sweet, Teller (of Penn & Teller), Studs Terkel, Leo Tolstoy, Tom Tomorrow, Linus Torvalds, Eddie Vedder, Paul Verhoeven, Gore Vidal, Voltaire, Kurt Vonnegut Jr., Sarah Vowell, James Watson, Steven Weinberg, Joss Whedon, Oscar Wilde, Ted Williams, Steve Wozniak, Frank Zappa ...and hundreds more!

Further Reading:

The God Delusion, by Richard Dawkins
(2006)

Natural Atheism, by David Eller (2004)

Why Atheism? By George H. Smith

*Atheism: a Beginner's Handbook: All You
Wanted to Know About Atheism and Why*,
by Philip A. Stahl, (2007)

...or ask the librarian to recommend available reading materials about atheism here in the Library.

Recommended Web Sites:

- American Atheists www.atheists.org
- The Secular Web www.infidels.org
- Atheist Revolution
atheistrevolution.blogspot.com (blog)

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