

http://onfaith.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/panelists/willis_e_elliott/2008/04/no_and_yes_to_benedict_xvi.html

No and Yes to Benedict XVI

The Question: *In his speech to U.S. bishops last week, Pope Benedict XVI said: "Any tendency to treat religion as a private matter must be resisted . . . To the extent that religion becomes a purely private affair, it loses its very soul." Do you agree or disagree? Why?*

As I read the Pope's 4.16.08 address to the Roman Catholic bishops of America, I became convinced that this was his formative question in composing it: "What would I say and do if I were a bishop in the United States?"

Benedict XVI's diagnosis of our religio-cultural condition contained the expected catalog of isms – privatism, secularism, materialism, individualism, moral relativism, latitudinarian pluralism.

The current "On Faith" question suggests a central concern of the speech:

"In his speech to U.S. bishops last week, Pope Benedict XVI said: Any tendency to treat religion as a private matter must be resisted ... To the extent that religion becomes a purely private affair, it loses its very soul. Do you agree or disagree?"

I must disagree before I agree.

1.....I must *disagree*. The most private thing about human beings is "religion" as what one's "very soul," one's "self," is most loyal to. Through the stages of one's life, what one is most loyal to may change; but each of us is unique, and private, in the life-story of this loyalty.

2.....I must *disagree*. I am not so Protestant as to suspect that popes are up to no good no matter what they say. But I am Protestant enough to have counter-intuitive feelings and suspicions when a pope uses words such as "religion" and "private."

3.....I must *disagree*. "Public" is the opposite of "private," and official Roman Catholicism wants "religion" to be public in the sense that that church's understanding of "natural law" and "moral truth" should apply to state (government) as well as church ("religion"). For example, I worry about the politics, not just the theology, of this speech's assertion of "the right to life of every human being from conception until natural death."

4.....I must *agree*. "Private religion" is an oxymoron: "we are social beings...who find fulfillment only in love – for God and for our neighbor." The speech well details some of the current forces privatizing religion in America, inclining the public toward the drop-out mentality called "spirituality" (though he does not use this term). Robust religion requires "sound formation" of heart and mind, and it is made more difficult by our media "saturation with information."

5.....I must *agree*. Religion is about the whole of reality and the whole of life; and to the extent that it is marginalized away from the center, it is diminished in status from a tool to a toy: "it loses its very soul."

6.....I must *agree*. Forces and philosophies treating religion "as [exclusively] a private matter must be resisted." Active resistance, not a passive attitude toward the drift into "the naked public square" (of which Richard John Neuhaus has long warned) and secularist-atheist public discourse. "Free speech is valued" in America, said the Pope, who praised us for "bring[ing] moral arguments rooted in biblical faith into...public discussion."

7.....I must *agree*. Using "arguments from faith and reason" for our points of view, humanity must now honor "the dignity of the human person" and show respect for "the freedom of religion." Freedom? True freedom is "a liberation both from the limitations of sin and for an authentic and fulfilling life."

8.....I must *agree*. Humanity has "a deep thirst for God," who intends us "to drink from the wells" of his "infinite love." "Without God..., our lives are ultimately empty." Devotion, worship, life should be eager "to gaze upon him who is the source of our joy." What should center our lives, private and public, is "our deep yearning for intimacy with others and with our Lord."

There's a touch of irony and good humor in the fact that this pope, warning against privatizing religion, is himself a very private, inwardly oriented, Christian. In street language, the more he goes in (in prayer) the more he comes out (in gentle and generous witness). The impression his visit to America leaves on at least some of us is well put in the theme of his visit, which appears in the Bible (First Timothy 1:1) as "Christ Jesus our hope."

BY WILLIS E. ELLIOTT | APRIL 24, 2008; 12:19 PM ET

Comments

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MMA Paganplace, you said:

"Indeed, Priver, though, in general, it's common that minors don't get taught a number of things basically cause if their parents aren't Pagan, there's potential issues, there. Which sort of puts us in the position of younger seekers kind of being on their own... which is in some ways ironic, given the content of some other religions, but such is the world."

I've wondered about that too. I've had kids approach me that have been in that situation and all I can do is tell them to go so far underground that they can't be called on it. To learn about native flora/fauna/animals, to get proactive in their community. Reading everything they can get their hands on- continuing their education.

But I can't help but notice that so many of the young folks come in to us looking for easy answers or 'powers' that we can't give them and so end up bouncing right back into the same cycles they worked so hard to get out of.

Real understanding requires maturity- which seems to be really delayed in our country.

POSTED BY: PRIVER | APRIL 28, 2008 3:28 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

I'm not here to argue with you, Begone, but if you did a little research into the archaeological evidence that uncovered those dolls with enlarged breasts and genitals that date back to about 30,000 years, there is actually hard, tangible evidence. But there are a lot of branches from that tree. and roots that are there but under the soil, so to speak.

And the old folks got pretty good at hiding in plain sight to avoid capture as was evidenced by the Cunningfolk, among others. Being threatened with extinction will do that to people. Even to this day, some folks I know of, even the ones raised Pagan were also raised with some knowledge or participation in one of the monotheistic religions as a cloaking mechanism.

You said this: "Spirit Gods are appeased when they get angry and supplicated when the wolf comes to visit. Hirohito is the last man God of record. The pope, America's pastor Billy Graham and others are as close as one can get to being man Gods by being directly in touch with spirit God."

You have a different understanding of what constitutes a 'god' than I do. Other people have elevated those people to some sort of status- but why is a middleman necessary? I don't worship any person, nor does anyone else I know of. Underneath all the neat shiny clothes, the pope is just a guy. Human- no different from any of us.

I don't know if Jesus even ever existed. I wonder if maybe he is an abstract, pulled together as a result of the migration of peoples and absorption of others' stories. I leave it to others to argue over. I'm the first one to admit I don't know anything about Christianity, and the more I find out, the more it turns me off. But I can respect the fact that others find great solace in it, and I'm all for anything that makes people want to work to be better. If Christianity or monotheism works for others that's wonderful. They are welcome to do whatever they do.. just allow me the same right to disagree. That's all.

who is this 'horse's mouth' you speak of?

POSTED BY: PRIVER | APRIL 28, 2008 3:11 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

PRIVER, those 30,000 year old findings are interpretations and not hard facts. I got this straight from the horse's mouth, "no one worships spirit Gods." Only men Gods are worshiped.

Spirit Gods are appeased when they get angry and supplicated when the wolf comes to visit. Hirohito is the last man God of record. The pope, America's pastor Billy Graham and others are as close as one can get to being man Gods by being directly in touch with spirit God.

All true men Gods were sons of spirit Gods, or sons of sons of spirit Gods, Jesus and Hirohito for example. I understand you dispute that Jesus was the son of a spirit God and in particular the Jewish spirit God.

The number one distinguishing characteristic of man Gods is "passing the plate." Constantine invented the "as close as necessary" to man God understanding the benefits are the same. It's like horse shoes and nuclear weapons, close counts.

PAGANPLACE, I hope you understand Two Eagles. "Sex all night" is boasting, bragging and a put down of white male's sexual capabilities. "Women do all the work" follows suit, their attractiveness. He is also saying that Native Americans had the gender gap closed while avoiding the inherent perversions brought about by white man's mating protocols.

"We are all God's children" is correct, the fertility God which is natural and normal but is perverted by white man's religion. Probably related to how hard white men work while NA women do all the work, when they're ready and not when he's ready for he's ready willing and able all night long.

In case you didn't know, Two Eagles is a real chief and also a "natural" actor. He played a "Tonto" like role in, "The Outlaw Josey Wales" and the grandfather of, "Little Big Man."

POSTED BY: BGONE | APRIL 28, 2008 11:51 AM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

....a different kind of nonsense.....

Experience Chan! It's not mysterious.
As I see it, it boils down to cause and effect.
Outside the mind there is no Dharma
So how can anybody speak of a heaven beyond?

Experience Chan! It's not a field of learning.
Learning adds things that can be
researched and discussed.
The feel of impressions can't be communicated.
Enlightenment is the only medium of transmission.

Experience Chan! It's not a lot of questions.
Too many questions is the Chan disease.
The best was is just to observe the
noise of the world.
The answer to your questions?
Ask your own heart.

Experience Chan! It's not the
teachings of disciples.
Such speakers are guests from outside the gate.

The Chan which you are hankering to speak about
Only talks about turtles turning to fish.

Experience Chan! It can't be described.
When you describe it you miss the point.
When you discover that your proofs are
without substance
You'll realize that words are nothing but dust.

Experience Chan! It's experiencing
your own nature!
When you don't fake it and waste time
trying to rub and polish it,
Your Original Self will always shine
through, brighter than bright.

Experience Chan! It's like harvesting treasures.
But donate them to others.
You won't need them.
Suddenly everything will appear before you,
Altogether complete and altogether done.

Experience Chan! Become a follower
who when accepted
Learns how to give up his life and his death.
Grasping this carefully he comes to see clearly.
And then he laughs till he topples the
Cold Mountain ascetics.

Experience Chan! It'll require great skepticism;
But great skepticism blocks those
detours on the road.
Jump off the lofty peaks of mystery.
Turn your heaven and earth inside out.

Experience Chan! Ignore that
superstitious nonsense
That makes some claim that they've attained Chan.
Foolish beliefs are those of
the not-yet-awakened.
And they're the ones who most need
the experience of Chan!

Experience Chan! There's neither distance
nor intimacy,
Observation is like a family treasure.
Whether with eyes, ears, body, nose, or tongue -
It's hard to say which is the most amazing to use.

Experience Chan! There's no class distinction.
The one who bows and the one who is bowed to
are a Buddha unit.
The yoke and its lash are tied to each other.
Isn't this our fist principle the one
we should most observe?

Master Xu Yun

POSTED BY: PERSPECTIVE | APRIL 28, 2008 11:37 AM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Indeed, Priver, though, in general, it's common that minors don't get taught a number of things basically cause if their parents aren't Pagan, there's potential issues, there. Which sort of puts us in the position of younger seekers kind of being on their own... which is in some ways ironic, given the content of some other religions, but such is the world.

Kids *raised* Pagan, of course, typically get raised to the ways, with as much age-appropriate material as they want, and all.

POSTED BY: PAGANPLACE | APRIL 28, 2008 11:22 AM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Well, I did get it after awhile. For me the concept has always been foreign. I don't know about other synagogues or the larger Jewish community, but in the temple I attended way back when it was considered bad form to ask for money during services. But then at that time I did attend mostly kid's services. I guess the closest we ever got was being asked during Sunday school class to give pennies to plant trees in Israel.

Never thought to compare it to something like the old frontier life. In a way that makes sense.. but I think Pagans and Christians alike in some ways have mythologized what life was really like back then to a certain degree. That's the biggest critique that I run into with some of our authors- there is not a direct line from past to current practices like they want to think- but some of the concepts that modern practices are based on and evidence that has been unearthed of worship of the divine feminine go back to about 30,000 years.

Perhaps to be of most value in this day and age is not to completely swing back to the ancient time but to work towards emphasizing male and female balance.

Games? I suppose. Our rituals are not about all solemnity all the time. We just think of it as 'reverence and mirth'. Must all religion be so serious all the time?

It's been my experience that the young folks that come in to us really need time to mature to understand what it really means to take responsibility for their actions and have respect for those that would be their teachers.

Again, I can't speak for all groups, but nobody attends our classes under age 18. And no matter how experienced someone is, they don't teach at age 18. Most teenagers these days need to understand that there are real consequences to their actions and some take years and REALLY bad mistakes to figure that out. The few rules we do have are there for a reason. People making plays for power are asked not to come back. We've been very lucky that hasn't happened often.

You said this: 'Of course those "Pagans" must to be told about Jesus and threatened with hell else they will surely go to hell. If that is hell then one can hardly imagine what heaven is like.'

So I've heard. If they kept it to just talking about hell then maybe things would have turned out differently. Speaking as someone who has been told I'm going to hell so many times I've lost count just based on who I was born to, my response to those folks is always the same. 'nobody I love and care about would be in the Christian heaven anyway by virtue of being either Pagan or Jewish, so why would i want to be somewhere they're not?'

POSTED BY: PRIVER | APRIL 27, 2008 11:27 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Well, Bgone, sometimes we get some work out of the guys, but, (And this is my observation, not a uniform one: I'm so often trying to encapsulate the community here) ..actually, we do operate in the better senses of 'tribal' with so many things, adapted, of course, for modern life.

Note Priver not even getting it when you say 'pass the plate,' (as in a collection plate.)

POSTED BY: PAGANPLACE | APRIL 27, 2008 9:03 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Priver:

That is a good description of a frontier settlement, the move west and the gold rush pre preacher. Then came a man with a Bible, a church got built and the better class of people emerged. I'll wager you play games and young folks can get to know each other too.

Chief Two Eagles said it as well as it can be said speaking about how things were before white missionaries came. "No taxes, no debt, plenty buffalo, plenty beaver and water clean. Women did all the work. Medicine man free. Men hunt and fish all day and have sex all night. No way to improve that system."

Of course those "Pagans" must to be told about Jesus and threatened with hell else they will surely go to hell. If that is hell then one can hardly imagine what heaven is like.

POSTED BY: BGONE | APRIL 27, 2008 2:37 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Hope you don't mind my jumping in here. Just had a couple thoughts.

On this:

"Passing the plate" that has food on it isn't free for somebody. And it is getting less free at an alarming pace."

Certainly can't speak for others, but for our little community folks are invited to bring a covered dish to share, but it's certainly not mandated or enforced by anyone. some people have their specialities when it comes to food and enjoy showing off their skills. even if someone just picks up some juice or something to share, the cost of it all is spread out among the members.. and there's always enough to go around.

"could I be a Pagan and not know it?"

Dunno but it was certainly true in my case. :)

and the lack of organization is one that is one of the main societal critiques of the community because people think that either Pagans 'don't exist' or that the 'numbers are too small for the larger community to care about things we take seriously' or we 'don't advertise any charity work that we do therefore we must not be doing it at all.' None of which is true.

But it works for us and we wouldn't be comfortable any other way. It may have something to do with why some people who end up practicing different religions begin their search in the first place, regardless of whether or not they end up Pagan.

POSTED BY: PRIVER | APRIL 27, 2008 12:58 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

I have some observations and disagreements regarding Warren Anderson's post.

Public and private are opposites when it comes to religion. What I believe is neither your nor the government's business - it's private not public and there is no continuum. He says Christians are One Body, but who defines who is "Christian" and who is not? A Pope who, (mortal and is not God nor neither infallible) labels non-Catholics as "wounded" and not really Christian? Although I believe in the words of Christ, your Catholic Faith has always been exclusively "private", i.e., reserved to behind closed doors. You deny me the Lord's table as if His table and the invitation to it is the exclusive "private" possession of the Church.

As the persecution of Christians down through the ages, these so called "Christians" don't have a very good track record of their own with the original Crusades, the Inquisition and now the Christian Oil Crusades.

Christians have killed for hundreds of years at the outset because of their claim on that they had a right to enforce their righteous self-might on "the pagan public religion." Witness in our own day the public persecution of gays in the Catholic and Mormon churches.

Furthermore, one is loyal to one's own soul. No two people really agree what is the correct loyalty to God. To be loyal denotes a need for information, or formation not just spoon fed Church dogma and propaganda. You say "To inform the mind - intellect and will - a proper psychology or anthropology must be communicated and received." Who or what decides what is proper and to be communicated? - Which Church is "a reliable teacher and provider of formation for the whole person: mind, body and soul?" Yours? Mine? Some others? Who are you to dictate to the rest of us? Are you God or did he make you boss?

I agree with you when you say "Narrow or stunted views of faith tend to marginalize and polarize either the vertical relationship (between God and individual soul) and the horizontal dimension (between God and community)." For Catholics, it's "my way or the highway and the rest of you be damned. Keep your Church to yourself and out of the public domain. You can believe what you want. Maybe you're right and maybe you aren't but you don't have a right to try to shove your version of "God in a box" down the rest of our throats.

POSTED BY: ROY | APRIL 27, 2008 9:13 AM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Ah, Bgone: I see.

" Bgone:

"Pagan, a "watcher" is one who keeps an eye out for sinners."

Ah. I see what you mean, now. Not in that sense, no.

Watch*dog,* maybe: it's not like there's some Official Pagan Office Of Orthodoxy Enforcement, or any such. I've just often been in the position of being one of the ones to find out if there's something hinky going on, ...I have a rep in some places as someone to go to if things get weird, so if some newbies are dealing with charlatans or exploiters or something, I tend to find out, cause exploiters and charlatans tend to stay clear of concentrations of people who know their stuff. The community takes a *dim view* of such things, shall we say.

It's one of the challenges of *not* having an organizational hierarchy or orthodoxy, but those things have their own problems, as much talk here lately has demonstrated. In general, we prefer our way.

""Passing the plate" that has food on it isn't free for somebody. And it is getting less free at an alarming pace."

I presumed you were referring to a collection plate, ...we do do food drives and have our charities, but it's not part of services. There's not a lot of money involved, actually, most of the clergy have day jobs, and the festivals about break even. :)

"The picture I'm getting of your gang is one without organization."

No, not on a hierarchical or centralized level. We're actually notoriously hard to organize on any big scale, but this is part of our protection from the abuses that can come from such things. We believe in spiritual and religious autonomy, really, and the leaders tend to be those who earn some respect....and many of those end up organizing things on one level or another.

" Could I be a Pagan and not realize it?"

You don't *sound* like it, but it happens. :)

Worshiped any of the Old Gods, lately? :)

However this tangent related to topic. :)

POSTED BY: PAGANPLACE | APRIL 26, 2008 7:49 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Public and private are a continuum, not opposites. For Christians, we are saved as members of a community. We are One Body, and our actions, public and private, affect the Body. The Christian Faith has never been exclusively "private", i.e., reserved to behind closed doors. Explain, otherwise, the persecution of Christians down through the ages. Christians were killed for hundreds of years at the outset because of its claim on the whole person and the challenge that presented to the pagan public religion. Witness in our own day the public persecution of Catholics in China.

Furthermore, one is not loyal to one's own soul. One is loyal to God. To be loyal denotes a need for information, or formation. To inform the mind - intellect and will - a proper psychology or anthropology must be communicated and received. Who or what does the communicating? - the Church, a reliable teacher and provider of formation for the whole person: mind, body and soul.

Narrow or stunted views of faith tend to marginalize and polarize either the vertical relationship (between God and individual soul) and the horizontal dimension (between God and community). What is lost is the both/and cohesion of the relationship between the public and private spheres in which the faith relationship is expressed. For Catholics, living according the whole (kata holos) means receiving the whole of revelation guided by the Magisterium that is protected by the Holy Spirit, as Christ promised.

POSTED BY: WARREN ANDERSON | APRIL 26, 2008 5:29 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

'Pagans pass the plate'...

um.. maybe for the food after the service.. come to think of it i haven't seen any circle take money. ever. it's not what it's about. even the place where we go on rainy days was given to us by the local UU church and is free for us. The open area we use some of the time is generously donated to us by the local historical society, who has a great relationship with our community. Also free.

Our clergy don't get paid for what they do. They've said that spirituality should be open and free for everyone.

we've created the kind of community we want- based on mutual respect, looking out for each other and keeping all of us honest. we're all 'watchers' in that sense. Nobody's voice is considered more than any others when issues are raised that need to be worked out. most of the people have different paths that they are on spiritually, and the gifts and knowledge of each one are ones that the whole community benefits from.

I can't imagine going from this back to some sort of hierarchy that insists on obedience to one way.

But neither would I want someone to force themselves to believe something they do not just to 'fit in'. I don't like it when others try to do it to me, so I keep my mouth shut. If people want what we have to offer, they always seem to know how to find us.

POSTED BY: PRIVER | APRIL 26, 2008 1:01 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Pagan, a "watcher" is one who keeps an eye out for sinners. The Salem witches had to be identified as such. That was done by watchers. Pat Robertson is a watcher who collects "gifts to God" for his watching. Ever hear of the "Watchtower." Muslims have "paid" watchers known as morals police that are actually judges and executioners as well "seeing sin" and punishing it on the spot.

"Passing the plate" that has food on it isn't free for somebody. And it is getting less free at an alarming pace.

The picture I'm getting of your gang is one without organization. Not being very well organized myself I can identify with that. Could I be a Pagan and not realize it? I suspect we, the disorganized are a majority but without an organization to count us we'll never know.

POSTED BY: BGONE | APRIL 26, 2008 12:28 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Hrm, Bgone:

" BGone:

"You do pass the plate,"

We give people *food,* if that's what you mean. 'Pass the plate,' as part of a religious service with money, no.

"have *officials* or *watchers* or something don't you?"

No offices or officials, no. As for 'watchers,' that's me, among others. And among everyone. No officialness to it, though. What are you getting at?

" I mean, Pagans do have priests and priestesses don't they and those are full time *paid* positions like Catholic priests?"

laugh. Hardly. Actually, whether there should *ever* be *any* paid professional clergy is one of the big controversies in the Pagan community, these days.

"Constantine had several reasons to *convert* to Christianity. One of the more subtle was the fact that the plate was passed and folks put their money on it. The Pagan religion of Rome had people doing their praying at home, kinda private."

One thing that's often glossed over by those who blame modern Pagans for 'Pagan' Rome was that the state Gods were different from yer household and family Lares and Penates, never mind the kind of Olympian types you hear so much about... in fact the state appointed a 'pontiff' as the state head of a lot of the temples that were *there,* as administrators, whether they were and usually cause they *weren't* devotees of the Gods in question.

Constantine made everyone convert to Christianity in his reign, but himself worshipped Apollo till his deathbed, where he converted in order to try and escape the displeasure of the same God.

Roman government was different from Roman Paganism, and even *they* called the people with beliefs more like those of moder Pagans 'Pagani.' (It wasn't actually the Christian Roman empire that started that, yaknow.)

" Christians must come to church and pay their tithes. Of course Constantine sat at the top of the pyramid with all but him on salary."

What a bargain, eh?

"Anyhow, don't save a seat for me."

No sweat. We don't actually ...sit to worship or ...have seats, come to think of it.

I was suggesting possible things ministers could do when the Bible bombs. I see I don't have a real good feel for what Pagans are or do."

Guess not.

We're *very* not-interested in downsized priests and atheists coming in just for, well, whatever medieval motivation you may have in mind.

"This is one of those rare cases where I declare myself too old to learn. But best wishes anyhow and may the Gods be generous."

So mote it be.

But if you're 'too old to learn,' take my word for it, modern Paganism grew up in a world that knows everything you think you know about 'Religion' and is pretty specifically adapted to not be based on the things you suppose are inherent, cause you've seen so little different.

POSTED BY: PAGANPLACE | APRIL 25, 2008 5:47 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Paganplace

You do pass the plate, have *officials* or *watchers* or something don't you? I mean, Pagans do have priests and priestesses don't they and those are full time *paid* positions like Catholic priests?

Constantine had several reasons to *convert* to Christianity. One of the more subtle was the fact that the plate was passed and folks put their money on it. The Pagan religion of Rome had people doing their praying at home, kinda private. Christians must come to church and pay their tithes. Of course Constantine sat at the top of the pyramid with all but him on salary.

Constantine promised to cut taxes, increase spending and balance the budget. He did!!! Through the grace of God taxes were cut yet revenue increased -- same thing heard said at recent political debates. Must have been some kind of miracle that is repeatable.

Not really. He mandated that everyone was a Christian and instituted universal tithing -- just like America today with tax free, tax deductible gifts to *God's representatives* collected at tax exempt facilities called churches, temples, synagogues and mosques -- where the president sent us to pray 9-11-2001.

Anyhow, don't save a seat for me. I was suggesting possible things ministers could do when the Bible bombs. I see I don't have a real good feel for what Pagans are or do. This is one of those rare cases where I declare myself too old to learn. But best wishes anyhow and may the Gods be generous.

POSTED BY: BGONE | APRIL 25, 2008 5:23 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

See, Bgone? There's *abso-smurfly *nothing* in Pagan religion* that says 'Everyone has to do this.'

We don't believe in belief, that way. Even the basis of our morality isn't a commandment enforced by judging Gods, just something we observe and think we got some nice ways to deal with. Burn all the Pagan books, obliterate all the Pagan ways, what we live by will still be there.

We know this, cause it's been tried.

And here we are.

You mistrust visions. You're right to. I've had mine. I won't tell you about em. Gods know I got the engraved invitation wrapped around a clue-by-four, not to mention a certain dose of charisma, if little else in this life. But I won't tell you about them. Cause the path I found does not seek 'followers,' nor 'Converts.'

And has no need to.

Monotheists and monotheist atheists are really talking the same game, in so many ways. A choice between living irrational religiosity and living oblivion. and fight over and fear 'converts.'

What if that's not the game of life *at all?*

Bgone"

"The Reformation privatized religion -- gave anyone with a Bible the right to pass the plate without sending any of the money to Rome."

Franchised the Bible, more like. Didn't really change that much, just 'cut out the middleman,' ...but middlemen don't like to be cut out. Soon they adopted their own.

"People been into religion for a long time and that is not likely to change. Pagans probably accept converts to say nothing of visions and sessions with angels and so on."

Actually, we don't.

Someone says, "I wanna convert, convert me!"

We say, "Ain't that easy. Convert yourself. The Gods are anyone's, but you don't just sign on some dotted line. :)"

'Conversion' is an idea from creedal religions that isn't just a no-no to our current ways, but which is actually *nonsense.*

You don't 'convert' to Paganism. Certainly, we don't 'convert' anyone. ...maybe you just come home. That's how it feels to a lot of us.

From our point of view, Paganism isn't a 'creed'... which is why it looks all manner of chaotic from the outside. ..cause it's not an authority you can bend knee and convert to. We don't believe in *belief* in the same way that religions with book-creeds do.

Anyone who metaphorically walks in off the street wanting to swear oaths to particular Gods on the spot usually gets *notes of caution and a reading list, along with some stories and attention,* not a 'conversion.'

One thing that anti-religious atheists don't tend to *get* is that actually, 'religion' is not all the same, structurally, and functionally.

We don't operate that way. People who think they're 'converting' tend to have more an idea what the Gods are about from the Christians than they do from us.

They think we're all about shallow hedonism and certain Faustian ideas of magic, decide they *want* that, and when that turns out to not be the case, they'll either like what *is* going on, or call us fluffbunnies and start learning some Enochian John Dee stuff.

Sok. Keeps us all amused. But no, 'conversion' is not the thing.

The Reformation privatized religion -- gave anyone with a Bible the right to pass the plate without sending any of the money to Rome. The pope is worried about more of that? Don't think so. It's the distinct possibility the Bible will be ruled a hoax in a court of law that has him worried. Collecting money using hoaxes is known as a con and is a tad more serious than a little friendly competition for the "faith" dollar.

The Bible being a hoax does not stop religion but has a sobering effect on established ones that use it as their source of absolute truth. People been into religion for a long time and that is not likely to change. Pagans

probably accept converts to say nothing of visions and sessions with angels and so on. The Book of Mormon is looking real good. Prove Joe Smith was hallucinating or, God forbid lying. Don't you think?

POSTED BY: BGONE | APRIL 25, 2008 3:45 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

(There's been some post clipping, and I can't figure what's tripping the filters, so: continued from below:)

"8.....I must agree. Humanity has "a deep thirst for God," who intends us "to drink from the wells" of his "infinite love."

You know, Reverend, somewhere along the line, I got this wild idea that 'infinity' is big enough for the both of us.

Let's have an America. She may not be eternity, but She's home.

"Without God..., our lives are ultimately empty."

If you mean *your* God as you read your book,

Wanna bet?

POSTED BY: PAGANPLACE | APRIL 25, 2008 2:55 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Well, Reverend, I think I have some agreeing and disagreeing (and questioning) of my own to do, here.

"3.....I must disagree. "Public" is the opposite of "private," "

Who taught you that? Opposite?

I thought "Public" was where "Private" people interacted with each other.

"and official Roman Catholicism wants "religion" to be public in the sense that that church's understanding of "natural law" and "moral truth" should apply to state (government) as well as church ("religion"). For example, I worry about the politics, not just the theology, of this speech's assertion of "the right to life of every human being from conception until natural death."

Here I agree, Reverend. Consider my worrying about *your* religious politics in a similar light.

"4.....I must agree. "Private religion" is an oxymoron: "we are social beings...who find fulfillment only in love – for God and for our neighbor."

I agree we're social beings, but 'private religion is *not* an oxymoron. I live in a town where many people like me for my behavior as a neighbor, but would be extremely alarmed about my *religion,* thanks to what they teach each other about it.

" The speech well details some of the current forces privatizing religion in America, inclining the public toward the drop-out mentality called "spirituality" (though he does not use this term)."

Must disagree on the notion that 'spirituality is a drop-out mentality.'

Sometimes tuning in and turning on *does* mean dropping out, though, if the system you're dropping out of denies one her own spirit, or a sense of that we share.

Too often, Catholics and Protestants both characterize the human spirit as sinful and inherently bad, especially if rebellious, as though ignoring certain unproductive obsessions to focus on what's important were somehow 'lazy' or 'dropping out.'

I had a thing on Martin Luther on TV the other day, and it's funny how many Protestants have become exactly what he thought wrong about the Church.

" Robust religion requires "sound formation" of heart and mind, and it is made more difficult by our media "saturation with information.""

Can be, if you're not taught, or don't learn, how to process information. Or confuse the idea of 'revealed truth' or myth and scripture with *information itself.*

As I always like to say, 'Truth is cheap. Information *costs.*'

'Sound formation' of mind and heart do not come from accepting unquestioned principles by authority unquestioned, and then spending all effort trying to make reality square with the givens behind all the thought processes.

Nothing is 'information,' in whatever quantity, if one clings to a 'formation' where all *in*put is filtered based on unquestioned premises.

"5.....I must agree. Religion is about the whole of reality and the whole of life; and to the extent that it is marginalized away from the center, it is diminished in status from a tool to a toy: "it loses its very soul.""

Religion may be *about* the whole of reality and the whole of life: this doesn't mean it *is* these things, particularly when it wants to *override and contradict* both reality and life.

Why, though, are you so attached to the idea of status and 'centers?' Is this what your Jesus taught you, or did?

You are so attached to the idea we are all just foolish children without your view of your God. Why should that religion *not* be a toy?

I know it sounds *awfully* non-Supreme, but a *toy* is an artifact with which children (or adults,) *learn.*

The *public* square is not a place to squabble over which toys to play with or tools to apply to others, but a place where we play at being grownups. All of us.

You *don't* get to decide what religion's rules and commands are imposed there. That's not what the public square is *for.*

Even if you wanna take your bat and ball and go home.

POSTED BY: PAGANPLACE | APRIL 25, 2008 2:44 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

the hiway to god.

who is our lord?
the lordship belongs to who?

the creator of heavens and earths is the lord,the creator initiated and inovated and shaped what he created ,the creator posses what he created ,he know perfectly what he created ,he sustain what he created,he maintain what he created,he give life to what he created,he give death to what he created,he resurect what he created,he give his word to what he created,he legalize and forbid to what he created,he judge what he created,the most and superiest upper proof belongs to the creator.

1-every humankind ,including jesus and his honorable virigin mother, belongs to the creator and shall go back to their master the creator.

2- there is no diety worthy of worship save the lord the creator.

3-worshipping god is not limited to the place of worship but rather should cover every aspect of mankind including the mass public ,some body has to be the boss ,some body has to lead.

4-the big question is who will lead humanity?

lead humanity to what? and where ?and how ?and since when? and for how long? who led humanity before the christ jesus? and at the time of jesus and after the elevation of jesus ?

the led and the leader should be in harmony and in line with the purpose of this life and the perfect word of the creator the lord.

POSTED BY: MO | APRIL 25, 2008 5:03 AM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

And if intimacy with your Lord gets written into the laws of the land, forcing itself on those of us who don't wish it, can we file charges of spiritual rape?

POSTED BY: LEPIDOPTERYX | APRIL 24, 2008 2:06 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

What should center our lives, private and public, is "our deep yearning for intimacy with others and with our Lord."

And that's the problem. Your Lord is not my Lord.
So whose Lord becomes "our Lord?"

POSTED BY: LEPIDOPTERYX | APRIL 24, 2008 12:47 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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