

FIG Leaves

May 2000

May Meeting

FIG's own Edwin Kagin, lawyer and poet, will speak to us on May 16th about House Bill 70, the Camp Quest Law. HB70 was passed by the legislature, vetoed by the Governor, and finally placed into law when the legislature overrode the governor's veto during the final day of their session. Edwin will review the history of the bill and tell us about future plans to challenge it in the court systems. (More details about the veto-override on page 2.) He will also discuss other matters regarding the separation of church and state.

Edwin's father was a Presbyterian minister and many of his forefathers were theologians. He is a U.S. Air Force veteran, and an Eagle Scout.



He attended Wooster College in Ohio, where he began reading about all the people his father had condemned from the pulpit. Edwin attended University of Louisville law school after a brief career teaching college English Literature. According to the Lexington Herald-Leader, he "has an extensive background in the practice of constitutional law, and a scholarly knowledge of and appreciation for legal history." He is married to Helen Kagin, a retired physician and anesthesiologist. Helen is Canadian and Edwin insists that she married him for her green card. He is the director of Camp Quest, the first U.S. residential secular humanist summer camp, and vice-president of FIG.

Edwin Kagin...one of many Atheists in Foxholes

ATHEISM AND AGNOSTICISM WILL BE THE MAY 30 FIG DISCUSSION GROUP TOPIC

In our next meeting, we will seek to clarify the meaning of the terms agnostic and atheist and discuss the justification for taking either position. Background reading material will be mailed to all members and subscribers in advance of the meeting to enable us to have a more meaningful discussion.

The meeting will take place at 7 PM on Tuesday, May 30, in a private room at Lenhardt's Restaurant, 151 W. McMillan in Clifton. They have their own parking lot and a new policy of lower prices. Please note this event on your calendar!

Bill Jensen and Gary Weiss

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Events

May 16 Meeting

Edwin Kagin

Tuesday, **May 16**

at 7:00 PM

Geier Center

corner Gilbert and
Elsinore Avenues

Potluck Dinner

Sunday, June 11



FIG Discussion Group Atheism and Agnosticism

on Tuesday, May 30,

at 7:00 PM at Lenhardt's

151 West Mcmillan, Clifton

KENTUCKY LEGISLATURE OVERRIDES VETO:
PERMITS FAITH-BASED DISCRIMINATION
AGAINST ATHEISTS

The Kentucky legislature made its message to atheists and others who fail to pass a religious litmus test loud and clear. When it comes to enjoying equal protection under civil rights laws, "Fergedaboutit!"

The state General Assembly last weekend overrode a gubernatorial veto of a measure which provides churches and other faith-based groups with a special legal shield against the enforcement of civil rights protections when those organizations offer to rent their facilities to the public. House Bill 70, introduced in January by Rep. Tom Kerr (D-Taylor Mill) and Rep. Joe Fisher (R-Ft. Thomas) cleared both chamber of the legislature by a wide margin, but was vetoed last month by Kentucky Gov. Paul E. Patton. In declaring his disapproval of the measure, Patton charged that the proposal "violates both the spirit and meaning of the Kentucky Civil Rights Act by permitting discrimination on the basis of religion, the free exercise and non-establishment of which were among the fundamental principles in the founding of our state and country."

The legislation came in response to complaints from religious groups, including a Baptist Association. Four years ago, the church reluctantly rented one of its camp retreats to a non-theist group. Leaders of the association told a hearing of lawmakers that they were uncomfortable about renting the camp, "but did so out of a fear of being sued under state civil rights laws." THIS IS OUR CAMP QUEST ! (Bob)

The final legislation was carefully pruned to give the appearance of not violating civil rights statutes. HB 70 permits churches or any other religious group interesting renting their properties the power to refuse "if the rental or sale of the public accommodation would not be consistent with the religious tenets of that religious organization."

Opponents of the bill said that it would permit faith-based groups to reject racial or religious minorities, gays or anyone else who failed to pass theological muster. Rep. Kerr added more specific language to the legislation, though, declaring: "Any organization that teaches or advocates hatred based on race, color or national origin should not be considered a religious organization."

That may give HB 70 even less chance, though, of passing constitutional muster. Rep. Kathy Stein, the only Jew in the legislature, told the Kentucky Herald-Leader

newspaper that the bill will likely be challenged and found unconstitutional in federal courts, thus forcing taxpayers to shoulder the cost of legal defense.

"This sends a message to the Commonwealth of Kentucky that it is OK once again to go back to the '50s and '60s," declared Stein, "when it was OK to discriminate against other people because they were different than yourself."

"Ladies and gentlemen of the House, this is wrong," Stein told the Assembly during debate over the Governor's veto.

Kerr's modifications to the bill also place the state of Kentucky in the dubious position of defining what groups will and will not be designated by government as "religious," or which particular denominations might fall under the special privileges provided by HB 70. Christian Identity and other religious fringe groups justify racial discrimination on the basis of theology. The bill also does not address the problem of sexual discrimination, common in Christian fundamentalist groups which view homosexuality as sinful.

With little opposition, the House voted 86-12 to override Gov. Patton's veto. The Senate soon followed, approving HB 70 by a 26-8 margin.

For further information:

<http://www.atheists.org/flash.line/church20.htm>

<http://www.atheists.org/flash.line/church17.htm>

AANews

World Wide Web

Atheist Web Site:

http://atheism.about.com/culture/atheism/library/FAQs/bfaq_evolution_main.htm

Urban Legends:

<http://www.snopes.com/>

Letters to the Editor

We welcome comments.

Our e-mail address is:

FIGEditors@aol.com

The mail address is:

Editor, FIG Leaves, P.O. Box 8128,
Cincinnati, OH 45208



FIG Leaves Volume 9, Issue 5, May 2000 - Editors welcome thoughtful articles, letters, reviews, reports, anecdotes, and cartoons. Submit in electronic format via Internet to FIGEditors@aol.com or on disk or typewritten via mail to Editor, FIG Leaves, P.O. Box 8128, Cincinnati OH 45208. Contributions received before the first Tuesday of the month will be considered for publication that month. All material printed in FIG Leaves may be reproduced in similar publications of non-profit groups which grant FIG Leaves reciprocal reprinting rights as long as proper credit is clearly attributed to FIG Leaves and the author. Opinions expressed in FIG Leaves are those of their authors and do not necessarily reflect opinions of the editor or the Free Inquiry Group, Inc., its board, or officers. © 1999 The Free Inquiry Group, Inc. FIG Board of Directors: President George Maurer, Vice President Edwin Kagin, Secretary Helen Kagin, Treasurer Joe Levee, Members: Nurit Bowman, Lyse Hurd, Tim Kelly, Inez Klein, Robert Riehemann, Gary



April Speaker Review

Tom Flynn spoke to the Free Inquiry Group on April 25th at the Geier Center. He is a senior editor of Free Inquiry magazine and the author of two books.

Mr. Flynn spoke on the subject of respect between believers and non-believers. He contends that the religionists get too much respect, and the humanists get almost none. The reason for this, he claims, is that humanists do not behave as if they deserve respect. They give too much and demand too little.

Compounding this problem is the fact that the religious right has engulfed the American center. They have staked a position that claims to be the voice of morality. This has caused the humanists to become increasingly marginalized. White evangelical Protestants were once on the fringe, but they are now mainstream, having supplanted the non-evangelical Protestants.

Multiple public opinion polls, including one commissioned by Free Inquiry magazine, have consistently shown that about 90 percent of the American population believes in a personal, supernatural God. This implies that there are about 30 million non-believers in the

U.S., which should qualify as one of the largest identifiable minorities. Getting all of these people to move in the same direction may be 'like herding cats', however.

Like any other minority, humanists must establish an identity and assert themselves in order to command respect. Even if our stated purpose is to dismantle religion, we will get more respect from religionists if we push our agenda. Remaining silent turns us into doormats. The invisible can be safely ignored.

Humanists should consider forming strategic alliances with other groups that are oppressed by Christianity. Muslims, Hindus, and other religious minorities share our interest in maintaining the separation between church and state. We need to support issues that have a broad base of support.

Assisted suicide is one issue that has popular support in opposition to fundamentalist Christian doctrine. This could serve as a rallying point for a humanist agenda. Humanists can speak in favor of a centrist position that critiques Christian morality. We must not blow this opportunity.

Pat Robertson Quotes:

"When I said during my presidential bid that I would only bring Christians and Jews into the government, I hit a firestorm. 'What do you mean?' the media challenged me. 'You're not going to bring atheists into the government? How dare you maintain that those who believe in the Judeo Christian values are better qualified to govern America than Hindus and Muslims?' My simple answer is, 'Yes, they are.'" --from Pat Robertson's "The New World Order," page 218.

"The mission of the Christian Coalition is simple," says Pat Robertson. It is "to mobilize Christians -- one precinct at a time, one community at a time -- until once again we are the head and not the tail, and at the top rather than the bottom of our political system." Robertson predicts that "the Christian Coalition will be the most powerful political force in America by the end of this decade." And, "We have enough votes to run this country...and when the people say, 'We've had enough,' we're going to take over!"--Pat Robertson

"The Constitution of the United States, for instance, is a marvelous document for self-government by the Christian people. But the minute you turn the document into the hands of non-Christian people and atheistic people they can use it to destroy the very foundation of our society. And that's what's been happening." -- Pat Robertson, The 700 Club, Dec. 30, 1981

"It is interesting, that termites don't build things, and the great builders of our nation almost to a man have been

Christians, because Christians have the desire to build something. He is motivated by love of man and God, so he builds. The people who have come into (our) institutions (today) are primarily termites. They are into destroying institutions that have been built by Christians, whether it is universities, governments, our own traditions, that we have.... The termites are in charge now, and that is not the way it ought to be, and the time has arrived for a godly fumigation."--Pat Robertson, New York Magazine, August 18, 1986

"You say you're supposed to be nice to the Episcopalians and the Presbyterians and the Methodists and this, that, and the other thing. Nonsense. I don't have to be nice to the spirit of the Antichrist. I can love the people who hold false opinions but I don't have to be nice to them."--Pat Robertson, The 700 Club, January 14, 1991

"Just like what Nazi Germany did to the Jews, so liberal America is now doing to the evangelical Christians. It's no different. It is the same thing. It is happening all over again. It is the Democratic Congress, the liberal-based media and the homosexuals who want to destroy the Christians. Wholesale abuse and discrimination and the worst bigotry directed toward any group in America today. More terrible than anything suffered by any minority in history."--Pat Robertson, 1993 interview with Molly Ivins

(talking about apartheid South Africa) "I think 'one man, one vote,' just unrestricted democracy, would not be wise. There needs to be some kind of protection for the minority which the white people represent now, a minority, and they

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Kagin's Column

Here are some photos, taken by Helen Kagin during the July 4th weekend, 1999, at Lake Hypatia Freethought Hall, in Alabama, where the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) dedicated the first ever, we think, monument to "Atheists in Foxholes."

I was one of the surprisingly large number of veterans in attendance for this annual campout weekend.

These photographs are of that dedication. Everyone in the photos (save Anne Nicol Gaylor of FFRF, who unveiled the monument she conceived and had created) is a former member of the Armed Forces of the United States, and all are non-believers, showing the lie of the famous slogan, used as a put-down of non-believers by some fundangelicals, that "There are no atheists in foxholes."

Well, yes there are, and were, and those seen there assembled, who served their country in



uniform and who deny the supernatural, are living proof of that fact.

Sadly, there were many other atheists in foxholes, who fought for our country and for our American right to freedom of religion, who did not emerge alive to join us in this happy and safe ceremony of dedication. They should be remembered, and honored. They died to protect our right to believe or not to believe, in or out of foxholes.

Any non-believers who served in the military, whether members of a freethought group or not, are entitled and invited to become enrolled in the registry of Atheists in Foxholes, maintained by the FFRF.

Those interested should contact the Freedom From Religion Foundation, PO Box 750, Madison WI 53701 - (608) 256-8900. Their e-mail is: ffrf@mailbag.com and their web site is: <http://www.ffrf.org/>

Edwin F. Kagin



Camp Quest is pleased to announce that we are at full capacity with 40 campers! We are currently seeking ways to safely increase our capacity so that more campers can be enrolled.

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FIG Leaflets

"I don't know that atheists should be considered citizens, nor should they be considered patriots. This is one nation under God."--George W. Bush

"We're going to bring back God and the Bible and drive the gods of secular humanism right out of the public schools of America." --Presidential candidate Pat Buchanan addressing the anti-gay rally in Des Moines, 2-11-96

"I want you to just let a wave of intolerance wash over you. I want you to let a wave of hatred wash over you. Yes, hate is good...Our goal is a Christian nation. We have a Biblical duty, we are called by God, to conquer this country. We don't want equal time. We don't want pluralism."--Randall Terry, Founder of Operation Rescue, The News-Sentinel, Fort Wayne, Indiana, 8-16-93

How close did we come?

As we shall see, date setting is a habit among messianic revolutionaries,... for 1984 was a year of grave danger for the Western world. That year was the exact midpoint of the presidency of Ronald Reagan, a man who not only believed in the Bible as a source for predicting future events but had grave musings about the necessity of an apocalypse preceding the Second Coming of Christ. merely pointing out that Reagan was firmly in the mainstream of American religious belief does not negate the fact that contemporary American Fundamentalists often interpret the Apocalypse as nuclear war, and wonder whether it is a necessary precursor of the coming of the Messiah. In a sense, Doomsday is the Fundamentalists Utopia, and the survivors of that cataclysm will reign with Christ on earth for a thousand years. Perhaps it would have been better if someone other than Ronald Reagan had his finger on the proverbial button between 1980 and 1988.

David S. Katz and Richard H. Popkin
Messianic Revolution: Radical Religious Politics to the End of the Millenium
(NY: Hill & Wang, 1998) p. xiv

A retired politician reminisces:

With satisfaction he thought that he had avoided saying a single thing that was true during the entire interview. This was one of the few things that still held an interest for him. To deceive without being discovered. To spread pretense and illusion. After all his years as a

politician he realized all that was left was the lie. The truth disguised as a lie or the lie veiled as truth.

From: Henning Mankell, *Sidetracked* (translated from the Swedish by Steven T. Murray) (New York: The New Press, 1999) p. 11-12. (Originally published as *Villospår* by Ordfront Frlag, Stockholm, 1995)

Here is a novel for you.

The plot involves the disappearance of a brass crucifix from a down-at-the-heels Manhattan Episcopal church ministered by Thomas Pemberton, a doubting, ponytailed relic of the '60s. When the cross turns up on the roof of the Synagogue for Evolutionary Judaism, Pemberton sees solving the mystery of how it got there as an opportunity to renew his flagging faith.

-- Peter Plagens in a review of *City of God* by E. L. Doctorow in *Newsweek*, 21 Feb. 2000, p. 58

If the right of privacy means anything, it is the right of the individual, married or single, to be free from unwarranted governmental intrusion into matters so fundamentally affecting a person as the decision whether to bear or beget a child."

--Justice Brennan, *Baird v. Eisenstadt*, 1972

The foolish renounce this world and pursue an imaginary world to come.

--Giordano Bruno, Italian philosopher burned at the stake by the Holy Inquisition, 17 February 1600

When Greg Pruitt was out hunting in Ocala National Forest, he found a World War II bomb, perhaps lost from the nearby naval range. He decided it was a great "keepsake" and he hauled it off to camp in his pickup truck. When other hunters saw it, they summoned the police who evacuated fifty people while a military bomb squad retrieved it. Commenting later, Pruitt said: "common sense should have kicked in a little better and earlier." (AP)

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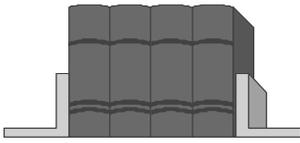
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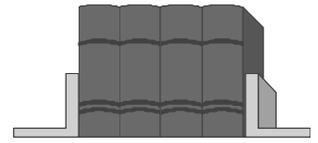
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Book Reviews



**100 Banned Books:
Censorship Histories of World Literature
by Nicholas Karolides, Margaret Bald,
and Dawn B. Sova
(New York: Checkmark Books, 1999)**

Censorship is not only as American as apple pie, but widespread around the world and has been tried at all times in history. These books were originally composed in just about every major modern and classical European language, plus in Arabic, Maya, Sanscrit, and Bengali. The earliest censorship reported here; Publius Ovidius Naso's *Ars Amatoria* dates from the beginning of the common era. The emperor banned Ovid from Rome to the outer edges of his realm, somewhere on the Black Sea coast. The arts of love and lovemaking have always excited the censors. The most recent banned book was published in 1993 and is the famous *Lajja* (Shame) by the Bengali authoress Taslima Nasrin. She had to publish abroad and flee her country where the government has stated it would not be able to protect her against the mob.

In this reference volume the authors provide for each book (1) a full citation, (2) a summary, (3) a censorship history, and (4) a list of further readings. Books have been suppressed for many reasons, this collection is organized into four categories. Literature suppressed on political grounds includes *Dr. Zhivago* in Russia and *Black Boy* in the American South. Works censored on religious grounds include writings by Galileo Galilei, by Thomas Paine, and by Charles Dickens. Just about every major religious work, including the Bible, the Koran, the Talmud, and the *Popol Vuh* of the Maya people has been suppressed by an opposing religion. Literature suppressed for discussing sex has included classics of most nations, *An American Tragedy* by Theodore Dreiser, *Candide* by Voltaire, *The Decameron* by Giovanni Boccaccio, *The Arabian Nights*, and *The Kama Sutra*. Under the category "Suppression on Social Grounds" the authors list books by Anne Frank, Mark Twain, Geoffrey Chaucer, John Steinbeck and Nathaniel Hawthorne. They include such less well known works as *Black Like Me* by John Howard Griffin, *Annie on My Mind* by Nancy Garden, and *Last Exit to Brooklyn* by Hubert Selby.

Reading through this collection it becomes clear there are different levels of censorship. In most cases only the work itself is suppressed, in worse instances the author him or herself is punished. Giordano Bruno was burned at the stake with a nail piercing his tongue, for with his tongue he had committed sin. Tom Paine was incarcerated, Ovid was banished, Salman Rushdie and Taslima Nasrin were threatened with death. Other authors were fined for daring to publish what the censors objected

to. Some books were suppressed nationally, Henry Miller, James Joyce, and D. H. Lawrence met this fate, other merely found it difficult to find a publisher, Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita* had this experience. But by far the largest number of modern books in America were merely removed from several school libraries or put under restriction in a public library. As late as 1959 *Lolita* was banned from the Cincinnati Public Library (p. 306). At this point it becomes difficult to distinguish censorship intentions from judgement about merely poor literature.

Two books in this collection took me somewhat aback. Adolph Hitler's *Mein Kampf* was suppressed in many countries between 1930 and 1945. In the US many libraries suppressed it at the request and insistence of Jewish groups and protests. Yet, one might argue if more people had read this book in the thirties we might have been better prepared for the War, and might even have avoided a lot of grief.

The other odd book in the collection is *The Hoax of the Twentieth Century* by Arthur R. Butz. The "hoax" of the title are the German extermination camps of the Hitler period. Butz argues the Holocaust never happened: "The thesis of this book is that the story of Jewish extermination in World War II is a propaganda hoax." (p. 63, quoting Butz) The book has been of course widely attacked, for it is just plain wrong. But the issue is not merely bad scholarship, Butz and the whole coterie of Holocaust deniers pursue an anti-Jewish objective of making fascism respectable once again. It is this case which makes me really think whether censorship may sometimes be justified.

Wolf Roder

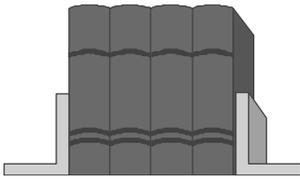
***Genome: The Autobiography
of a Species in 23 Chapters*
by Matt Ridley
(NY: HarperCollins, 1999)**

Just what is in your genes? Are you predestined to live out your life determined by your biological endowment, or does the environment play a role as well? Matt Ridley, and for that matter almost every scientist concerned with genetics will insist and confirm that both, nature and nurture play major roles in that person who is you. In this book the author describes for us what is known about the genome, how genes work, and what it means for the future.

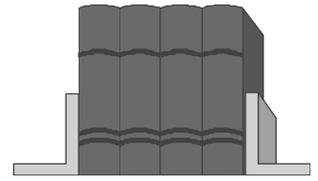
The program which builds and controls our bodies consists of 23 chromosome pairs, one each from our fathers and from our mothers. Each chromosome is a string of four different amino acids, a three foot long molecule of deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA). The amino acids

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Book Reviews



(Continued from page 6)

act like letters in an alphabet, and their order in groups of three determines whether the germ cells will build a mouse or man. Yet, each section of such letters can only direct the building of one specific protein. When that protein is not needed, the sequence is turned off. Thus, there are really no "genes" in the sense of specific bodies controlling heredity, there are sequences of chemical letters which direct the building of specific proteins at specific times of development, and at specific places in the body. How we grow arms and legs from this, much less learn to engage in reading or divorce is subject to intense research. This book will be out of date within years rather than decades.

Ridley recounts a great deal about what we do know about the human genome. We share many of the genes in our bodies with primitive bacteria, some with most animals, some others with all vertebrates, and others with mammals only. There are genes which we share with the great apes, and others which distinguish us from chimps. In fact, reading the genome has contributed to a better understanding of biological history and evolutionary paths of development.

Extremely instructive is Ridley's discussion of individual genes whose function we understand or at least can surmise partially. He discusses genes which guide our development from zygote to infant, and from toddler to adult, but most of these "regular" genes, i.e. genes which all humans have are poorly understood. Many of the genes whose functions are clearly understood are simple mutations which condemn the carrier to suffer a cruel disease. Repeatedly the author assures us he does not want to discuss so many genetical illnesses, and that genes are not there to make us sick, but he returns to hereditary disorders because we know their genetic cause. He does write of genes which influence our intelligence and memory, genes which seem to enable us to use grammatical language, and similar complex aspects of ourselves. But far too little is yet known about these structures.

Throughout the book Ridley emphasizes the interaction of nature and nurture. Many of our genes are turned on and off only by the environment, by our experience, or by volitional acts. Belief in God appears to be the expression of a universal human instinct, and "that there is in some sense a group of genes for believing in God or gods." (p. 310). Most illuminating, but also speculative is his discussion of free will. Causality of genetic action is circular as genes guide behavior, and behavior affects genes. Thus the interaction of genetic and external influences can make human behavior

unpredictable, but

determined by the person him or herself, not controlled by any external or genetic source or cause.

This is a very informative book. What is more I found it an easy read and able to hold my attention without difficulty. I do recommend it.

Wolf Roder

(Continued from page 3)

need and have a right to demand a protection of their rights."--Pat Robertson, "The 700 Club," 3/18/92

"The feminist agenda is not about equal rights for women. It is about a socialist, anti-family political movement that encourages women to leave their husbands, kill their children, practice witchcraft, destroy capitalism, and become lesbians." -- Pat Robertson, fundraising letter, 1992

(talking about Planned Parenthood) "It is teaching kids to fornicate, teaching people to have adultery, every kind of bestiality, homosexuality, lesbianism-everything that the Bible condemns."--Pat Robertson, "The 700 Club," 4/9/91

"I know this is painful for the ladies to hear, but if you get married, you have accepted the headship of a man, your husband. Christ is the head of the household and the husband is the head of the wife, and that's the way it is, period."--Pat Robertson, "The 700 Club," 1/8/92

"You see what happened in 1962. They took prayer out of the schools. The next year the Supreme Court ordered Bible reading taken from the schools. And then progressing, liberals, most of them atheistic educators, have pushed to remove all religion from the lives of children...The people who wrote the "Humanist Manifesto" and their pupils and their disciples are in charge of education in America today." --Pat Robertson, "The 700 Club," January 13, 1995

"Many of those people involved with Adolph Hitler were Satanists, many of them were homosexuals--the two things seem to go together."--Pat Robertson, "The 700 Club," 1/21/93

"NOW is saying that in order to be a woman, you've got to be a lesbian."--Pat Robertson, "The 700 Club," 12/3/97

"There is no such thing as separation of church and state in the Constitution. It is a lie of the Left and we are not going to take it anymore." --Pat Robertson, November 1993 during an address to the American Center for Law and Justice

<http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/7027/patrobertson.html>

